ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

OF

RUSSIAN-MENNONITE IMMIGRANTS

of the 1920's (Ontario)

Interview #28 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.

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Place of Interview: Residence of the Interviewee

Interviewee: Mr. Nick J. Fehderau
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Kitchener, Ontario

Interview:

PAETKAU: Mr. Fehderau can you tell me where and when you were born, a little bit about your youth, your family background?

FEHDERAU: Well I was born in 1904, and it was in south Russia. It's near the Black Sea, not far, about 100 miles from the Black Sea. There was Taurida government, it's a province of Russia in the south. I was born on the farm. It was a larger farm. It wasn't just a small farm in the community. It was more of an estate. My father had 5,000 acres land. And we were not in the Mennonite community we were more or less surrounded by Russian peasants. It was just like a big estate. I was born there. But that was in 1904. 1904 was a terrible year for Russia; 1904 and 1905. They had big upheavals there because the Russian peasants they were not satisfied. The Russian students they were not satisfied with the way the government was running. We had no parliament. We had no freedom, personal freedoms. So there was a lot of revolts. And they were striving to overthrow the government. But that was going on for quite awhile. Of course the main cities they took the brunt of this thing. But this was even in the country side. Even in the south we felt the effects of this upheaval. Well the beginning of a revolution. It was eventually crushed but for awhile it looked pretty bad. They made all kinds of raids on the estates and farms. Shortly after I was born we had a few raids on our farm. They were shooting at the windows and making all kinds of trouble. They took some money and so on. So my parents decided to relocate. I mean, keep the farm and have them run by an inspector and we moved then to a German

settlement. The Mennonite settlement. That was about 60 miles away. There were 60 villages altogether in that big Mennonite settlement in south Russia. They called it the Molotschna Colony. You heard about it I suppose. There was a main town there, they call it Halbstadt. We bought a house there . So when I was an infant they moved to Halbstadt. My five older brothers and sisters they were the age where they should go to school and there was no good school around our estate or farm so, I mean, in Halbstadt they had all the schools. Had a public school and even a Kommerzschule. So there was possibility for my brothers and sisters to learn. Eventually when I grew up if I had a chance of attending all the schools up to the Kommerzschule. So that was an advantage for me. But I was born, as I say on a farm, but on account of all these upheavals and so on we went to live in Halbstadt. But for the settlement--you see things quieted down. After awhile the government took control of all these revolutionary activities and by the time that I remember, like 1908, 1909 and 1910 and so on and shortly before 1940 when the war broke out everything was settled. And there was not unusual activity, just the usual activity. Even here. We had all kinds of bandits here once in awhile, you know, they break into the houses. But not unusual, like 1904. That was up to my school years around 1910.

PAETKAU: Then you went to school in Halbstadt?

FEHDERAU: Yes. I attended"Dorfschule" . It's a five class. In our colony at least it was 5 classes. Sometimes they had 6 years. Two classes, but there were 3 years in the one class and 2 years like 1,2,3 in the first class and then the second class was like 4 and 5. After I finished during the war years I finished"Dorfschule". Then the war broke out while I was still in the "Dorfschule", 1940. Then I went to the"Central-schule. " Ever heard about "Centralschule?" Well there we had 4 classes in "Centralschule." After finishing 5 classes in "Dorfschule" we went 4 yrs. to the "Centralschule". It was a big building. It was well organized. We had German teachers. Only that was during the war years. And the Principal according to the government had to be a Russian so we had a Russian Principal. But all the rest of the teachers, no there was one woman teacher too, but all the rest were our Mennonite teachers. There I went through these four years. Well you see the time got worse and worse all the time. You see the war years didn't effect us too much. 1914, 1915, 1916, was alright for us because we lived far away from the front, from activites. But then in 1917 in February the Revolution took place. But that didn't effect us right away. It was a Democratic revolution and perhaps you heard about Kerensky. He was a Democrat. Well he wanted to establish a Democratic government in Russia. That lasted from February to October, about November. You see we had

three different calendars. When I was young we were under the Julian Calendar but later on the Reds adopted the Western calendar, it was what we had the Gregorian Calendar, you know. You know the difference between the two calendars? Yes, 13 days difference. When they celebrate Christmas they always celebrate it about 13 days later than we. Well anyhow that's why there is a difference. We say the October Revolution but in fact it took place in November, you know. It's a discrepency in certain days. Now the first revolution they brought us freedom. You see during our time, during the first world war the thing is this that we were considered of German origin. We are Mennonites and we were given our freedoms, you know. We didn't have to take up arms and we didn't join the army. But our young men had to go into the Red Cross, semi-military service without arms. So there was about 13,000 altogether that serviced for the Russian--Mennonites during this time. 13,000 is quite a lot. Up to the age of 45 years and sometimes the fact that--well married men and families, that was quite a hardship for the families when the bread winner was taken away. But we were pro Russian mainly you know. Even if the oppression was quite severe they forbade us to teach German and to speak German in our services. Like we had our German services in the church. You see they stopped all preaching. We couldn't--did you hear about this already?

PAETKAU: I've heard something about it.

FEHDERAU: Well you see there was just Bible reading, singing and praying that's all. But no sermon. And that went from 19--almost two years that we had no sermons. So that was quite a hardship for us. But in spite of that you know we were very patriotic as Russians you know. We considered ourselves Russians and we thought that was fine. But gradually that wore on our nerves and they didn't consider us as Russians anyhow. So I mean the sympathies with some people they changed a little bit. They started to get a little bit, maybe, pro German too. You can imagine under pressure all the time and the Russians didn't consider us as Russians anyhow so what was the use. But in the beginning, the first two years you know, we contributed to the war as much as we could with loans and so on. Then in 1917 the revolution broke out. It was the February revolution. That was a beneficial revolution for Russia because they did away with a lot of these laws--well against the Germans. There was full freedom again. We could preach and everything and we could even do some evangelist work amongst the Russians. See the Russian Orthodox church they didn't allow us to, you know, have evangelist services amongst the Russian. When we came they almost, they told us you know well you can believe what you want but don't force your religion upon other Russians. And we tried to do that but in some cases it was pretty hard because we still thought that we should tell the people about Christ and Jesus and some were arrested and sent to Siberia for that of course.

So since 1917, February, we had a lot more freedom. Only the thing is this that what good--the freedom was good for us. But some people misused the freedom. And the Communists they used that freedom to publicize their ideas. Now, Lenin was in Switzerland and he was expelled out of Russia. And he was publishing papers and sending them into Russia and there was a lot of propaganda going on in Russia itself, underground propaganda for a Communist party. Now under the Tsar it was very very strick. If they caught anyone trying to teach Communism and so on, spreading Communism they would be sentenced or shot, sent to Siberia or be shot. But now you see it was freedom and they moved in from the outside, Switzerland and inside all those elements came up, forward. And they started preaching Communism and organizing. Well it was six months. The Kerensky Regime, they wanted to establish a Democratic government just like Canada has--Parliament and everything. They wanted to have an election in November and we sent representatives, some 500-600 delegates were sent to Moscow for an election. While this was going on and the delegates were assembling in Moscow all at once the Communists made revolution you know. They didn't wait until--they knew that they couldn't win by ballot. They had only a fraction of Communist delegates sent for the parliament. The biggest majority were non Communists. So they knew they couldn't do it by peaceful means. So while they were assembling there and waiting to be called for the parliament they made the revolution and Petersburg or Leningrad what they call it now and they took over by force. So when they really came up you know --they were supposed to come the next day--and while they were coming up they were arrested. And all the non Communists took it out and arrested. So that was the end of the Democratic Government of Russia. You see what I mean? It was just a beginning. If we could have succeeded in establishing a Democratic Government then Russia would have been far better off but now the Communists took over and they began a reign of terror. It's hard to describe what happened. Of course we didn't feel it right away in southern Russia because that was 1,000-2,000 miles away. At first it was in the big cities. They organized these groups, they call them "Cheka". Ever hear of the "Cheka"? That is, terror - - groups. Well they were like the marine, the Russian marine. They did very little during the war. They were restless. They were revolutionaries--well of course all these non unsatisfied elements they joined the Red Army and the Red organizations and they started a reign of terror. And it didn't take long, a month or two and then it started in our community. People got arrested, shot and all the possessions got taken away. Well you know the methods of the Reds I suppose. You heard about them.

PAETKAU: M-m. Did your father lose his land this time as well?

FEHDERAU: Oh yes. Well you see that was 1917 as I said in November. And right away, well my father had pretty substantial bank accounts, and that was confiscated right away. Practically the next day all assets were frozen. We never saw anything of them anymore. That wouldn't maybe be so bad but all the land was confiscated. Well they figure this way, you see now any land over let's say 60-70 acre land that was taken over by the government. At first. Later on when Stalin came into power even these little pieces of land were taken over by the collective farms. But they started out. That was their first aim to give each peasant a piece of land. Well that was 30 dicoteen. Well a dicoteen if I were to transfer that into acres that would be 60-70 acres each peasant. Now you think those are big estates. Our estate was 5,000 acres but that was by far not the largest. You know there were some Russian noblemen they had up to 100,000 acres of land and more. They thought if they would divide us up among the peasants. They were land hungry. I don't blame them for revolting. You see they live maybe on 2-3 acres of land . You see we Mennonites were different. When we came in 1790, 1800 we came from East Prussia and Catharine the Great invited us to settle down in the new acquired land. You see they took all the Ukraine from the Turks. The Turks had the Ukraine. And there was nothing. There were staps. You know what staps(?) are? Prairie land. Beautiful land but it wasn't worked. Just wild roamed the country at that time. So Catharine the Great was really a German princess but she became the ruler. Her husband died and she became the ruler. But she was the princess from Hessen; was a German ruler. But now a German princess was all at once a ruler of a big Russian Empire. And she saw that the Russians were not very efficient. So she knew how efficient the German farmers were in their own land in Prussia. So she sent emissaries over to Prussia and to other parts and invited them to Bulvaria. Invited those farmers to come and settle down . And Germany had a shortage of land already at that time. The farms couldn't be divided. The young people were restless, they wanted to have more land. So that was welcomed. Then our Mennonites they were under Prussia at that time, East Prussia. Frederick the Great was a big military man and he wanted conscript our Mennonites into the army. He didn't recognize our nonresistance. So they were just welcome those emissaries from Catharine the Great. They come over here, we have religious freedom. We won't take your sons into military service. And each one will get 150 dissertin of land, about 150 acres of land. And you pay it--well it was very little what you paid. So it's no wonder that our Mennonites they took the opportunity and bought. Around 1790 about that time they started to immigrate. At first it was quite difficult at that time. Weeks and weeks they had to go by wagon train. Then the beginning was very poor. But it didn't take long. Within let's say about 25-30 years they had beautiful villages.

FEHDERAU (continued):

The time 1914 when I (can't remember the times you know). These villages they were beautiful villages. I mean the Russians couldn't succeed the way our Mennonite farmers did there. They had the latest machinery at that time already. The houses were just beautiful. So they made a big success. You see under the Communist their land was taken away. It was not only my fathers--well that was we didn't have our farm in the Mennonite community we lived outside there. But all that farm land was taken away. And later on it was collectivized. That means they had collective farms there and the Mennonite settlement as such was destroyed. Now there is nothing left. I saw pictures. Some of my friends went to the Ukraine and you go through villages you hardly recognize what used to be a beautiful village.

PAETKAU: What kind of an effect did this have on your father, or on the Mennonite people when they lost their land and their villages were destroyed?

FEHDERAU: Well you see we were Christians. And after all, I mean, nothing happens just accidentially. And we took it, well, the Bible says, "der Herr hat's gegeben and der Herr hat's genommen." (Unintelligible)..reason. We were just glad to keep our lives. After all what we had gone through the first years of revolution we were just glad to be alive. We weren't even crying about our possessions. I mean of course father took it quite hard because he was 100% farmer. Now all at once he was condemned to do nothing. In the town we had just a house, just a little garden, just like here. The land was confiscated but the house for the time being we could keep the house. But there was nothing to do for him, and he was 100% farmer. Of course that affected him quite a bit. This was just the beginning. Afterwards it got worse every year, worse and worse. They took all the grain away from the farmers. They would ship them right out. During the depression time, well during the time the grain was shipped out of the country and the people had nothing left to eat. Can you imagine that? They took the last grain out of the grainery and shipped them out of the country. During that time there were 5,000,000 people starving. They wanted to undermine the price on the world market and they knew if they could have a depression in Canada, in the United States, in the world that meant that their revolution could be spread here easily. You know what I mean? To prepare the ground for the world revolution and that's why they did it. They shipped the last grain out of the country, their own people starve, to undermine the world price. You imagine now supposing today some country would ship millions of bushels into the country for half the price. Don't you think they would sell? People would buy it. The businessmen they would buy that and they would undermine our price and

it would drop below so I mean it would be below the price. They couldn't exist, the farmers. That's what happened during these years.

PAETKAU: You mentioned the Tsar before and talked about him a little bit. How did people feel about the Tsar and his government?

FEHDERAU: Well we didn't--we were not attached to the Tsar at all. He was an autocrat. You know what an autocrat is? You see he ruled by force and he had his man that terrorized Russia. Of course after we had tasted the Russian, I mean the Red government then we thought, "Oh my that was 100 times better. than the Communists." We sooner would have the Tsar back. At that time we really didn't think too much about the Tsar. It was a cruel government. Any position was crushed. You know that from history.

PAETKAU: Did the Tsar also start land liquidation or was he about to do that?

FEHDERAU: Oh yah. You heard about that before?

PAETKAU: Well I've heard it mentioned.

FEHDERAU: Well you see the thing is this that we were considered Germans. Then they passed the law in the "Dumma"(?)that was the parliament at that time. But that was a very limited parliament. It didn't have the same power as here. Because the ministers they break the rule by force. But they got a law through that all the German colonies, German land is supposed to be taken away from the owners. They call that liquidation of the German properties. So that was in 1916. I remember that well. Then all at once my father received a certain letter that he was supposed to transfer all his land to the "Semskibank"(?). That means the government bank. There was not so many banks there. There was just one bank and that was the government bank. They would supervise the transition. They would supervise the land then. Well that was of course quite a blow. But I say that lasted only from 1916-1917 till the revolution. The first Siberian Revolution. Then we got it back again. They stopped all these laws going against the Germans. So in that respect we just gained through the first revolution, the Democratic Revolution. So we received that back but during that, oh let's say about half a year, what the bank supervised our farm they made quite a mess of our farm. Practically we had blood horses and we had all the cows and implements, everything was stolen from the farm. They worked for their own pockets and they destroyed the stock terribly. So I know my father was complaining a lot when he took it over again. He had to build everything up again.

But he didn't have enough time. Of the half a year we had the October Revolution and then they took it away altogether. He would have built it back again but not in that short a time. But I was on a farm at that time during that period in between and everything was going back to normal again, after we got the land back again from the government. You see their plan was to take all the land, even from the farmers. This was just the beginning. At first they took the big estates. Then they wanted to go down, if the war would have lasted, and the revolution wouldn't have come they would have taken all the land from the German farmers. That was the original plan. See, as long as the Russian Army was successful and during the first 3-4 months they were quite successful. They went right ahead and took part of Germany. You perhaps read about it. But then Hindenburg he got them into a trap. They went so far and then all at once they got the whole Russian army into a trap. I forgot how many hundred thousand men the best army were captured at that time. Hindenburg was a great German commander. He devised that plan. Even in East Germany they made a big statue of--at that time when Hindenburg saved Germany so to say. Because with his master plan he just let the Russian go in. Of course they didn't realize that they were going to the trap. Then he closed this up and the whole army was trapped there. As long as they were successful they didn't bother us at all. But then after this terrible blow even for Russian with this million of solidiers it was a terrible blow to lose the cream of the crop practically at that first blow. Then they started to go back all the time, all the time. The further the Germans advanced the worse it got. Of course we had to suffer for that. As long as they were successful it was O.K. Then after they had all the defeats they worked up the people against the Germans, because they were, let's see, 2,000,000 Germans living in Russia. Not only Mennonites. Did you ever hear about the Volga Mennonites? The Volga Germans? There was a whole republic. Whole big along the Volga was all German settlers. They suffered as much as we did. There were different parts. We were in the southern part and they were along the Volga. There were approximately 2,000,000 Germans in Russia. They thought that was a threat to their security. You imagine what happened when Japan, you know, after Pearl Harbour. You see how jittery we got in British Columbia. These Japs were all arrested, and they were taken out of--I think they were resettled. See, during the war you can easily work up his jury. People got a sight of it and afraid. Here 2,000,000 Germans here in Russia and the Germans coming closer. Of course I don't blame them they got scared. That's why we had to suffer.

PAETKAU: How did the Mennonites then feel about, during the war were they identifying with one side or the other.

FEHDERAU: Well I said we were pro Russian, very much at the beginning. But when they start oppressing us and they start making all kinds of laws. Like (unintelligible) us to (unintelligible) German and then speak German and then the schools stopped teaching in German and we had our own schools. All that. Then we felt the press was very much against us. When you read the papers it was always attacks against the minority. Of course after a year or two of this constant pounding. They supervised everything. My brother for instance he had pigeons. He liked pigeons and he had all kinds. He had about 200 pigeons. He had one big stable, it was all full of pigeons. He was great on raising these pigeons. All at once the law came out that we have to give an account every week of any pigeon that was gone. How can you do that. They fly around all over the place. How can you count them and say now there are two less. They thought they were carrier pigeons, and we were sending messages to the German Army. Well it's just one of these incidences. Any way they could make it miserable for us. Father said we can't give a count of all the pigeons. There's 200 of them. So we did away with the whole business instead of getting into trouble. There might be some missing or so and then the Russian police would get us fellows. So he said, "We'll kill the whole business off." That's the way it went in different things. If there was a case in court and so on, it is very hard for a German to win a case. There was always this pressure against us. So I mean, how could we remain very enthusiastic about it all. So perhaps in some cases they started to get more pro German than pro Russian. I was young then. I was a lad in the school. I was not affected so much by that. But I felt the atmosphere. Then 1918 Russia lost the war. You know that. Now one the terms of the treaty of Brest Litovsk was that German wanted to have the Ukraine for 10 years occupation. Ever heard about this? They had to pay quite an amount of money. But then they wanted to occupy the Ukraine because they needed the grain. The war dragged on in 1918 and the Germans were starving. The Ukraine was the bread basket of Europe. Beautiful land just like Kansas, Western Canada, there was lot's of wheat. So they wanted to occupy all this territory. Lenin made a peaceful trust. Lenin made peace at Brest Litovsk. That's the city where the peace was signed. They signed that Germany could take over the Ukraine for 10 years. First they didn't want to. They were too harsh these terms. Finally they decided. So in April 1918 the German soldiers occupied our territory. That was after we had about one year of Bolshevik terror, from 1917. Well not quite a year. From November till April; Easter. Half a year, let's say, we were under the Communists. We had the worst terror--I don't want to go into details what we experienced. A lot of people were

shot in church, the houses and all that. Now you imagine all at once this German army marched in and established peace in--we got our land back again the second time. We had order and everything, and they treated us fine. So of course we didn't see anything wrong in the German army. They treated us fine. And the population, except they took some of these Communist leaders out. If you have seen all these terrorists before and then all at once you see them running loose. Of course, people pick them out and deliver that to the German army. I don't know what they did with them. As far as we were concerned the German army treated us good; the Mennonites. So we had from April till 1918 in November. That was when Germany lost the war against the West. Then the (?) treaty was signed. And one of the stipulations of the treaty was that Germany had to get out of the Ukraine. Even Russia was out of the war but still they wanted to have Germany out of the Ukraine. They did a bad service for the world and everybody. Because you see that meant that all the territory was back in Communist hands again. So in 1918 they started getting out. Then a reign of terror began for us; worse than anything we had before. The Germans they had to leave in a hurry. They left a lot of ammunition, rifles and even cannons, machine guns. They left it right there. Can you imagine the whole army. Leaving all the ammunition and running for their life back home. That meant that ammunition was there. And the peasants they armed themselves. The Russian army broke up too and they took the rifles along with them. The soldiers they weren't disarmed they took the rifles, ammunition along. So the result was that the whole Ukraine was full of bandits. They were organized into groups. I don't know how many groups but one of them that affected us most was one by Makhno. That was 1918. You see when the Germans left there was a vaccum. The Red Army--it took them months before they really came into our--you see the Germans went out. But it took Moscow so long to occupy the rest of the Ukraine so there was a vaccum. There was nobody there. And now these bandits sprang up. And that's where we had our trouble then. A reign of terror for almost a year. We Mennonites had to suffer a lot. They terrorized us, they raped our women, they took everything away, and they shot a lot of people, they burned whole villages. See, that was after the Germans left. That was up to February, 1919.

PAETKAU: Is this when the Selbstschutz was formed?

FEHDERAU: Yes. Exactly. See a lot of people they--the Mennonites they condemned us for doing that. They thought--well it's true we were not according to our belief. But a lot of our people--not all the Mennonites are, what would you say, nonresistant. And at that time too, during the war and during the German Occupation and all that, I mean, that

teaching was not very popular. I don't know why. Our preachers practically never preached about nonresistance. And so there was a lot of ignorance too because our young people and I too, were not taught nonresistance. That teaching was more or less in the background, forgotten. You see the German army came and they were very militaristic and they saw a lot of our young people and they said, "Why don't you organize yourself?" "Have a little bit training?" "You know, you never can tell what happens." So they sent some of the officers into our colonies and some of the young people. Even the [illegible] (I was too young at that time) they were quite enthusiastic. "Sure why not? The time might come when we need a little organization. to defend ourselves. Not to attack anybody but to defend ourselves. Then in 1918 the German army up and left, just like that. In a few weeks they were out. But they were the nucleus of the Selbstschutz at that time already. Some German officers and some sargents and so on they liked it there and they stayed. They said, "Why should we go to Germany?" And even they married some of our Mennonite girls. So they stayed there. Then the bandits started to come up. That was in November. I want to give you the exact--that was November when they left. Then November we heard all kinds of rumors. Not in our colonies but outside that up north was organizing these bandits and they were up to 15,000 cavalry. It was a big, big bandit. And they terrorized not our settlement but the settlements that were in the Old Colony. Ever hear of the Old Colony? That was further north. That was the first settlement when the Mennonites came. They settled in the Old Colony and then in the Molotschna. Well that Old Colony was closer to the center of these bandits. There was a place they call that was in the Yugoslav government, like province. It was government, in Yugoslav. But anyhow that's where He was a convict. He came back after revolution and organized these bandits. We heard about it and they started to come up to our colonies. The colonies on the outskirts. You know we have 60 villages and on the outskirts they were attacked already. Then some of our leading men at that time. I was young at that time. They said, "Why sitting here and just waiting until the bandits come and overtake us.?" They did terrible things to our people I don't want to go into detail. But "Why sitting here? Why don't you organize yourselves? And keep the bandits out until the Russian army comes. Til the Red Army come and take it over." I mean we don't want to attack anybody but just keep them out. My brother was 7 years older than I am so he was in the first world war as a Red Cross.... And he was home and he was interested in this defence too. So he joined the Selbstschutz. And in our home in Halbstadt there were about 120 young men armed

themselves. And it went through all the 60 different villages. The young men organized themselves and armed themselves against the bandits not against the army. So it was November, December right before Christmas I remember well, they drilled, they trained. My brother went there too. He had a rifle. All at once they said that they were coming up again. They're taking our house search. Our colonies. So they were put on wagons, from all over, hundreds and hundreds. They all went out to the place where the bandits attached. It was a big Russian village. They call it
It was right close to our Mennonite settlement. That was the center of that attack when they came out of that village. My brother told us right away in the morning they were sleeping, the bandits there. And our German Selbstschutz they went to throw them out of , the village. That was the first battle of our Selbstschutz against these bandits of Makhno (?) and they were thrown out. So we lost a few men. They lost a few men. It was quite a battle. I don't say that it was right. I'm just stating the facts. Maybe we should have depended on God more and said God would protect us. But that was the sentiment at that time. People thought that was the right thing to do. And I don't hear hardly anybody even from our leading men talking against it, at that time. So they were thrown out. And the result was they got so scared. They were really---you see defenceless people, they were big heroes. If they got any resistence they were cowards these bandits. And they never attacked us again. January, end of February, so for four months practically we lived pretty secure and we never had even a chance to fight with them. They never came. They got so scared from this one attack. So all at once they started end of February. They started from the one side. They became a mass. You couldn't figure out what it was. So our Selbstschutz was sent there, and there was no match against it. We found out later on, by February, that the Red Army was coming up. And instead of fighting the Makhno bandits they took them into the army. "We all want peace so let's go together. We are brothers." And they integrated the Makhno bandits into their own units. And instead of fighting against the Makhno bandits there our Selbstschutz was fighting against the Red Army. And there was of course no match. There was just a few days. Of course they had artillery, and machine guns and we were just a small bunch there. There was no match against the Red Army. Then I remember the end of February all at once they made alarm in our village. I was a boy at that time, about 16, and the Makhno. We didn't know that. We didn't know who was coming. Later on we found out it was the Red Army. At that time we thought they were coming in mass, and breaking through to revenge. So everybody started running. We had horses and wagon and we got everybody to the wagon and we just running away. Of course we didn't get very far. They were overtaking them. But

then the commander of the Red Army said, "Come back. You will have no harm. The situation is under control." But the thing is this, if the Red Army, well at that time, took the villages so, that was alright. But if the units of Makhno bandits were some, well they were the old bandits and so..... We got into the hands of the Makhno army. Were really trimmed. I remember just not today when we came back to our village after running away. We locked up the house and ran away. But after three days we came back because the Red Army said, "You can come back." See all the villagers ran but they couldn't get very far because they overtook. So we came back and oh the approach to town was all with sentries and there was a bunch of bandits. You had to go over a railway crossing and right at the railway crossing there were maybe 8 or 10 armed soldiers and they were Maknoes. So they wanted to shoot my father. "Ah, ah you run away? You were against us. You are our enemy. Now we're going to fix you up." They took him out and we thought they were going to shoot him. Just the father. We were in the wagon. But finally they changed their mind. But I think that was God's grace. And they said, "Alright we'll take you into town and let the commander make the decision about the shooting." So then we got some sentries . We had two wagons that time. And we came into the town and it was swarming with military. All kinds of it. And we had two, strangely enough, Mennonites. That's the same story. They were French. And these two Reds they saved our lives. Because my father had given them the horses . Just a few days before they asked us for horses for something. I don't know what they wanted with them. And when we came into the government building there, the yard with the sentries. You know with the escort. You know these two armed said, "These are our friends. Let them go." And that saved our lives. So we said. And they O.K. and just let him go. So we turned around and went home. And that's it. Wonderful things sometimes happened.

PAETKAU: Did you stay in Halbstadt then for the rest of the Civil War? The Revolution?

FEHDERAU: Yes we stayed then. Father died then. And we allowed for awhile to remain in the house. Then all at once there was a big military unit coming into the head, more or less meet--- you see I can't go into detail because when the Makhno, after the Reds came in it took just about a half a year then there was the White Army was organized. Ever heard about the White Army? See all the offices and all those that opposed the Red they fled to the south from big cities way to the south to the Crimea. You heard about that? I see you are well informed about this. And they organized an army there. They called it the White Army. Well as against the Red Army most likely. You see the White Army opposed the Red Army . Those were the offices and lot of ordinary people that were against the Red Regime. But this White Army was supported by the allies.

FEHDERAU (cont'd)

See England, France--I don't know about America so much but England and France mainly. They thought they could support this White Army and drive the Reds out. That would be like an ally for the English you know, the British. And they supplied them with tanks, ammunition and even uniforms. My brother you know he fled into the Crimea after--and he joined then the Denikin Army, the General Denikin. He was a truck driver. He didn't want to take up arms but he was--he thought that Russia should be freed from the Communist rule. So he fought, well not fought, he supported it. He couldn't stay there so he ran right into Crimea. Well we stayed there and he went right into the Crimea. As a young man you know you could get ahead easier. So they organized themselves and in 1919 they attacked, and we had another upheaval. The Red Army was thrown out and the Denikin Army marched up. Can you follow me? And they occupied our territory and they went up and they took Kharkov, Ural--I don't know if you are familiar with these names? And they went right almost close to Moscow. That was for one side. Now we were free again. See what I mean? Half a year we were on the Reds and then we were freed again on the Denikin--well we considered them our friends and they treated us very good. So they went up and up and looked as if the whole Red Army would be finished. Besides that there was another army coming from Siberia. I don't know if you ever heard about Calchuck(?)--Calchuck(?) was a Russian General. He organized in Siberia an army. And that army was far larger than Denikin's army, the White Army. That was about 2,000,000 soldiers he had there. And they were coming up over the Ural mountains and they were coming right into European Russia. And from this side here Denikin, you see they took this--and my brother was in the Caucasus, this is Siberia. (I am pointing out this but---illustrated--I think you can mention the map--this is Siberia, and this is the Caucasus, this is the Crimea, and this is where we lived in the Ukraine.) And they took everything out near the Stalingrad. That was used to be called Tsaritayn. Tsaritayn used to be the name of Stalingrad. Here the Calchuck(?) army, here the White Army of Denikin and there was just, remember it was right here he told us later on they were just about ready to join. And Teretsky was the leader of Red Army. So he threw all his money what he had into this sector here. And he succeeded not that they didn't join these two armies, that was a downfall. They got such a blow then, here and there on both sides that he within half a year destroyed all the armies. It was unbelieveable. We could hardly believe it. Calchuck(?) he suffered such a defeat. I read a book by English author. He said if people would know what happened then never in history was an army so totally defeated as Calchuck(?) army. That was in November, 1919. The Siberian winter was just setting in. Can you imagine this army was in a retreat. I read

Kulchak

FEHDERAU (cont'd) quite a bit about the retreat of the Calchuck(?)army. It was unbelieveable what they suffered. The whole practically 2 million soldiers they perished; in blizzards. They came in villages and it was far below zero. You imagine the Siberian winters. They came in. They made camp fires. The people that sat around the campfires they were alive and all the rest they were frozen, the bodies. They piled them up like cord wood. Just remnants they came into China--just remnants. And there was quite a number of them in China. Refugees. But that army was wiped out, finished by the end of the next. Then the Denikin army they went way out. But while they were out there the Makhno bandits starts to organize again, and they're back. See they were so scratched out already and they didn't have that many soldiers, the White Army. Now the front was stretching out over a 1,000 miles. You imagine they haven't got the soldiers to hold these lines. Then they stopped the conscript. And what did they do? Theyconscripted peasants. And they couldn't depend on them. And the result was the whole White Army was weakened while it was first a very efficient
It was weakened by these conscripts from the peasants and some of them with Red leanings. Then in the back this Makhno bandits. It was in November again the whole thing started to fall apart, the whole army, and we saw that. My brother told us--it's finished. He came through one night about 9:00 his unit was coming through there. And he asked the officer if he could visit us. And he came and he said , "We are retreating. We are finished." So they retreated. There was just a remnant of the Denikin army that came into the Crimea yet. Well that was the end of it. My brother died then in a fight. And there was another upheaval but I don't think I should talk about it because next year the English and the French thought they could reorganize on a different command, they could make another attempt to fight the Reds. So there was General Wrangel. That's a German name but he was a Russian general. And he organized another army. Next spring they attacked again, in 1920. And again our colonies were taken over by Barnaul(?) . Now you can imagine how poor we were after all these back and forth, the front going over us back and forth? We were so tired and sick of any activities. But he lasted only about 3-4 months. Then the Red soldiers came and threw them out and everything was pushed into the Black Sea. We were terribly massacred there.

PAETKAU: So what were conditions like then for you in the village after this was over?

FEHDERAU: Well then the reign of terror started again. You see they really, now that they were entrenched you know--now that they really had the power the Communists (end of 1920-21)then they really put on the power. See then they started fighting against the church. After a little while they had--see the

FEHDERAU (cont'd): Communist doctrine is; religion is opium for the people. It just makes them dumb, keeps them ignorant. That's what they say. And when you think of the church--I don't want to condemn them or anything, but the orthodox church they didn't really preach them there the full gospel. It was an established church. It was the government church and they weren't in close cooperation with the government with the Tsar government. And their idea was to keep the people under. I'm not a revolutionary but facts are facts. And we saw that many times. A young bright peasant boy he never could get out of the grade schools no matter how smart he was. The Russian orthodox church they had their parish schools you know. It was church schools, not government schools. He saw to it that that boy never got out in the government education because they knew as soon as they got education they would get into the universities and then college education and would join the revolutionaries. Because they saw the peasants how they lived. They had cases where they had gone to universities. Each one was a revolutionary see because they knew how the peasants were living. So of course the church they worked in cooperation with the government. See that's why the fury of the Reds turned against the church. It's one of the reasons you know. They're anti-religious, that's without questions. But then they saw how they worked in cooperation with the Tsar government and that's why they especially were against the priests. And the churches were destroyed and priests shots, monasteries broken up and it was really bad because they are anti-religious. You know that much about Communism? They think that is opium for the people.

PAETKAU: Now. I understand there was quite a famine and you mentioned that before too, these years following. Then there was a new program called NEP that was instituted. Can you tell me something about that?

FEHDERAU: Yes. You see when the Reds took over completely with all the Civil War was over, 1920. The last remnants of the Wrangel Army, the Denikin Army, everything was cleaned up. Now there were the messes and then they really started to put on pressure. But first of all they would take everything, well the grain, livestock, everything they would take away from the peasants. The result was again a famine. A second one. Now you see the livestock during the upheaval and so on , like horse and cows they were all destroyed. So the farmer couldn't put the grain into the ground. Just let's say, a fraction of it he could. Then the seeds were taken away. Then that little bit that he had left, what he had he ate because he was hungry. So there was not enough grain for seed. That little bit what was really sown at that time, 1920-21 then we had two terrible dry summers on top of it, 1921-22. These were the terrible years. Now that little bit what I said what was sown it came up but then there was no rain. You take Europe now they had the same thing and in England and in Germany. The grain was that high and then it dried

FEHDERAU (cont'd): up and that's what happened there. I remember well I was 18 years at that time and the fields they were just dead and dried up. Just about maybe 10 inches or so. So that meant there was no harvest. And there was nothing shipped in from outside, very little at least. 1921-22 were terrible years on top of all the terror what we experienced, then the famine yet. You couldn't buy, you couldn't---we traded. We had left some things because we hid--I didn't go into that but we hid lot of these things. We dug out big holes and we put our best things in the ground. And that's how we kept a few things. During the famine that was the only way to get some grain. So we dug these things up and we got on the market and we were able to trade. Money was nothing. But it was the billions. It went into payroll money, millions and then billions. I have a few hundred million pieces. It was worth nothing. It was just maybe a dollar worth in hundred million. I mean in actual value. Then we went to the market and we traded and so we survived. Then the Mennonite Central Committee, you know, the Mennonites in America they heard about our plight, our conditions there. And they sent representatives over through letters and so on they sent over and investigated. I remember well when the first one came, Miller, Orie Miller and Hiebert and he spoke to our people there and investigated. Then they had to get permission from the government to start a relief program there. You see it was not so easy to obtain a government permission to start because they were suspicious of all foreigners. England held the anti-Communists you know and France and America was anti-Communist. So they didn't want to let anybody into the country. But they received permission finally after long, long negotiations. Then I remember when the first shipment of flour and stuff started to come in. And they organized kitchens, food kitchens. Well in each town there was a food kitchen and you would get stamps. Only those that had nothing and were starving because the people were going around just like the flies, dying. Not so much our Mennonites you know. There were some Mennonites dying but not so many. But the Russian villages they were more affected. Somehow we managed to survive, somehow. There were not too many Mennonites that they really were dying. They were starving but not dying of starvation. They just managed somehow. Then they organized the kitchen. But only those that were most affected really starving, they got stamps. Our family, just mother was old and she got one ration. I never got one. We had just so that we could survive you know. Not too much but we didn't really starve. So that went on for awhile. But then they organized another plan and through that plan our family had gained quite a bit. And that, we called it food drafts. I don't know if you heard of that. Well you see if anybody had relatives in Canada or the United States he would write to them or perhaps they would know that and they would pay

FEHDERAU: $10.00, that was a norm. $10.00 into the Mennonite Central Committee. And they had warehouses. Like in our village they had a warehouse with flour, sugar, canned stuff, milk. And I would get a letter in Russia with that certificate. So I took that $10.00 certificate and went to the warehouse, the MCC warehouse and they would give me $10.00 worth of goods. Oh that helped us a lot.

PAETKAU: That was quite a bit in those days.

FEHDERAU: That was quite a bit. Now it doesn't seem to be a lot but I forgot exactly but I think it was 20 lbs. of flour and 10 lbs. of sugar and some condensed milk, cocoa, rice. It was very good. So, we our family we had an uncle here and he was a preacher in Kansas. And he sent us 17 food drafts. That really supplemented what we had. We had a little bit. We had a cow. That gave us a little milk and a little butter. But this extra what we got from our uncle there that really was a big help, a big boost. So that we survived while a lot of people they suffered much more than our family. I can just say for my own family. That's how we survived. We traded in some stuff for grain and then with those 17 food drafts so that we survived till 1923. Then the thing started to get much better. You see the government they saw . You asked about the NEP. The government saw that their policy with the farmers was absolutely wrong. See they were ruining the farms. They were ruining the whole economy of the Soviet Union. So Trotsky and Lenin--Lenin was alive at the time. He died in 1924. They sat down and said,"We have to do something. I mean we can't go on like that; we destroy our whole farm and whole country. So we're going to relieve our policy a little bit. Now we still think that should be done but just to give him a breathing spell we'll give them a little more freedom." And that is NEP. N
The New Economic Policies. That's the short letters of NEP. "We're going to give them a little more freedom." And it worked wonders. They introduced it, I don't know for sure, at the beginning 1923. But then in 1923 we felt effects already, in the summer of 1923. We had a good crop what was sown out. Then they gave us new money. Instead of one hundred million or billion dollars they start to give us good money. They called it
But the 10 rubels was 1 . And it was good solid money. It's good till now. I think it's the same, they never changed it. It didn't devaluate. It was good solid money what they gave us in 1923. So that helped us a lot. At least when you got money you had something in hand and it wouldn't be devalued the next night, But I tell you one instance how we lost money through devaluation. Somehow my mother had one diamond ring and we were hard pinched and we needed a cow. And one diamond ring at that time could buy a cow. But how to get the transfer. Now you have to sell the ring and it pretty dangerous to sell diamonds at that time because the Reds had taken

everything out. So father he went and he somehow sold to a Jew for one million rubels. That was at that time. But now we have to find a cow. So he went around and around. One week went by and then the second week and the rubel was falling and falling. You know what we could buy from one million rubel? Forty pounds of flour instead of the cow. You see that's how the money was devalued, day by day, day by day. And my father was frantic. He went from one village to another to get a cow and nobody would sell a cow. Well what should he do with the one million. He shouldn't have sold the ring in the first place but you know we needed a cow. And that's the way it went. That's just one instance you know what devaluation meant for us at that time. It was terrible. So in 1922 we experienced a lot of things. We were thrown out of the house and we had to move into a very poor location. But then 1922 it was in March or April that we first heard about immigration . I told you about NEP you know how it effected the whole economy went up and the farmers started to get more interest in raising stuff. So the whole economy started to revive. But then in 1923 we first, 1922 really, we first heard about the immigration. That there was a possibility of immigrating. We had a committee there; Mennonite Central Committee they organized a committee to supervise all activities, like immigration, MCC work and so on. They sent out a questionnaire; how many would be interested to leave the country. And we got the first questionnaire. It was the first time we heard about it, about April 1952. My father was old and he was a broken man at that time. He died just about the same year and he was not very much interested in going. He said, "What shall I do? I am an old man. What shall I do in a new country? I can't work. I'll be starving, I may as well starve here." It seemed as if things started to get a little better. But all the rest of the family like mother and we and I we said, "No, let's register. Let's put our names in and see what happens." We had to pay something down and then register. So we sent this questionnaire in and we are willing to immigrate. So they had a list. After awhile they compiled a list of all those that wanted to go but then they weeded this list out. They took the most severe cases first. Just like those that didn't have a means of support . Like we lost our farm. We lost our house in the city there. So we were really displaced persons so to say, while there were a lot of farmers they still had their farm. Even if some of the land was taken away they still had the means of survival. We more or less of the town, in the city, we couldn't. So we were put on the first, at the top of the list. That's why we had the first chance to go. Then we started working and I guess you know about all these--how they went to Moscow and how they worked--

B. B. Janz he went to the and the different government agencies and he finally got the permission. It was God's grace. It was a miracle . They approved the immigration first. In 1923 they approved a list of 3,000 people, but they were from the Old Country. And then later on they approved another list of 5,000 for the Molotschna colony. I told you. 1924. Our family was included in this list. So we stuck to it you know, we wanted to go. I had a sick brother and he wasn't able to immigrate. So out of the family my father died and the sick brother he has no means of going; there was no chance of going. So mother said, "We can't leave sick brother there. So we're going to stay there." But finally only two sisters and I remained of the family of eight. We really went through and we got our passports and then in June, 1924, the 26th of June the first bunch went out. And we were in the first bunch, like I and my sisters. I was 20 years old then, born in 1904, immigrated in 1924. We had the chance then to leave the country. Well there's a lot more what you could say about the conditions, about religious condition. I went to school all the time, right up to 1924 I was in school. If I would have joined the Communist Party, some of my comrades did, but they had to give up all their religion. They have to give all their belief, everything up, because if you wanted to go ahead in the Communist state you had to be a Communist. And you have to give up all what you stand for, as a Christian and so on. And I could see no future there. Perhaps--I went through the normal school so to say; it's a different and some of my comrades they got teaching jobs there. I had a good command of the Russian language. So I mean if I would have chosen and some did, some stayed there. For awhile I would have been perhaps not too bad off. I would have been teaching there. But in the long run around 1930 Stalin clamped down. He eliminated all enemy, well they called it enemy of the state. That means all that had background like my--see what I mean? Like the Mennonites that was enough accusation you see. They were not dependable people. We were not dependable people. The government, the Russian government couldn't depend on a man like me suppose, because our background was They called it only . And that meant anything. You could have maybe two acre land but you were classified as an enemy of the state. means a son of a well-to-do. If you were classified in this class, I mean at that time there was no future for us. So I never regreted I mean to get out. I would have been sent to Siberia. All my classmates they all perished there. They were sent out. So the Mennonites they didn't have no chance. A lot of them went to Siberia and survived there. And now way out in Siberia, they survived. And I got letters. I got a letter from my best friend and he was teaching in Russia all these years. I got a letter about a year ago. He is

FEHDERAU (cont'd): pensioned off now and what--he is a way out in Siberia, in the north. Somehow over there they were more lenient, like different from the South where the centre of activities was more or less. Well that's about it.

PAETKAU: When you came to Canada where did you go then?

FEHDERAU: Well I came right here to Waterloo County. I landed in Waterloo here. That was the first group. See in the first group there were 1,300; 5,000 altogether. But in the first group there were around 1,200-1,300. See it was in June, well till we landed it was 19th of July; it was going into the winter. And what could they do the MCC, the immigration authorities, our --what could they do with these 1,300 people? They had to be placed somewhere. So the farmers here, the Mennonite farmers in Waterloo County and surrounding district they were really very good to us and they consented to take us in for the winter. See it's not so easy to place 5,000 people all at once, where could you dump them? Government didn't help us that time. But there was one stipulation. We couldn't go into the cities, and that was a big drawback because that meant that we couldn't work in the city and make our living there. So one year on the farm that was a requisite. So we landed in Waterloo and the farmers from all over, Tavistock and Hawkesville and what not all. They all came over here and that was all organized that each would take a man or a family and so on. It was very nice. I think that this is a show of Christianity, isn't it? I mean to take in a family of say 5-6 people on a farm. But they had to work; the man had to work on the farm and the woman in the kitchen. I was taken by a Freeport farmer by the name of Ben Shantz. He was looking for a hired man for July. I was 20 years of age. He went around and he looked around for a young man and he asked me if I wanted to go with him. So my sisters went to different places but I went with him and I worked there for the summer. Then at the end of the summer he said, "Nick, you can stay here for the winter but I can't pay you anything." And he paid me only $35.00 a month. He says, "I have one hired man, he's an older man and I need just one man." I was the second one and he says, "I can't keep you for the winter unless you want to stay." Well I needed money because we went granted, the CPR granted us--granted--I had $130 debts to pay and I had no clothes. You see our clothes they didn't fit here at all. I couldn't possibly wear them here and they were old too. We had no way of buying them the last while. So the Lord led wonderfully in my life. I would say that. I had a friend and he was working in Freeport Sanitorium and he lived right across the street from Ben Shantz. He heard that I had no work so he came over to me one evening and he said, "Now listen here, go over to the Sanitorium there they need men in the kitchen.

FEHDERAU (cont'd): To work in the kitchen for the winter. So I went over right away. So Miss Bingeman she hired me. Right the next day I had the job. I didn't lose a day. This was wonderful. See that was outside the city so they didn't have objections to that. So I worked 4 months on the farm and then I got this job there in the kitchen, help the cook there. It was a good job only I had to work Sundays and different things like that. Otherwise it was clean and -- . You did anything at that time as long as you made your living. I got $30.00 too a month. They let me off in the middle of the week.

PAETKAU: How did you find the attitude towards immigrants here in Canada when you came?

FEHDERAU: Well I couldn't say that I suffered but every once in awhile--there's all kinds of people. And every once in awhile you would hear, "Oh, you're a foreigner." But it didn't bother me too much because you know from who said it. But on the whole people were nice. It was once in awhile, you would meet these everywhere. Perhaps jealousy or something like that. But later on they would be called DP's. At that time 1924 they would perhaps say 'Pollock' or "You foreigner" but on the whole I didn't feel any--they were good to us. Especially the Mennonite friends here. The Mennonites that lived here--there was a Mrs. Good and she lived on Cameron St. in Kitchener. She was a wonderful woman. She belonged to that church on Lancaster, that missionary church on Lancaster St. Ever heard about that church? It's not a Mennonite now but it used to be. They changed to Missionary. Well she really looked after my sisters. First my sisters and then through my sisters I got to know them and they invited me into their houses and they were, oh, they were so helpful. Then later on after a year they had sons working in an office--Gordon Good and Ira Good--and I got to know them and we got friendly and they got me a job at Kauffman Rubber factory then later on. So I got into the city. That's in summer 1925. See the first year we couldn't work there. So that's the way I got into the city.

PAETKAU: Where did you go to church these first years?

FEHDERAU: Well the first while I went to the church where Mrs. Good --Mr. Good he was preacher there. I couldn't understand very well that's the trouble. I wouldn't mind--they had practically the same convictions as we had. It was not much difference. Whenever I could--well you see I had to work Sundays but Sunday nights I was off. They would take me to the church. Or every other Sunday morning I was off so they took me into their church too. But then every so often, this was not regular, but you see there was 1,300 Mennonites here. Every so often, we had some preachers

FEHDERAU (cont'd): amongst our immigrants. There was a Friesen, a Reimer, a Wiens and there were good preachers. They were preachers in Russian and they came over here too. They got together and they said, "Why don't you organize meetings on Sunday afternoons?" So the Mennonite churches in Canada here, in Kitchener and surrounding district they allowed us to use their churches for special meetings. Like King St. East church, First Mennonite Church and Breslau, in Waterloo, Erb St. Mennonite church. They allowed us afternoons to have German services by our own people. Oh there's some people, Canadian people that attended too. Out of curiosity you know, but mostly immigrants. We went on for maybe a year like that. You see we had nothing organized. But during that time a little group came together at St. Jacobs and they organized the Mennonite Brethren Church. The Ontario Mennonite Brethren Church. There was maybe--I wasn't there but there was about 10-12 people and they were the first one to organize. There was a Mr. Friesen he was the preacher. He was there with Wiens, Reimer and they organized this little group. And they called themselves the Mennonite Brethren Church, like a continuation of--well you see we have two fractions of Mennonites. The so called General Conference and the Mennonite Brethren. You are Mennonite Brethren?

PAETKAU: No, I'm General Conference.

FEHDERAU: General Conference, yah. I don't know -- they organized in Waterloo later on; Mr. Janzen. But we went together. We didn't make a distinction at that time. We were immigrants and that's what's all what's to it. We didn't make a distinction there. So all preachers and the General Conference preachers they were all working together and they were preaching--one Sunday he and the next Sunday from the other church. That's how we went. Then we started--starting the Missionary Church on Lancaster Street. That's where we started our extra meetings, Sunday afternoons, every Sunday afternoon. That was around 1926. Then we started together there, afternoons, every afternoon. And from there Kitchener MB church was started. Then in the fall of 1926 we thought that we should have a morning service. So we started looking around if we could find--I was working at the Kauffman Rubber already since 1925. And a lot of people came to Kitchener and started working here. Some domestic, some girls working here. So we started looking around if we could get a place for worship for Sunday morning. So we found on King St. E. around there where the Washerama is, that block. It's changed now, there's different stores now. But around that vicinity and on the third floor we found a nice hall and we organized ourselves and we started our meetings there Sunday mornings. That was the beginning. In the fall of 1926. We rented that but we could just use it Sunday mornings because during the week nights there

FEHDERAU (cont'd): was other groups using the hall. Later on we found out that the same room was used by the Spiritualist. Yah, all at once, we couldn't figure out there were heavy curtains, really heavy curtains in front of the windows and even shutters, even plywood shutters. And we couldn't figure out why all this. Why they make it so dark the rooms. Later on we found out there was a group of Spiritualists met in there. But we found out then later on that they stopped. And the minister says, "What was wrong?" And he said, "I don't know." They said"it didn't work so well after you moved. " (Chuckle, chuckle)

PAETKAU: Wrong spirit.

FEHDERAU: Wrong spirit, yah.

PAETKAU: Was there ever any idea of staying with the General Conference, like the Mennonite Brethren and the General Conference and the immigrants or why did they go their separate ways again?

FEHDERAU: We had for awhile joint meetings in Waterloo. There was a hall on King St. in Waterloo, King St. North. We have east and west but they have south and north. And there was an old Legion Hall, I think it was a Legion Hall or something . And we had joint meetings there. You see then each group became more or less independent. I mean each one had his own characteristics and so on and I guess they felt--I wasn't the leader at that time, but I guess they felt it would be better to just have separate meetings . So that's how the Waterloo church--you go to the Waterloo church? Yah, George St. And--but I often attended George St. church at that time. Jacob Janzen he was pretty good pastor, good preacher; Bishop Janzen. But then that's how it went. I mean we visited quite a bit the first while but finally each one thought perhaps better off to have it's own.

PAETKAU: Did Bishop Janzen work with the Mennonite Brethren people as well or did he just work with the General Conference?

FEHDERAU: They got along fine with our Brethren. I don't heard of any difficulties, not in Kitchener. I don't know maybe in some places they had difficulties but didn't have any difficulties. You see our preachers they were pretty intelligent. They were learned people and Mr. Janzen he was intelligent man and all these differences could be straightened out. But we felt it would be better if we would each pursue their own. And then in the long run it worked out fine. I mean, we can work side by side without difficulties.

PAETKAU: How did you find the process of getting used to Canada, a new way of life, learning a new language?

FEHDERAU: Well you see that's always difficult . See I was 20 yrs. of age and I had no English schooling. That was the drawback. Let's say if I had been around 12 years old I would get some schooling yet. I would get some education. The advantage in my case was that I went into the Freeport Sanitorium. If I had stayed on a farm I would have been speaking Pennsylvania Dutch. And that is no language at all as far as I am concerned. It is a language but it wouldn't help me anything. So I went to the Freeport Sanitorium and that's just if you want to learn to swim you have to jump into the water and that was the case with me. There was a cook he was an English man and all the rest of the help was English in the kitchen there so I had to do the best I could. So I believe that's a good way of learning more or less. But it's the spelling that gives me--I call it quite hard because--You know some words are so similar like father and farther The German father is with the v you know and the English is with the f. Sometimes that caused me a lot of difficulties. That is, the spelling. Maybe I didn't get enough grammar. I should have concentrated on grammar a little bit more. To get the basics of it. My son is good in grammar. He deals with about 25 different languages, as a linguist. His grammar is pretty good. See I went to night schools but you can't learn too much in night schools. It's just a very short period and all what you learn is perhaps a little bit of reading and writing. Writing as such isn't so difficult because we use the same letters. It's different for a Russian or Slavik people where they have different letters whereas from the German I knew the alphabet, the English alphabet. So I mean there was no difficulty only the spelling that caused me more difficulties than anything else. But otherwise I had no difficulties getting used to the Canadian way of life. Coming out--see if I would have come out of Germany or any of these countries with a higher standard of living--see during the good years we were alright but after coming out after this revolution and all these upheavals it was quite a relief to be in a country where there was law and order and where the people are friendly and all that. I had no difficulties whatsoever to get used to the Canadian way of life. I am thankful to God that I am in this country and had a chance to bring up a family . They're all married and all have children already.

PAETKAU: I found Mr. Fehderau to be a very interesting and knowledgeable man with whom to converse about experiences in Russia. He indicated to me that he likes to read and he enjoys writing as well in his spare time, and the conversation indicated to me that he was widely read in the area of Mennonite history, particularly Russian Mennonite history. Perhaps his information is garnered to some extent from those kinds of sources. His experiences, details which he shared with me seemed to have been thought through. At some points I thought he was

trying to be somewhat apologetic for what had happened in Russia, for instance the Selbstschutz. He tried very hard to explain as best he could the situations to make them clear and that indicated to me that he had worked these experiences through and that perhaps they were seen from as a result of that process rather than as directly from that time. However he possesses a wealth of information as is indicated by a manuscript he has written entitled "Skizzen aus meinem Leben in Sued Russland vor, während und nach der Revolution in den Jahren 1904-1924. Erinnerungen aus meiner Kindheit und Jugend-jahren von N. J. Fehderau." A manuscript of 200 pages detailing his life and experiences in Russia which will be a good supplement to this tape. He also indicated that he has written and is in the process of writing memoirs about his life in Canada. So that would also be a valuable source but it is not complete. The first mentioned document "Skizzen aus meinem Leben in Sued Russland" will be on deposit in the archives of Conrad Grebel College. There is also another document which he mentioned, "First Impressions of Canada" which apparently he has written for the Historical Society at the request of persons involved there which also may be on deposit at Conrad Grebel College but would need to be located.