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¹⁹ *Бачинский, П.П.* Эммануил Ионович Квиринг / П.П.Бачинский, В.Э.Квиринг, М.Б.Перельман. – М., 1968. – С. 129-131.

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THE SELBSTSCHUTZ: A MENNONITE ARMY IN UKRAINE 1918-1919

В статті досліджено участь самозахисних збройних формувань менонітів в громадянській війні. На основі внутрішньоменонітських джерел розкрито їх неоднозначна роль у процесі розвитку громадянського конфлікту на Півдні України.

On 3 March 1918 Trotskii and his fellow delegates at Brest Litovsk negotiated a treaty between the new Lenin government and the Central powers which would cede Ukraine to its nationalist claimants and their German-Austrian allies who controlled the key portions of the region by now. Viewed as hated foreign invaders by most Ukrainians, the Austro-German forces arrived in the south Ukrainian Mennonite colonies as liberators from their Bolshevik over-lords, and much-needed force for order and stability¹. By 5 April Ekaterinoslav was in their hands, Alexandrovsk fell on the 15, and Melitopol two days later. On 19 April at 1:30 p.m. two officers, Lindemeier and Hoer, entered Halbstadt in the Molotschna colony to announce that a company of German soldiers would be arriving by train momentarily².

Large crowds had gathered at the train station to greet the new arrivals, delayed for several hours, they learned, by a tumultuous welcome and a meal of abundance in the village of Lichtenau. When the train did arrive in Halbstadt at 5:30 p.m., cheering onlookers waved an overjoyed welcome. As one reporter put it, "The greeting at the arrival itself is hard to describe.

One had to be present there"³. Several hundred soldiers and their officers remained to be lodged in Halbstadt, as well as Neuhalbstadt and Muntau. Two hundred horses were brought to Halbstadt, presumably for the use of the Germans during their stay in the colony⁴.

Arming the Colonies

Surprised and almost overwhelmed by such a heart-warming and supportive reception, the German forces determined nevertheless to rid the area of any Reds who might resist their presence⁵. Quickly they gained the assistance of a number of German and Mennonite colonists, some of whom had already gone to Melitopol to obtain weapons for self-defense and protection⁶. Even before the arrival of the German occupation troops some Mennonites, younger men mostly, had been planning military measures to deal with the pillaging and daylight robbery which had become so commonplace throughout the region⁷. Well-to-do property owners had encouraged the move. Village residents on the whole, had high hopes now of recovering lost property and goods, and looked to their new protectors to restore the pre-Revolution community patterns as completely as possible⁸.

Collaboration of Mennonite villagers with the German troops occurred in other settlements as well. When, early on in the invasion, the Germans discovered through advance scouts that several Mennonite villages of the Baratov-Schlakhtin colony faced imminent attacks from nearby Russian villagers, the German lieutenant entered the village, captured the president and had him shot. Russians who had participated in gaining goods through local confiscations were punished also. The Mennonites had offered to serve as guides and provided wagons for this penal expedition. The Russian peasants would later recall these actions. Revenge for such deeds no doubt played a part in their later raids.

Mennonite young men were invited from the outset to assist in policing the area, and to accept German military training to aid the army in its longer-range occupation duties⁹. In the Jasykovo settlement north of Chor-titza German officers conscripted all men between the age of 15 and 35 to serve in local units of defense. A cavalry unit of 10-12 men and a machine gun unit stood on guard in every village, with the Germans supplying guns and ammunition. Each local village commander became a subordinate to the self-defense commander in charge of the entire area. When the Molot-schna volost zemstvo committee met on 23 April under the chairmanship of H.H.Schroeder, delegates agreed that a self-defense organization for the colony had become an absolute necessity. A proposal by the German Cap-

tain Mueller found unanimous support, and leadership of such a unit was placed in the hands of J.F.Sudermann and two assistants, M.J.Sekerinsky and A.K.Tichonov¹⁰.

Religious and other leaders viewed with some alarm the spirit of almost eager collaboration with the earlier Bolshevik takeover on the part of some, and much more so now with the German occupation. However efforts to resist such trends, were only partly successful. Over-zealous young men who wanted to appoint themselves to policing functions were exhorted by ministers, teachers and others to desist. The teachers of the Halbstadt *Kommerzschule* also forbade their students to take part in house searches along with German soldiers¹¹. A few courageous ministers such as the tent missionary Jacob Dyck, a teacher, Benjamin B.Janz, and people like Jacob H.Janzen (both the latter from Tiege) openly called for strict nonresistant refusal to take up arms in any form¹². At Grigorievka a majority of men led by persons like Jacob Krahn and the minister Jacob Berg successfully withstood the efforts of the local German commander to create self-defense units for settlement, and they had done so despite threats of beatings for those who refused¹³.

In actual fact, a few such units had been in the process of forming even before the Germans arrived. In the village of Tiege in the Sagradowka colony, the regular watchmen had armed themselves with rods and clubs. When the Germans came closer, several men were asked to go and ask for guns, which were given, and which made it possible to plan an official self-defense unit for the village¹⁴. Several other units which had grouped in secrecy at this time however heeded the counsel of Benjamin Unruh and others to refrain from "cleaning out the nest" of hostile neighbours as they had threatened to do¹⁵.

By early summer regular defense units had been established in the Mennonite villages of Gnadenfeld, Tiegenhagen and others, as well as in the German Lutheran community of Prischib. Military exercises continued throughout July and August under the direction of Lieutenant Leroux of the 182nd Saxon Infantry Regiment headquartered at Halbstadt. Some of the Mennonite units performed gymnastic feats at the soldiers' celebrations known as *Ludendorffeste* held in Halbstadt and other centres during the time of the German presence¹⁶.

Military Collaboration Challenged

The question of nonresistance as a point of doctrine, and the practical issue of whether or not to arm for protecting their communities, surfaced as a special concern at the conference of Mennonite congregations held at

Lichtenau on 30 June to 2 July 1918¹⁷. During the afternoon session of the first day David H. Epp announced that the assembly must address itself specifically to a directive from the Berdiansk office of the German military commander requesting that a self-defense militia be formally established in all German colonies of south Russia. A reply from the Mennonite communities would be awaited by July 4, and with it the names of all congregations which opposed this military measure in any way¹⁸.

To focus discussion Jacob Janzen read a paper entitled "Our Nonresistance", maintaining at the outset that the religious wars of the Middle Ages and later had not served the Kingdom of God. In fact, the Anabaptists, forerunners of the Mennonites during the Reformation, had rejected the use of all weapons. These congregations, said Janzen, based their position on many Scriptures, although there seemed to be no biblical injunction directly forbidding military service. While Mennonites had been blessed for their nonresistant stand, Janzen contended that they had now as a whole abandoned this position. By rejecting warfare, some had hoped to rescue the principle, but if it did not extend to self-defense, such a position could not be authentic, or justified. Therefore, he stated: "We must either repent and become nonresistant again, or else, divided into the armed and the unarmed, continue to worship together, and allow the matter of nonresistance to become a matter of the individual conscience"¹⁹.

An ensuing debate, extended well into the second day, dramatically illustrated the shredded consensus in the Russian Mennonite community. While few of the Mennonites present at the meeting really wanted to drop the principle of nonresistance as such, several delegates did call for "realism" to acknowledge that the current situation might require a unique application of traditional pacifism which would countenance self-defense as a civic and Christian responsibility for the community as a whole.

It was thus argued by Heinrich Janz and Aron Toews, for example, that one must differentiate between the principles of the Kingdom of God, and the principles of this worldly kingdom. In matters of the former one must remain nonresistant, of course, but with respect to the latter one is also obligated to support law and order²⁰. Missionary John Wiens added that one must recognize the views of those who find their duty to defend the fatherland supported by the Scriptures also, as for example in Romans 15 which states that all authority is instituted by God²¹.

A long-standing appreciation of traditional privileges under a protective state confronted the realities of a very risky future throughout the discussions. Some obviously feared the loss of German support and goodwill if the Mennonites would refuse all forms of resistance to a common enemy.

As one advocate of resistance, B. Wiens, stated it: "We have occupied ourselves till now with ideals and have lost sight of reality. We must consider that we are irretrievably abandoned to robbing murderers if we lose our (German) military protection and dispense with self-defense"²².

Both J. Janzen and B. B. Janz recalled the well-known Mennonite willingness to serve the state in honourable, even dangerous, but non-military ways (as during the Crimean War). Janz reminded the audience that non-resistant Mennonites were highly regarded in any state, even Germany²³.

What could have become a fruitful point of consideration was G. Rempel's observation that one could really not conceive of nonresistance "without privileges", i.e. without obtaining the protection of the state in the legalization of a non-violent peace position. What few Mennonites had thought through thoroughly thus far was the notion of suffering, perhaps even the voluntary loss of life for the sake of the peace witness. The brief Bolshevik period of government had undoubtedly brought such thoughts to mind, but the possibilities of returning to this challenge of martyrdom, should the Germans leave, or their defenses fail, were not pleasant to contemplate for anyone at the conference debates²⁴.

A call for tolerance touched on periodically became the dominant theme of the closing moments of the Lichtenau nonresistance discussions. Aware perhaps that Mennonite communities had already surrendered the principle in various aspects of their daily lives and realizing that deep fissures existed in their midst, the Conference delegates saw fit not to punish those who might take up arms in the current struggle. The resolution which passed, and closed the discussion, read as follows: "The Mennonite General Conference holds to its established confession of nonresistance. The Conference finds this based on the behaviour of Jesus Christ during His early life, and also His Word. It recommends however that congregations allow those who think otherwise in this matter to do so without violation of conscience"²⁵.

Ambiguity remained in the final part of the resolution. Jacob H. Janzen and Johann Cornies nevertheless undertook to forward the resolution to the German headquarters at Melitopol, in Janzen's words; "to bear the wrath of the German High Command of the district".

Gains and losses owed to the Lichtenau Conference would become apparent in due time. With understandable latitude the delegates had side-stepped a head-on confrontation over the issue of arming the colonies, while still insisting that in the essentials of their faith nothing had changed. Militants and volunteers of the training units had undoubtedly gained a reprieve. Though not officially sanctioned in their intentions and actions,

they would at least suffer no severe recriminations from their churches and families. When Janzen later recalled the events, he remarked, "It seems we protested to the wrong people (meaning the German High Command), at the wrong place"²⁶.

Mennonite recruits saw little action while the Germans remained in the colonies during the summer and early fall of the year. During this period of relative calm those who had been driven from their homes and estates during the winter and spring returned to repair their houses and move in again. People were back at work; the harvest turned out well, and factories became operational once more. Rail transportation between the colonies had suffered from destruction of the bridge at Einlage by the retreating Bolsheviks, but ferries and private boats sought to fill the gap. Everywhere it seemed that things would be back to normal soon if nothing happened to undo the newly-stabilized situation again²⁷.

The Fight with Nestor Makhno

There were those, of course, who wondered if the German occupation could last long, and especially what the Russians might do to avenge the German punitive raids, as well as their drain on Ukrainian foodstuffs, should the occupation forces have to leave. In actual fact that moment was now only weeks away. The temporary calm of the summer and early fall would vanish almost overnight, and the formerly peaceable Mennonite communities would be themselves engulfed in war.

The departure of the German troops became reality in late November and early December after the signing of the WWI peace armistice on 11 November called for the withdrawal of German troops from all areas occupied in Eastern Europe²⁸. Before either the Bolsheviks or the White Army could move into the vacated sections of Northern Tauride or Ekaterinoslav, they lay open to occupancy by the Ukrainian partisan forces of "Batjko" Nestor Makhno who had led a guerilla war against the Austro-Germans since his return to the region in early July, 1918²⁹. Recalling the brief ascendance of Bolshevik and local peasant terrorism the winter before, Mennonite communities viewed the prospects of their immediate future with alarm and deep fear.

Makhno's initial attacks against the German-Austrian army units shifted to include local Mennonite farms and villages at least as early as October, 1918. Outlying estates felt the first blows of the raiding bands³⁰. Some families fled almost immediately, if they could escape, but others, hoping for better times again, remained with their farmsteads and homes³¹. An assembly at Schoenfeld, a centre for the Mennonite settlement to the

northwest of Gulai Pole, planned to counter the Makhno incursions with an armed defense. The poorly organized band of about 120 men of the area along with about fifteen Russian landowners equipped only with small arms, was quickly routed, offering little prospect of countering the peasant attacks successfully³².

Mennonites Attacked

On a Sunday morning in late October the worshipping Mennonite community at Schoenfeld heard the news of an approaching band. A participant later described the moment: "It was clear to everyone what this meant—murder, looting and raping. Thereupon Rev. Dyck asked the assembled for advice as to what the community should do in the imminence of a possible early arrival of the brigands. I recall a man possibly in the forties, getting up and suggesting that since many of the inhabitants had plenty of rifles and ammunition in their homes, the best procedure would be to have everyone go home, pick up the weapons and return to Schoenfeld, and be prepared for self-defense. I do not recall whether there was much discussion on this recommendation, but the pastor asked for those in favor of the suggestion to rise. The majority of the men did... there were also voices of opposition, particularly from members of our Bible study and prayer group, and there was old Mrs. Warkentin, mother of one of the deacons of the church, who advised that we stay in the church and pray. Her advice went unheeded. The meeting was closed without any attempt to hold a service. The men went home, and soon returned with their guns..."³³

No contact with the enemy materialized, however. Next day the villagers were asked to turn in their weapons at a specified place and told that they would remain unharmed. When the community complied, no further trouble occurred during that period.

Fleeing families of the Schoenfeld district brought the news of Makhno's aggression, and the resultant plight of the villagers, to the Molotschna area where many of the refugees took up temporary residence with relatives or friends. The apparent growth in numbers and influences of the Makhnovtsy caused great consternation in all the Molotschna and even more distant villages. Left to their own resources now, with the Germans gone, the Whites still far away, and no government help available, Mennonite leaders met in several local assemblies to assess the options for action in the crisis of the day³⁴.

Organizing for Defense

Some night watch detachments had already been reorganized. When even before the German departure, the Gnadefeld volost *Schod* ordered armed units to be appointed in every villages of its jurisdiction. Some communities resisted. German soldiers, they felt, should serve as guards. Another meeting called at Mariawohl to persuade the reluctant had at first no different results. To hire four armed guards, said some of the members present, meant "having soldiers". What did that do to the principle of faith? C.M., a teacher of the Gnadefeld *Kommerzschule*, challenged the group to rethink this position: "When I look at your village with its beautiful developed farmyards, surrounded by orchards and adjoining buildings - isn't it true that you wish to stay here and end your days here, like your forefathers? Now the bandits wish to destroy you, and it has been decided to hire four mounted watchmen in every village. When the bandits come at night they will shoot into the air, and the bandits will disappear so that you may remain peacefully in your homes"³⁵.

The argument seemed to convince the majority and the resolution carried.

At a general representatives' meeting convened in Rueckenau, Molotschna after the Germans were gone, many persons wanted to retaliate for the theft of their property, and determined to get back their stolen goods. A proposal to arm all die men between 30 and 37 came before the audience. Again the response varied, and the procedures became stormy. In fact, as one observer viewed it, all resistance to the idea was beaten down. When a Rosenort representative, Peter Bergmann, appealed to Mennonite tradition and reliance on the help of God, chairman Henry Schroeder shouted at him: "Get out!" When the protest continued he was led out by force, again at the direction of Schroeder. When a young man of Blumenort appealed to his conscience, he was told to "hang it over a hedge", and beaten up to make him willing to serve"³⁶.

At another gathering, David Janzen, a minister from the church at Rudnerweide, called for reassertion of the traditional Mennonite position of nonresistance. Highly agitated, the chairman shouted: "Spit in his face. My finger will pull the trigger as long as it has the power to do so". Would-be supporters of the minister seemed helpless in the face of such tirades. Compulsory mobilization could not be avoided here either³⁷. Just two days before, at a large village meeting at Alexandertal where self-defense would be discussed, the minister spoke on Sunday morning about a God who would help His people in all circumstances. When the meeting convened, the members found that a White officer had been invited by the advocates

of defense. As chairman, he shouted: "You farmers destroy the weeds among your gain, without pangs of conscience. Who is Makhno? A weed that is worse than weeds, and he must be destroyed. Furthermore if a rabbit destroys a young tree in your garden, you shoot without further consideration. Who is Makhno? An animal, worse than an animal who must be shot down. If there someone here who for conscience' sake does not wish to take a gun and shoot Makhno, please identify yourself"³⁸.

The courageous speaker of the Sunday before though unsupported, would not be cowed. "I am one who on the basis of God's Word will not take a gun", he replied. Harshly the officer retorted: "We will place you before a court of White officers and shoot you down like a dog"³⁹.

While such and other forms of intimidation seemed to bring the at least some compliance, there were villages which resisted these self-defense conscription measures. For a time, the non-conformists in the Halbstadt volost included strong elements in Fischau as well as Rudnerweide, and Pastwa in the Gnadenfeld volost. Some villagers later agreed to join as medical corpsmen or other non-combatants in the defense system which now emerged in the colonies⁴⁰.

In late November supporters of a Mennonite self-defense organization in the Molotschna colony met for a formal organizational meeting held in Tiegerweide, where the volosts of Prischib (non-Mennonite Germans) and significant sectors of Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld agreed to combine their resources for armed resistance to the Makhnovite attacks if they should come⁴¹. Each volost appointed a small coordinating body known as the Management (*Wirtschafts*) Committee. Task directors were chosen to establish telephone and transport arrangements, to build fortifications and trenches, organize infantry, supply materials for needy families of impoverished recruits, establish a staff for discipline and court marshal, and to set up a medical corps. Special staff members undertook to make contact with the White Army in order to secure weapons and ammunition⁴².

An interesting perspective of the organizational process comes from an eyewitness account of what happened.

"Who actually elected the *Selbstschutz* committee?... No one elected it. The Mennonite instinct, group consciousness and feeling of belonging together brought h into existence. This is not the voice of the majority or the voice of the people... it came to pass"⁴³. There seemed, moreover, to be little continuity between the earlier self-defense preparations, established by the German forces, and the new organization set up essentially by the Mennonites themselves. In the existing sources the members of the newly-formed Management Committee for the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volosts

were listed as follows: Halbstadt: J. Neufeld (Schoensee), Plett (Tiegerweide), Friesen (Blumstein) and H. Schroeder (Halbstadt); for Gnadenfeld: A. Rempel (Gnadenfeld), P. Toews (Waldheim), C. Warkentin (Waldheim), N. Esau (Friedensruh), Richert (Gnadenfeld), Jacob Epp (Elizabethal). This committee had direct links with the *Mennozentrum* and the administrative organs of the congregations⁴⁴.

A 300-man cavalry force, divided into five sections, carefully deployed its strength to protect the northern and western borders of the Molotschna-Prischib region. They supported about 20 companies of infantry, possibly 2700 men in all. Thirteen of the companies came from the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volosts, and the rest from Prischib. Leading officers included personnel which had remained behind when the German army, persons like Sergeant Major Sonntag, Lieutenant Bischler, Goebel, Mueller and others⁴⁵. There was considerable participation from Mennonites at the detachment and company levels; G. Toews, H. Friesen and H. Dyck led cavalry units, J. H. Nikkei commanded a unit, there was platoon leader D. Friesen, and J. Sudermann led the Swabian Selbstschutz at Prischib⁴⁶.

Khortitza, the Old Colony, did not manifest the vigor and effort of self-protection of its sister colony on the Molotschna. There may have been a hundred men or more who were mobilized as a self-defense unit. The village of Neuendorf refused to cooperate in the draft, but supplied a volunteer corps of 17-18 year olds, a group that soon vanished from the scene. In the Eichenfeld area, centre of the Jasykovo settlement to the north, Peter van Kampen had earlier given leadership to a body of about 250 men. They were all Mennonites with the exception of three who were Cossacks. Nothing more had been done while the Germans occupied the area. When they left, the ages 20-35 were drafted, and two men, Jacob Niebuhr and Jakob Martin Dueck placed at their head. Of their activity little is known so far⁴⁷.

The Mennonites Return Fire

Although relatively poorly armed, the Molotschna contingents proved their capabilities already in the first military encounters with the Makhno attackers. One participant summarized the first weeks thus: "When Makhno began to attack our villages he met with stiff resistance. All of his attacks were beaten off. Not a single encounter ended in his favor. We had been well-trained by our German officers in shooting, bayoneting, the throwing of hand grenades, the quick digging of trenches, etc. All of this we were to make use of in no time at all"⁴⁸.

Initial colonist victories north of Prischib seemed to justify the strategies of the defenders. Only a few lives were lost, and the prospects of aid from the Allies and the advancing Whites, along with the prayers of concerned families, encouraged the fighters to hold and protect their lines⁴⁹.

Tchernigovka and Blumenfeld especially added lustre to the 'victors' record. On the weekend of 5 December 1918, Molotschna units got an urgent call to meet at the Neuhalbstadt district office and prepare to meet the Makhnovtsy who had occupied Tchernigovka in the northeast sector of the settlement, with the villages of Hamburg and Sparrau in greatest danger. The White retreat in that area brought the call for Molotschna men to hold the front, and repulse the enemy if possible. The Halbstadt company took the brunt of the battle. With a quick attack the Makhno men were routed and fled to Pologie. Makhno himself barely escaped capture. The defenders lost only two men, Johann Martens and NCO Henshel; both were buried with military honours in a Mennonite cemetery several days later⁵⁰.

Facing the brunt of Makhno's fury at his early defeats, Blumenfeld of the Schoenfeld volost faced his reprisals head on in January, 1919. The villagers looked, in vain it seemed, for any opportunity to flee to the Molotschna sanctuaries as others had done a few months before. The secret arrival of 300 mounted *Selbstschutz* cavalry men during the night of 18-19 January gave them a chance to escape. Hastily gathering up a few goods, they were escorted quickly through enemy territory under cover of darkness, so that 100 or more persons could now share the protection of the regular *Selbstschutz* corpsmen in the colonies⁵¹.

Problems with the White Army

One dimension of the Tchernigovka encounter had nevertheless created an element of concern, when the colonist units came under the direction of the retreating White army in the area. Somewhat undetected, Russian officers had infiltrated the *Selbstschutz* organization, in an effort to integrate the units with the total movement of the Volunteer Army in southern Ukraine⁵². A regimental colonel, Malakov, set himself as chief commandant of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld companies, and a reorganization was initiated by which various villages would be placed in groups under the supervision of a Russian officer.

When the potential problems of collaboration with the White forces dawned on the Mennonite military directors, serious deliberation followed between Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *Selbstschutz* committees who feared the consequences of this collusion. Jacob Epp agreed to contact Colonel Malakov and with Heinrich Schroeder attempted to formulate the position of

the Mennonites with respect to White involvement in the self-defense operations. A resolution signed by all committee members and submitted to the White officers sought to clarify the situation: "We Mennonites of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volosts united, armed, and organized during times of stress when we were molested, subjected to burnings, robbed, raped and murdered by various roving bands. This self-defense is no military organization of aggression or war, but designed to protect our lives and possessions and families against robber bands. We Mennonites are no revolutionary party set up to exercise military power. If organized government should emerge in Russia, above all in Ukraine, we solemnly declare that we will lay down our arms and submit to this government fully, regardless of its political persuasion"⁵³.

Malakov reluctantly accepted this position, and presented it to his fellow officers in the region⁵⁴.

For three months or more, from late November, 1918, to the end of February the following year, German colonists of the Molotschna and Prischib managed effectively to deflect or defeat the Makhno offensive south of Gulai Pole. The front with neighbouring attackers had stabilized in the region of the German villages of Blumenthal, Tiefenbrunn and Waldorf somewhat north of Halbstadt and Prischib. On 2 March 1919, further heavy fighting occurred at Gruenthal and the area of Andreasburg where about 100 of Makhno's men lost their lives. Northern villages of the Molotschna colony, such as Ladekopp, had received fresh supplies of weapons and ammunition. Some hoped that the Germans might return from Nikolaev where the last remaining detachment was waiting to leave for home. Preparations for possible evacuation were begun as well⁵⁵.

The Last Battle

Then, about a week later, the Blumental defenders themselves began a forced retreat under heavy cannon fire. For several days they had held back enemy forces numbering about 3000 men. After the main defensive wall had been breached, all hope was lost. One of the Mennonite soldiers, Jacob Thiessen summed up the situation thus: "When the enemy forces began to advance we saw with consternation that we were now dealing with an army of about 10,000 men, and all dressed in the uniforms of the Red Army of the North"⁵⁶.

At this moment of truth, all attempts to hold the Homeyer line at Tiefenbrunn crumbled quickly, and a last ditch effort at Durlach a short time later failed as well. The German cavalry commanders, Heinrich von Homeyer and Sonntag, dissolved the front and urged all their men to pull back

in order to save themselves as best they could. Many boarded a waiting train at Waldrof and returned to their homes at Prischib or in the Molotschna villages. The villagers, who had learned of the coming collapse, were moving southward with their loaded wagons, enroute to the Crimea⁵⁷. A great many of the soldiers joined them in flight. Others gathered for prayer meetings in the churches. When the fleeing crowds were told that the southward route was cut off, many returned, along with some of the foremost leaders, to await further developments under the oncoming Reds. German losses in the fighting had been slight, but what vengeance the Reds might take for theirs, much heavier by far, was now an ominous question that remained⁵⁸.

Between the Reds and Whites

A Mennonite delegation including B.H.Unruh and several ministers sought at once to explain to the Red military leaders of the occupying forces that they had had no intention of fighting the Red Army, that their armed efforts had been strictly non-political, intended only to ward off robbers and bandit attacks. Commissar Malarenko promised immunity to the Mennonites, but ordered the self-defense units disarmed and disbanded within three days⁵⁹. Villagers loaded their weapons on wagons, and brought them to the volost centres. At Gnadenfeld two men, C.Martens and G.T.Derksen of Gnadenfeld and Alexandertal respectively, pled with General Dybenko to spare the community, and to forgive them for their misdeeds. Enraged, Dybenko replied: "You cursed betrayers of your fadiers' faith. For 400 years you did not bear arms, but now on behalf of Kaiser Wilhelm... I will not destroy you, but my soldiers may plunder the village for three days; any members of the self-defense units which are found, will be executed"⁶⁰.

With the Reds now in power, and the possibilities of terrorization once more a reality, the villages could only hope for the return of the Whites. They did not have to wait long.

Although crushed by the Bolshevik-Makhno forces, German colonist self-defense units may have aided a build-up of the White forces under General Denikin so he could begin an all-out offensive in early June⁶¹. During the intervening months, the Bolsheviks and the Makhnovtsy once more reappeared in the Mennonite and German Lutheran villages of the Molotschna region. These attacks seemed more justifiable now that the colonists' collaboration with the German occupation army earlier, and more recently their resistance as sub-units of the White army, made it easier to consider the villagers "counter-revolutionaries", i.e., enemies of the Red regime.

A harsh Red Army tribunal at Melitopol called to account all those believed to have opposed the Bolsheviks in any way. More than 100 persons met death by execution each week during this period. Among them were many Mennonites who had taken part in the military defense of the colonies. Special mention is made in various sources of the death of Peter Wiens, secretary of *Mennozentrums*, who was arrested as a spy, and later shot down by a group of drunken soldiers. The endless requisitioning of goods in the Halbstadt volost alone meant a loss of several million rubles, and the forced care of a body of more than 10,000 refugees from the southeast further aggravated the situation. In the Old Colony, where the Bolsheviks had taken over early, conditions were equally bad or even worse⁶².

The Whites Return

Respite came with the arrival of the White Armies in the northern Molotschna villages in mid-June, 1919. However, the usual requests for feeding and quartering soldiers, the requisitioning of horses and teams for transportation, and the call for Mennonite volunteers to join the Whites continued to drain the community without letup⁶³. Students were immediately drafted, although a general mobilization scheduled to begin about a week later, did not materialize immediately. In fact, some modifications could be secured by the protests of potential draftees who refused to join the Whites, even though they had been involved in the active defense of the colonies only months before. It was not their intention to become part of the civil war, they maintained, even though they had been prepared with a free conscience to provide armed protection for their families and their own homes⁶⁴. Local Whites recruiting officers not infrequently ignored appeals for non-combatant service consideration and proceeded with regular mobilization. "Your men", they said to the parents, "fight well indeed"⁶⁵.

Voluntarily and otherwise, a sizable number of Mennonites did respond to Denikin's call, not only as drivers, but as gunners and infantrymen as well. Several found assignments in the Dmitrii Donskoi armoured train. A diarist of the period, Anna Baerg, noted the taking over of Gross Tokmak by "300 Mennonites and 200 Cossacks with two tanks"⁶⁶. As one volunteer of a Red Cross unit viewed the situation, some were politically naive in their actions, some went for adventure, and others had no way out. Individuals who had been in the self-defense units, or being sons of wealthy farmers who fear reprisals, found safety in the White Army at least for a time⁶⁷.

Meanwhile in the Chortitza settlement White officers proceeded to organize a number of Mennonite men for defending the villages and the

railroad from the Dnieper to Nikopol. The "Chortitza Otrjad" as it was called, had about 100 men who were supported by the volost⁶⁸. Conscience pangs were frequent among the men. One Mennonite soldier said it for many others: "I had a hard struggle to reach this decision, also later when I had to stand watch at night all alone at a dangerous post of when a fight was raging and I saw men collapsing and dying. I had an inner struggle but there was no one there to tell me what was right. My conviction was that I was doing this to subdue the robber bands who brought destruction to us"⁶⁹.

Under General Kolchak, on the eastern Siberian front, some Mennonites had earlier requested and obtained placement in non-combatant assignments⁷⁰. When Aaron Langemann, with about 40 others, was mobilized in May, 1919, he accepted a term of medical duty with six weeks training which he described as "grueling to the extreme". After a period of secretarial work in a hospital west of the Urals, he was further assigned to look after supplies⁷¹. Another recruit, Kornelius Langemann, took up similar duties at Tcheljabinsk in the Urals. Poorly clothed and fed, he volunteered to join the front as an orderly, but fell ill and was offered the privilege of staying in the barracks if he would take up arms. Since this was close to home, and he might assume that no shooting would take place, Langemann agreed so that he ate and dressed well for four months. Finally he had to leave again to serve as a medic in the front lines since he continued to reject the carrying of arms. A regimental retreat prevented his arrival at his destination, so that he with several others agreed to desert and return home⁷².

Makhno Reprisals

Kolchak's fate seemed to symbolize the White movement as a whole. A rather impressive 1919 summer initiative by the Volunteer Army, scheduled in Denikin's mind to reach Moscow by winter-time, owed its fall collapse to internal problems, stepped-up attacks by Makhno's partisan units and the Red Army, and an overextended front which the Whites would have found difficult to hold even under better circumstances⁷³. By 21 September the Makhnovtsy had reached Khortitza and Rosental, and a few days later the Molotschna communities as well⁷⁴. Their advent this time led to the longest and most catastrophic period of destruction which the Ukrainian Mennonites would experience during the entire Civil War.

Mass killings at Eichenfeld (Dubovka) in the Jazykovo settlement, at Blumenort and the neighbouring villages of the Molotschna, and six villages of the Sgradowka colony would now highlight the anarchic brutality and

wanton destructiveness of these months. The sporadic military activities of the Mennonite self-protection units and more even the occupation policies of the White Armies had helped to heighten peasant hatred, and whip up passions for revenge. What the Makhno partisans, victorious and at peak strength, would do now that they were unresisted by Reds or Whites, time would tell soon enough⁷⁵.

The Jazykovo settlement to which Eichenfeld belonged had been the centre of rather successful resistance to the earlier attacks of Makhnovtsy⁷⁶. In the final battle of their organized existence, the self-defense units of the Nikolaipol area had fought off an attack on Eichenfeld itself as late as the summer of 1919. When the Soviets moved into the Ekaterinoslav region, they heard Nikolaipol described as a "fortress". Beside that the assassination of the Soviet Snissarenko, along with two other officials, placed the city under suspicion, and later served the Makhnovtsy as a pretext for wiping out a number of communities in the region⁷⁷.

On 25-26 October, a band, including many peasants from nearby Russian villages poured into the streets of Eichenfeld, screaming, "We will kill all Germans". During the twenty-four hour period of pillaging and destruction which ensued, the volost lost 109 persons, most of them men and including over 80 victims in Eichenfeld alone⁷⁸. Many farmyards were burned to the ground, others completely ransacked, with the lumber removed to neighbouring Russian villages after the residents had fled. As one person described the final scene, "Gerhardstal, Eichenfeld, Neuhorst and Neuendorf had vanished; Reinfeld, Petersdorf and Paulheim had only standing walls remaining"⁷⁹.

During these very days, not many miles away in the Molotschna colony, Blumenort and several nearby communities had to suffer a similar fate, their most violent experiences in the entire history of the settlement. A group of fleeing White soldiers, among them apparently several Mennonites and a German officer, Gloeckler, had taken shelter at Waldheim. While waiting there they were encouraged to drive out the enemy Makhnovtsy police unit in nearby Ohrloff so that local harassments would diminish. Gloeckler, on his way to Lichtenau, began to recruit local Mennonite men who had been with the self-defense corps earlier. They set out from Tiegerweide on Sunday, 27 October (OS), a force of twenty two men in two wagons. At Blumenort they halted to hide their vehicles and firm up their plans for the attack⁸⁰.

While taking cover on the farmyard of the village manager, Jacob Regehr, who tried to dissuade them from their reckless enterprise, they heard the shout of a woman, "Now they are taking my brother!" Five Makhnovtsy,

just arrived from Ohrloff, were attempting to arrest Jacob Epp. Caught off guard, and probably fearing detection, Gloeckler's men dashed to the stone fence, shot down three of the five (another one died in hiding) and fled, leaving the Blumenort residents to face the worst in reprisals⁸¹.

When the Ohrloff Okhrana arrived early the next morning, it assumed that the night watchmen must be responsible and quickly arrested Regehr widi two of his sons, as well as two ministers, Peter Schmidt and Jacob Sudermann and nine other men of the village. All fourteen were imprisoned in a cellar. Returning several hours later with a small detachment of die so-called "Asiastic Otrjad" (Asiatic Regiment) stationed in Lichtenau, they passed briefly to hear the protests of Jacob Epp that not Blumenort but outsiders were responsible for the attack on the Makhnovtsy the previous night. At a cry of derision from a Russian woman, he was cut down and shot while trying to escape, and in the next moments all the imprisoned men were hacked to pieces as well.

On Wednesday the "Asiatic Otrjad" from Melitopol arrived in larger numbers, with an invitation from the Makhno men to "put down the colonist revolt". In a swift and brutal attack they swept through Altonau, killing eleven and abusing many women, struck down six more men in Ohrloff, as well as Peter Mandtler in Tiege, and then slew an additional five or six others in Blumenort. Here also nine farmyards were totally destroyed and others partially burned. Those left were plundered since all the residents had fled. Halbstadt inhabitants were saved from a similar fate the next day by the protests of factory workers who were not sympathetic to Makhno's rule. Several days later General Schkuro's Cossack cavalrymen appeared, and a large number of the Blumenort avengers were themselves put to the sword⁸².

Neither the Eichenfeld nor Blumenort disasters quite compared in magnitude, at least with respect to lives lost, to what happened in the Zagradovka region a few weeks later⁸³. Hatreds generated by the problems of land distribution, and more directly the execution of Russian peasants by the White guards at Kronau had inflamed the Russians of this area⁸⁴. In a three-day savage campaign of devastation, the bandit raids of 29 November to 1 December (OS) laid waste a total of six villages with resultant deaths of 214 persons⁸⁵. A description of events at Ohrloff essentially mirrors the experiences of the other communities.

In no time the forty one farmsteads were beset and the street exits blocked by riders. No one was permitted to leave. They demanded weapons, money, food, and finally lives. Like savages they would enter a house and without uttering a word start hacking at the father of the house with

sabers. They raped women and girls, not even sparing the thirteen-year-olds: If a girl resisted she was simply killed. Furniture was upended and smashed, and in some cases used as kindling in setting fires. Men, women and children fled into the gardens and fields pursued by sadistic riders who hunted them down like wild game. When the bandits left the village after two hours, forty-four dead people and many wounded ones lay about the houses and yards⁸⁶.

The attack on Muensterberg took on additionally vicious dimensions. Whereas in other villages women and children had for the most part escaped with their lives, here everyone was killed as a matter of course; in the words of one source; "from the child in the cradle to the oldest man", a total of 98 in all. Persons who fled to nearby Russian villages were betrayed and mercilessly cut down. Only one of about 30 farmsteads escaped being burned down; it was finally also dragged away, board by board, by Russian neighbours who laid claim as well to the collective farm lands of the village. Physical mutilations and venereal disease left their mark for a long time to come as pathetic further evidence of the fateful visitations⁸⁷.

Why the rest of the villagers remained untouched is not completely clear. One report intimated that a searchlight of the Whites served as a warning of their presence, putting the bandits to a hasty flight. Later observers added that most of them lost their lives at the hands of pursuing Whites⁸⁸.

No end seemed in sight to the civil conflicts of Russia as 1919 drew to a close. By early November the Whites had taken over the Molotschna territory once again⁸⁹. Several weeks later a regional district meeting discussed military support, and the sending of a delegation to Denikin to ask for more protection. Self-defense measures came under consideration as well. Soon after that the Whites mobilized all students of ages 17 and 18, as well as teachers up to the age of 35. A unit led by Johann Warkentin, took 25 of the Kommerzschule students to report to Brockman at Tiegénhagen. On 14/27 December he took his detachment to Tiegerweide where mobilization was being resisted. A group of thirty returned the following day to guard the bridge at Lichtenau⁹⁰.

The episode of the *Selbstschutz* was a moment of truth which, while it could have been considered hypothetically before it actually occurred, struck with a force which really dumbfounded the Mennonite community of south Russia. On the one hand, it could be considered an elemental, one might even say, primitive, meaning natural, response to violence perpetrated against the community on a scale never seen before. Other Russians had come across it more than once in their history. On the other hand, it

did directly contradict what Mennonites had thought they believed deeply up to that moment.

There were significant voices which challenged the *Selbstschutz* initiative, but the option of accepting without physical resistance the suffering which the civil war brought on, had not been thought through carefully, nor trained for in any way. The arming of Mennonites for resistance to outside forces would cause a heart searching, and a reexamination of faith that would continue for years to come. The Russians themselves would find it difficult to understand the subsequent Mennonite continuing affirmations of non-resistance. As long as the evidence of willingness to take up arms when it came right down to a matter of life or death called ultimate integrity and authentic faith into question, non-Mennonites and others who did not claim to be non-resistant would continue to question Mennonite claims, as they have to this day.

Notes

¹ On the German occupation of Ukraine, see Oleh S. Fedyshyn, *Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution 1917-1918* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 60 ff.; Xenia Joukoff Eudin, "The German Occupation of the Ukraine in 1918" *Russian Review* I (November 1941), 91 ff. The new Rada and its variant forms are discussed in the essays and literature cited in Taras Hunczak, ed., *The Ukraine, 1917-1921. A Study in Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1977), 4-61.

² A first-hand account of the reception of the Germans among the Mennonites was given in "Erste Ankunft der deutschen Truppen in Halbstadt", *Volksfreund (Vfrd)*. 20. April 1918, 1. See also J.G.Dyck's letter to B.B.Janz, dated 15 September 1956 in the B.B.Janz papers, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies Archives (CMBSA) File I, d. See also Gerhard P.Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgment: A Family Strives for Survival in the Russian Revolution* (Lodi, CA: by the author, 1974), 28 ff. and the Peter Dyck diary entry for 19. April 1918 in John P.Dyck ed., *Troubles and Triumphs 1914-1924: Excerpts from the Diary of Peter J Dyck, Ladekapp, Molotschna Colony, Ukraine* (Springstein, MB: by the editor, 1981), 46. All entries in this diary are New Style dates.

³ Kroecker, "Erste Ankunft," 1.

⁴ B.H.Unruh, "Tatsachen," *Der Bote (DB)*, 15. September 1937, 2. See also a letter from Neuhalbstadt dated 21. April 1918, printed in *Mennonitische Rundschau (Menn Rund)*, 9.Oktober 1918, 11-12. It mentions a group of 700-800 German soldiers appearing in the first contingent at Halbstadt.

⁵ At Nikolaipol, for example, the Germans executed 11 Soviet officials. See Gerhard Regier, "Reisebericht," *Menn Rund*, 28. November 1933, 4. A number of immediate executions are noted also by Peter Dyck in his diary entry for 20 April. Some Mennonites who were in the village Soviets (councils) were also arrested, and later

some were shot. See "Wieder drei Bolshewiki erschossen," *Vfrd*, 31. Mai 1918, 7. The three were a Jew, Dr. Tobin from Alexanderwohl, Gerhard Friesen from Gnadenheim, and Johann Wiebe of Lichtfeld. The story of Tobin's and Friesen's repentance is told by Isaak Wall in A.A.Toews, ed., *Mennonitische Maertyrer der juengsten Vergangenheit und tier Gegenwart. Volume II* (Clearbrook, BC: by the editor, 1954), 297. Three Mennonite soldiers had brought two men back from Mariupol where they had fled to escape the Germans.

⁶ Adolf Reimer, „Wie es Kam," *Rundschau Kalender* 1930, 36 ff.

⁷ The concern of property owners to recover property, and the readiness to protect with force if need be, what they still possessed, is freely admitted by Mennonite observers of the events of April-May, 1918. See for instance, B.J.Dick in "Kurz etwas ueber den Selbstschutz," 4, an unpublished paper in the author's files. Soviet historians frequently noted the role of wealthy property owners in supporting and sponsoring self-defense measures in the colonies. See A.Reinmarus, *Anti-Menno, Beitrage zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland (Moskau; Zentral Voelker Verlag, 1930)*, 100 ff., and A.N.Ipatov, *Wer Sind die Mennoniten?* (Alma Ata, Kazakhstan; Verlag Kazakhstan, 1977), 73 ff., for earlier and later examples.

⁸ Restoring the older patterns included for the colonists the re-institution of the familiar village and district administration which took place under the Germans. A.Kroeker, "In Halbstadt...", *Vfrd*, 20. April 1918, 1.

⁹ The German order was that all men between the ages of 19 and 25 should report for drilling exercises. However, in some areas most men up to 40 volunteered. When resistance occurred, the authorities would bring considerable pressure, psychological and emotional, to bear on the colonists. Many Mennonites felt that it simply would not do to refuse the call to military exercises, since they must show gratitude to the liberators. Some found reassurance in the fact that most drilling did not involve weapons, and did not lead to active military duty at the time. Others were proud to see their sons in uniform. For a glimpse of drilling experiences, see Peter Fast, "Erinnerungen aus der Zeit des Russischen Buergerkrieges 1918-1920," 5 ff., unpublished manuscript in the author's files. A.Kroeker felt that if Mennonite leaders had protested the drilling more vigorously, they might have found it easier to uphold the nonresistance principle later on. See A.Kroeker „Die russischen Mennoniten und die Wehrlosigkeit," *Menn Rund*, 1. August 1923, 10.

¹⁰ See „Sitzung der Molotschansk Wolostsemstoversammlung am 23. April 1918," *Vfrd*, 27. April 1918, 6. When Tochonov and Sekerinsky left the committee they got 200 rubles each, and were thanked for their services. W.A.Hausknecht and J.H.Schroeder were elected to replace them. "Aus den Beschluessen der Wolostsemstoversammlung vom 16. Mai 1918," *Vfrd*, 31. Mai 1918, 7. The security force of the volost (*Okhrana*) was set at 32 men during this same meeting. Fast identified the military leaders of the self-defense program as "the German District Commander of Halbstadt Herr Freiherr von Staufenberg, and the directors of the self-defense forces, Lieutenant Leroux with his assistant, Sergeant Mueller, Training district VIII, in "Erinnerungen," 6.

¹¹ See B.H.Unruh, „Unsere Kolonienpolitik," *Menn Rund*, 12. Juli 1932, 2.

¹² See H.Kornelsen, „Es war doch anders,“ *Menn Rund*, 18. April 1936, 4-7. This observer noted that there were nonresistant individuals "in every village", and then described the conflicts within the community over the issue. See also Adolf Reimer, "Wie es Kam," 36 ff.

¹³ George F.Loewen, ed., *Erinnerungen aus dem Dorf Grigorewka 1889-1926* (n.p.: by the author, 1975), 22. See also the article on Rudnerweide nonresistance elsewhere in this volume and the memoirs of Anton Sawatzky in the author's files.

¹⁴ A.A.Wiens to B.B.Janz, „Anfang des mennonitischen Selbstschutzes wie ich ihn miterlebte,“ B.B.Janz papers, CMBSA. Wiens noted that "all ministers" of this community recognized the defense units as legitimate. The Tiede unit was originally set up to defend the village against thieves. (Note: All items cited from the B.B.Janz papers are in File I, d).

¹⁵ B.H.Unruh, „Unsere Kolonienpolitik,“ *Menn Rund*, 12. Juli 1939, 2.

¹⁶ See also H.H.Schroeder in „Unser Kampf gegen die Banden Makhnos 1918-1919,“ *Deutsche Post aus dem Osten* (Maerz, 1938), 6, and Dyck's diary entries for 3 July and 8 August 1918. On one occasion a mock battle was fought between Mennonite contingents from Muntau and Tiegengagen, and the Swabian units of Prischib-Durlach. The *Ludendorffeste* seemed to draw the Mennonites to a stronger identification with their German cultural background, and also heightened enthusiasm for military drills. Dyck, with many other villages, viewed the total celebration as being mainly a drinking party which with the dancing involved, could only have a demoralizing effect on Mennonite youth. See his diary entry for 4 July 1918.

¹⁷ The two hundred and eighty persons present did not include representatives from the churches of the Caucasus, Samara, Orenburg, Turkestan, and Siberia due to difficulties of travel and communication.

¹⁸ See the minutes of these proceedings reprinted in John B.Toews, ed., *Selected Documents: The Mennonites in Russia from 1917-1930* (Winnipeg, MB: Christian Press, 1975), 406. Typed copies of these minutes were found in the A.A.Friesen papers, Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA), North Newton, Kansas (cited below as "Lichtenau Minutes"). A microfilm copy of these papers is also found at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 407.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 412. Janz held the position of president of the Forestry Camp administration committee at this time. His justification for the taking up of arms later appeared in H.B.Janz, "Der Molotschnaer Selbstschutz," *DB*, 27. Februar 1935, 2-3. He based his support for self-defensive action on the fact that Jesus also gave His disciples permission to arm when they were faced by the enemies in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to his trial.

²¹ See "Lichtenau Minutes," 415.

²² *Ibid.*, 411.

²³ The fact was, that during WWI Mennonites were serving in the German military forces by the hundreds, and that few of their conscripts had opted for an alternative non-combatant assignment, even though technically that possibility still did exist. Note the lists of Mennonites killed in action published in *Christlicher Gemeindekalender*, published by the South German Mennonites. The column "Zum dankbaren

Gedaechtnis" listed Mennonite casualties as 67 for 1917 (137-152), 36 in 1918 (117-124), 55 in 1919 (125-136), and 62 for 1920 (101-114).

²⁴ "Lichtenau Minutes," 412. See Peter H. Rempel, "Nonresistance without Privilege. The Dilemma of Russian Mennonites 1917-1927," unpublished paper, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, 1976, 14-21. In the author's file.

²⁵ "Lichtenau Minutes," 415.

²⁶ See Jacob H. Janzen, "Alternative service and the Cessation of Nonresistance of the Mennonites in Russia after 1914," unpublished paper in the author's files, 4, for remarks of Janzen in this section.

²⁷ See Roland, "Zur Zeit des Buergerkrieges in der Altkolonie," *Menn Rund*, 3. August 1921, 13. Some persons decried the trends to exploitation and indulgence among Mennonites during the period of German occupation. "Prices went skyhigh, business boomed, as if to get back what was lost, and the young went for entertainment, May festivals, dancing at weddings and *Ludendorffeste*." Adolf Reimer, "Wie es Kam," 36., and "Was du saest das wirst du ernten," *Friedensstimme (Frdsst)*, 1. September 1918, 7.

²⁸ The Fourteen Points of Woodrow Wilson, set forth in January, 1918, and used as the basis for the armistice agreement, emerged in Articles XII through XV of the armistice, with a demand to evacuate all Russian/Ukrainian territory. An account of the German evacuation, fully completed only in late winter of 1919, is given in G. Frantz, "Die Rueckfuehrung des deutschen Besatzungsheeres aus der Ukraine 1918/19," *Wissen und Wehr* XV (July 1934), 445-464.

²⁹ A revolutionary with anarchist views, Makhno had recently returned to his home community of Gulai Pole after visiting with Peter Kropotkin and Lenin in Moscow, and his appointment as president of the Peasants' and Workers' Soviet at Gulai Pole in the spring of 1917. He had just been released from the Butyrki prison at Moscow at the time. On the early life and activities of Makhno, see Peter Arshinov, *Isloria Makhnovskovo Dvizheniia, 1918-1921* (Zaporozhe: Dikoe Pole, 1995), and its English translation, *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1974), 51, 54, as well as Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918-1921: Aspects of the Ukrainian Revolution* (Seattle; University of Washington Press, 1976), 67-74.

³⁰ One source mentions that a Mennonite farmer, Jacob Neufeld, was among the first landowners to "host" Makhno at a *khutor* at Ebenfeld near Gulai Pole. See Victor Peters, *Nestor Makhno. The Life of an Anarchist* (Winnipeg, MB: Echo Verlag, 1970), 32. That encounter appears to have been friendly.

³¹ On the tactics of Makhno see Palij, 10 ff., and Peters, 44 ff. The crucial encounter of Makhno's band with the Austro-Germans at Dibrovka, in which the peasant leader Shchub joined up with Makhno, and which led to the almost total destruction of the large community by the occupation forces, is described by Peters, 41 ff., and Palij, 110-111.

³² In the Kasnopoler volost, where Schoenfeld was located, some of the Mennonite estates like Ebenfeld, Silberfeld and Bergfeld were the first to be plundered. See Is. Kinn, "Die Eroetzung der Blumenfelder durch den Molotschnaer Selbstschutzverein anno 1919," *Mennonitische Volkswarte (MVW)* II (Mai 1936), 153-155, for an ac-

count of the flight of refugees in these attacks. Gerhard Toews, one of the self-defense leaders at Schoenfeld described the activities of his units in *Schoenfeld. Opfer und Werdegang einer deutschen Siedlung in der Ukraine* (Winnipeg, MB: by the author, 1939), 90 ff. This writer had earlier depicted the terrors and destruction of this period in two novels, *Die Heimat in Flammen: Deutsche Schicksale im Russland der Anarchie* (Regina, SK: Der Courier, 1933), and *Die Heimat in Truemern: Deutsche Schicksale im Russland der Anarchie* (Steinbach, MB: by the author, 1936).

³³ The Sunday episode in the Schoenfeld church is recalled in Schroeder, *Miracles*, 44-46. This writer went on to detail the manner in which a subordinate of Makhno, Batjko Právda, "ruled" the Schoenfeld area during a period of some months beginning in November, 1918, till the Bolsheviks overran the area several months later. See also Abraham Berg, "My Life - My Story," MHCA, Vol. 1083, Folder 10. Berg recalls the slaying of his mother's uncle, Abram Schroeder, as well as a Mr. Bergen in the fall of 1918 and the flight of his family to Alexanderkrone in the Molotschna. Of taking up arms Berg wrote, "I never believed in self-defense as we were too few, and in the long run we would lose, and revenge would be all the more severe."

³⁴ The Bolsheviks, headed by their military commissar, Trotskii, and army general, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, planned their second major offensive in Ukraine as soon as they learned of the German withdrawal. At about this same time Simon Petliura placed himself at the head of the Ukrainian liberation movement, and as self-designated "Supreme Commander" called on Ukrainians to help him drive out the German Hetman supporters. Among the Whites, General Krasnov's Don Cossacks and General Denikin's Volunteer Army determined also to take over Ukraine. Before these various forces could make their way to the centres of Makhno strength, the latter would rule in the locality of Gulai Pole, and direct affairs there to his own advantage. See Arthur E. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine. The Second Campaign 1918-1919* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), 24 ff.

³⁵ See B.B.Janz papers, CMBSA, H.Goossen, „Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe," 3-4. See also the Dyck diary entry for 12 November, where the requirement for Ladekopp is described as four watchmen on foot and 12 mounted men: "It will be difficult to keep up this heightened defense," he wrote.

³⁶ B.B.Janz papers, H.Goossen, „Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe," 4-5. The militaristic spirit of Schroeder, who later became a strong supporter of Adolf Hitler in the 1930s, stands out in the leadership cadres of the self-defense program of the colonies. He was however, supported by other hardly less vocal proponents, who led the recruitment drive of these days.

³⁷ H.Goossen, „Einige Erlebnisse unseres Volkes in Sued Russland in den Jahren des ersten Weltkrieges bis zur ersten Auswanderung," unpublished manuscript quoted in John B.Toews, "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in the Ukraine (1918-1919)," *Mennonite Quarterly Report (MQR)* XLVI (January 1972), 20. Toews' essay, while inaccurate in some details, remains the most comprehensive study of the self-defense episode in print till now (cited below as Toews, "Origins and Activities"). The Rudnerweide village community's views on Mennonite self-defense are discussed further elsewhere in this volume.

³⁸ H.Goossen, „Einige Erlebnisse," in Toews, „Origins and Activities," 21.

³⁹ H.Goossen, „Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe," 5. Another typical argument used by the self-defense proponents against unwilling "volunteers" was the question, "If they come to attack your home, and rape your wife, what will you do?" see P.P.Kroeker, *Meine Lebensgeschichte* (Saskatoon, SK: by the author, 1964), 40 ff.

⁴⁰ See H.H.Schroeder, „Unser Kampf," 6 and B.B.Janz, „Herzliche Bitte," *DB*, 2. Maerz, 1938, 1-2. The arguments for and against arming, discussed at the fall, 1918, meeting were outlined by Adolf Reimer in, "Wie es Kam," an article which first appeared in warning style in the *Friedensstimme*, and later as a reprint in the *Rundschau Kalender*, 1930, 43 ff. This writer, a participant, summarized the entire development as follows: "We must also note that it was no community deliberation that led to this... was rather an instinct for survival, an elemental urge for self-preservation... fear. The *Selbstschutz* was a *fait accompli*, and all that remained was to decide one's attitude towards it", 46. See also H.Kornelsen, „Es war doch anders," *Menn Rund*, 8. April 1936, 4-7.

⁴¹ The Makhno threat seemed at first to concentrate at the north and northeast sectors of the Molotschna settlement region, Dyck's diary makes a reference to a Tiegerweide meeting on 21 November. The main topic was self-defense. "As I see it," he wrote, "it is most unfortunate that we did not begin to organize much sooner, because in a few days it may be too late." See the entry for 23 November 1918.

⁴² B.B.Janz papers, CMBSA, J.Epp, „Die Entstehung des Selbstschutzes," published as „The Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in the Ukraine. An Eye-witness Account," in *Mennonite Life* XXVI (July 1971), 138-142, translated and edited by John B.Toews (cited below as "The Mennonite *Selbstschutz*").

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 141. This eyewitness represents one point of view on the way in which self-defense activities were organized. Actually there seems to have been more rationality to these plans than some thought, although it was not done through the assembled church community. More information is needed to clarify the way in which the committee was brought into being.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Whether these men were all installed at the outset, or whether some joined later is not clear. Kornelius Wiens of Margenau was mentioned as a member of the Gnadenfeld committee at one point also. The evidence suggests strong agreement between the *Selbstschutz* leaders such as Schroeder and men like B.H.Unruh and Mennonite leaders generally as to the need of armed protection at that point in time, or at least hesitance to oppose it openly. See George Thielman, 57-58, and Jacob A.Loewen and Wesley J.Prieb, *Only the Sword of the Spirit*. (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 1997), 135 ff.

⁴⁵ Toews, *Schoenfeld*, 90-100. A photo, so far the only one known to have survived, of a Mennonite armed unit with its German officers was first published in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Remembering Alternative Service in Russia," *Mennonite Reporter*, 16 February 1981, 6.

⁴⁶ See Toews, "Origins and Activities," 17. Jacob Warkentin was a spirited cavalry leader, according to some reports. There is no list of name of the Red executions that followed later, but one may assume that some of the leading men were among them.

⁴⁷ Diedrich Neufeld, *A Russian Dance of Death: Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine*, trans. and ed. by Al Reimer (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1977), 24. For the organization of these forces, see J. Dyck, "Einer der Dabeı war," B.B.Janz papers, 1-8, and Anton Sawatzky, "Wer das Schwert Nimmt," *Mennonblatt*, 1 Mai 1958, 6, and more details in his handwritten protest against Mennonite atrocities, "Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben", in the author's files. The exploits and fate of another Old Colony *Selbstschutz* leader, Abram Loewen, from Nieder Chortitza, have been noted in David G. Rempel with Cornelia Rempel Carlson, *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, 1789-1923* (Toronto Buffalo London; University of Toronto Press, 2002), 199, 210-217, 229, 248.

⁴⁸ Jacob Thiessen, a student at the *Kommersschule* in those days, recalled these experiences in his memoirs, *We are Pilgrims* (Aberdeen, SK: by the author, 1974), 47. Weapons consisted mainly of rifles, since the *Selbstschutz* had only a few machine guns, and one 1 ½ inch cannon which had little ammunition. Th. Block, "Der Selbstschutz der Kolonisten Tauriens (1919 u. 1920)," *Mennonitische Blaetter(MBI)*, (November 1921), 91 (cited below as "Der *Selbstschutz*").

⁴⁹ Thiessen referred to Gruenthal in the Prischib volost as the first village to call for help. *We are Pilgrims*, 47. Blumental lay on the key route of the invaders into the German colonist communities. See "Ein Selbstschuetzler erzaeht," in the B.B.Janz papers. This anonymous writer mentions the stories of Makhno atrocities as a primary motivation for joining the defense units. The battle at Blumental took place on 24-25 December (OS). See Dyck's diary entry for 8 January 1919.

⁵⁰ The date of the Tchernigovka battle is variously given as 6 and 10 December, and one participant refers to it as being in October, obviously an error. Diarist Dyck refers to the event as being on 19 December (NS) which would make it 6 December (OS) which is also the date mentioned by a colonist in H.Goossen, "Einige Erlebnisse," 11, as in Toews, "Origins and Activities," 21. See Dyck's diary entry for 20 December 1918. Details of the battle are offered by Heinrich Schroeder, *Russland-deutsche Friesen* (Doellstaedt-Langensalza: by the author, 1936), 52-54. See also the recent retelling of this final battle in Ray Rempel, *Selbstschutz: The Role of the Mennonite Militia in the Russian Civil War*, unpublished paper in the author's files.

⁵¹ The Blumenfeld rescue was described in detail in Isaac Enns, 153-155. For local views, see Dyck's diary entry for 1 February 1919 which suggests that 20 mounted men had guided the rescue. It may be that the others were part of a thrust to scatter the Makhno forces around Orechov.

⁵² The Whites had developed a major centre of resistance around the Cossack centre of Ekaterinodar in the Kuban, and at Kiev in Ukraine under General Denikin. The major forces of the northern Caucasus offensive did not reach Ukraine till the late spring of 1919. However already in the fall of 1918 some of the Don Cossacks and White officers had made their way to Sevastopol and Yalta by boat via Novorossisk. Towards the end of 1918 a segment of the army under General Tillo had then advanced as far as Dzhankoi and Melitopol, and some of the Russian officers then penetrated the Mennonite colonies. See Epp and Toews, "The Mennonite *Selbstschutz*" 138 ff, and also Kenez, 150 ff, for an account of White Army movements in Ukraine.

⁵³ On the one hand, the Russians may have moved into the area at the invitation of some of the self-defense leaders in the colonies. It may also have been the price they had to pay for having the Whites provide arms and ammunition to the Mennonite colonies. Epp and Toews, "The Mennonite *Selbstschutz*," 140.

⁵⁴ The resolution will have spoken not only to the general principle and objectives of the defensive operations of the villages, but considered incidents of local aggression in which Mennonites and Whites collaborated. Epp mentioned at least one case where several Russian villages were overrun and searched, and in the process of which five bandits were captured and shot by Russian officers in the Gnadenfeld cemetery. On another occasion groups from several Mennonite villages, attacked Tchernigovka to requisition a good deal of liquor and other goods. Eight persons captured there were released by order of Jacob Epp. Epp and Toews, "The Mennonite *Selbstschutz*," 140. *Selbstschutz* leaders and other Mennonites deplored the brutality of the Russians, and also their inept methods (cowardly at times) of conducting the war. See Thiessen, *We are Pilgrims*, 50; Th.Block, "Der *Selbstschutz*," 13, and the Dyck diary entries for 28 January and 1 February 1919.

⁵⁵ See the Dyck diary entries for 28 February and 2 March. The reason for Makhno's failure to overrun the area may have been related in part to the fact that he devoted considerable energy at this time to organizing his "government" of the area. He was also directing thousands of men against the armies of the Ukrainian Directory on the one hand, and worrying about the presence of the advancing Bolshevik forces on the other. On 26 January 1919, he officially agreed to unite his forces with the Bolsheviks in a common struggle against the Whites and the intervening Allies. Two conferences to plan defences for the area were held on 23 January and 12 February 1919, at Dibrovka and Gulai Pole respectively. Palij, 117-159. The French forces had occupied Odessa in December, 1918.

⁵⁶ Thiessen, *We are Pilgrims*, 51. The final days of the collapse of the *Selbstschutz* recounted by Thiessen in his memoirs, were also depicted in Walter Burow, "Der *Selbstschutz*," an unpublished essay in the author's files, and in a historical novel by H. von Homeyer, *Die brennende Halbinsel. Ein Ringen um Heimal und Ehre* (Berlin-Schoenberg: Landmann Verlag, 1938), in which the author depicts his role in the final phase of the self-defense activities in the colonies. According to the story, he was invited to Halbstadt to replace the White officers. Members of the *Mennonenzentrum*, including apparently, B.H.Unruh, were in charge of negotiations. Toews, "Origins and Activities," 25-26.

⁵⁷ For accounts of the flight plans and activities, see „Wie die Kolonisten aus der Molotschna nach der Krim Fluechteten," *Menn Rund*, 21. Juli 1920, 7, 10, Th.Block, „Die Flucht der Molotschnaer Kolonien (10./11. Maerz 1919), *MBI* (Oktober, 1921), 76-77, and the 12 March entry of the Dyck diary. A resident of the area later remarked that fleeing was a big mistake because those fleeing were viewed as the real enemies of the Reds if they did not come back, and were treated accordingly. Persons found fleeing were often executed, and their good confiscated. J.A.Toews, "Autobiography of J.A.Toews," unpublished manuscript in CMBSA, Book II, 75.

⁵⁸ According to one observer the self-defense units lost less than a dozen men, while the enemy (Reds and Makhnovtsy) a total of about 750. A.Lepp, „Copie eines Briefes

aus Russland," *Menn Rund*, 19. Mai 1920, 7. It is quite possible that Mennonite losses were actually higher.

⁵⁹ Epp and Toews, "The Mennonite *Selbstschutz*," 141. Another participant in these negotiations seems to have been Jacob H. Janzen who mentioned that he and A. Dyck were sent by the church of Ohrloff to try and ameliorate the Soviets so that they would be lenient. Janzen also mentions the rage of General Frunze, who later replaced Trotzki in the Commissariat of War, when he learned about these requests from people who had opposed his forces at Blumental. See Jacob H. Janzen, "The Activities of the KfK in Russia from the year 1922 to 1924 A.D.," unpublished paper, in the author's files.

⁶⁰ H. Goossen, "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe," 7.

⁶¹ For placing his forces under the Bolshevik High Command, an agreement made in January, 1919, Makhno got supplies and munitions while retaining autonomous control of his forces. See Arshinov, 94 ff., for an account of how this "union" came about. See also Palij, 148, for an interpretation which offers a more objective perspective and a clearer understanding of how the Bolsheviks hoped to use this move to bring the Makhnovist movement more under their control.

⁶² See *Die Mennoniten Gemeinden in Russland waehrend der Kriegs- und Revolutionsjahre 1914-1920*, (C.B. Heilbronn a. Neckar: Kommissionsverlag der Mennonitischen Fluechtlingsfuersorge, 1921), 74 ff., which first appeared as T.O. Hylkema, *De Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinde Gemeenten in Rusland in de oorlogs- en revolutiejaren 1914 tot 1920* (Steenwijk, 1921), and was then revised and edited by Benjamin H. Unruh, for a summary of the experiences by Mennonites at the time of Makhno-Bolshevik control in the period of March-June, 1919. See also David G. Rempel, *A Mennonite Family*, 208 ff.

⁶³ Denikin's successes at this time may have owed much to the fact that the threat of Siberian counterrevolution under Kolchak apparently seemed more threatening to Moscow at the time. Kenez, 36 ff.

⁶⁴ N.N., "Die Wehrlosigkeit unter den Mennoniten Russlands," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch (Mein Jahrb)*, 1952, 37. See also Clara Dyck, ed., *The Diary of Anna Baerg* (Winnipeg, MB: MCC (Canada), 1977), 80, and the Dyck diary entry for 5 July. The story of a group of nonresistant Mennonites who were sent to the Terek region with the White Army is told in Gerd Aesche, "Jawohl, Herr Leutnant," *DB*, 24. Februar 1970, 11, and 3. Maerz, 11, Noncombatant work under the Whites is also mentioned in H. Wiens, "Zur Umfrage," *DB*, 31. Mai 1966, 10-11.

⁶⁵ The author of "Dir Wehrlosigkeit" believed to be Peter F. Froese, for a time with the Mennonite office in Moscow, claimed that the self-defense experience brought a renewed opposition to military service, so that relatively few men actually joined the Denikin and Wrangel armies, 37.

⁶⁶ See the Anna Baerg diary entry for 13/26 June 1919, 79. On the armoured train volunteers, see Thiessen, *We are Pilgrims*, 58 ff.

⁶⁷ Gerhard Lohrenz, *Stormtossed: The Personal Story of a Canadian Mennonite from Russia* (Winnipeg, MB: by the author, 1976), 96-97. Lohrenz described his decision to join the Red Cross unit, instead of the regular White Army, as one which his father regarded as "the lesser of two evils." Assigned to a unit at Kherson, Lohrenz

- was put in charge of securing food and clothing for the men, and according to his recollections, met Mennonites in many military units of the Denikin army.
- ⁶⁸ The occupation of this area by the Whites is described briefly in Roland, "Zur Zeit des Buergerkrieges in der Altkolonie," *Menn Rund.* 10. August 1921, 7, 10. An emigre from the Khortitza colony, David G.Rempel, later recalled the number of men from the Khortitza-Rosenthal community who were serving in the White Army during the fall of 1919 as numbering 12 to 15. Neufeld, 24.
- ⁶⁹ Peter D.Froese, "Recollections of my Time of Service in the Denikin-Wrangel Army, and my Stay in Turkey," unpublished manuscript in the author's files.
- ⁷⁰ For the initiatives of the Kolchak forces in Siberia, see Peter Fleming, *The Fate of Admiral Kolchak* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963). Kolchak's leadership lasted from the time of the coup which destroyed the Omsk Directory in early November, 1918, till his imprisonment and execution in January, 1920. The high point of his military successes had come in March and April of the previous year. Also see J.J.Hildebrand, *Sibirien: Allgemeine Uebersicht ueber Sibirien und der Bruendung der Mennonitiedlungen in Sibirien. Erster Teil* (Winnipeg, MB: by the author, 1952), 80. This author claimed that he had been given a written statement of exemption privileges by the Kolchak authorities.
- ⁷¹ See Hans Rempel and George K.Epp, comps. and eds., *Waffen der Wehrlosen: Ersatzdienst der Mennoniten in der UdSSR* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1980), 30-32. The harassments of some Mennonite communities under Kolchak's rule are depicted in H.P.Isaak, *Our Life Story and Escape: From Russia to China to Japan and to America* (Dinuba, CA: by the author, 1977), 32 ff.
- ⁷² Kornelius Langemann, "Meine Lebensbeschreibung," unpublished manuscript, MLA. SA II, 363, 4-9. When other eligible men like John Dyck went to visit relatives in Millerovo in 1918, he had to report to the draft centre at Kamenslie to find that claims for conscientious objectors' alternative service had no validity, and that he must accept training to join the Cossack cavalry. Other Mennonites joined his unit later on. See Sylvia Murray Dyck, *Add One Cossack and Stir: The Life Story of John John Dyck* (Philadelphia, P.A: Dorance and Co., 1972), 24 ff. Recruitment in the Mennonite communities of Borisov and Ignatiev in the Bachmut region was mentioned in John D.Buhr, "Eine Woche Krieg um den Besitz Zweier Mennoniten Doerfer," *DB*, 29. Maerz 1966, 5-6.
- ⁷³ See Palij, 13 ff. for an account of the fighting between Denikin and the Makhno armies during this northward march, and then retreat. General Denikin analyzed the reasons for this defeat in Anton I.Denikin, *The White Army*, trans. by Catherine Zvegintzov (Gulf Breeze, FL: International Press, 1973), 291 ff.
- ⁷⁴ A gripping first-hand report on this return of the Makhnovtsy to the Old Colony has survived in Diedrich Neufeld, *Tagebuch aus dem Reiche des Totentanzes* (Emden: by the author, 1921). See especially the comments on 11 ff. Note also Dyck's diary entries for 5 and 7 October 1919, and D.D.Rempel, *Erinnerungen* (Saskatoon, SK: by the author, 1973). 40 ff., for comments on the appearance of the Reds and their Makhno allies.

⁷⁵ See Palij, 186 ff., on the anti-Ukrainian policies of Denikin. Under these conditions the addition of many new peasant recruits raised the size of Makhno's army to about 25,000 men during this period.

⁷⁶ On the successful defensive strategies of these communities, see Loewen, *Jazykovo*, 42-43; Heinrich Toews, *Eichenfeld-Dubovka. Ein Tatsachenbericht am der Tragödie des Deutschtums in der Ukraine* (Karlsruhe: Verlag Heinrich Schneider, n.d.), 15 ff (cited below as *Eichenfeld*). See also related information in the account of Gerhard Regehr and J.Dyck, "Einer der Dabei War," B.B.Janz papers, 1-8. The five villages of Jazykovo were situated about thirty kilometres north of Khortitzza, and about sixty kilometres south of Ekaterinoslav. These villages, Nikolaifeld (Nikolaipol), Adelsheim (Dolinovka), Hochfeld (Morozovo), Franzfeld (Varvarovka), and Eichenfeld (Dubovka), with several hamlets and numerous individual estates such as Petersdorf, Reinfeld, Paulsheim and Friedensdorf made up the Mennonite volost of Nikolaipol.

⁷⁷ According to one account of this assassination, this was the action of SS leader Peter von Kampen with a unit of men, who had set out to destroy the new soviet (workers' council) in Nikolaipol. The survival of one person in their office, after the attack, made it possible to identify the aggressors later on. Allegedly these key *Selbstschutz* men lived in the village of Eichenfeld. See Anton Sawatzky, "Wer das Schwert nimmt," *Mennoblatt*, 1. Mai 1958, 6, and a handwritten narrative recalling these events in the author's files. See as well comments on this account by O.Klassen, also in the author's file.

⁷⁸ An account of these attacks is found in Heinrich Toews, *Eichenfeld*, 24 ff. A map of the area, showing surrounding Russian villages, is found in Neufeld, *Russian Dance of Death*, 6. Loewen listed the losses of the individual villates as follows: Paulheim, 3; Petersdorf, 7; Nikolaipol, 1; Franzfeld, 7; Hochfeld, 18; and Eichenfeld, 73. In Eichenfeld the objective had been to kill all males aged 16 and over. Among the dead were also six members of an evangelistic team, the Tent Mission staff, led by Jacob J.Dyck. The team was holding meetings there at the time. See Schroeder, *Miracles*, 116 ff., and Katharina Ediger, *Under His Wings: Events in the Lives of Elder Alexander Ediger and His Family* (Kitchener, ON: Bachman Communications Inc., 1994), 175 ff.

⁷⁹ G.Regehr, „Reisebericht," *Menn Rund*, 23. Januar 1924, 3. This writer noted that 37 of those slain had been relatives of his wife, mostly men, and related to better-to-do families.

⁸⁰ The dating of the Blumenort disaster is imprecise. Most accounts refer to Sunday and Monday of the last weekend in October which would be 27-28 October (OS) or 8-9 November (NS). For a general outline of the events see B.B.Janz, "Wir haben gesuendigt," B.B.Janz papers, and personal letter to Abram Bergmann in Steinbach, dated 25 September 1960, in which it is observed that a former Blumenort secretary later resident in Canada claimed that Gloeckler and his men had been invited by someone in Ohrloff, and also Jacob Epp of Blumenort, to make the raid. B.B.Janz regarded this Mennonite "conspiracy" as the basic causal factor for the tragedy which followed. Janz lived in Tiege at the time. For the story as such see also G.G.Hiebert, "Die suedrussischen Mennoniten," 13-14, and „Die Schreckenswoche

im Dorfe Blumenort," *Mennonitische Maertyrer* Vol. II, 246-250. The latter account dates the period of terror 27 October to 2 November, i.e. lasting an entire week.

⁸¹ Apparently the Makhnovtsy had been looking for Heinrich Epp, a university student, and when he couldn't be found they sought his older brother, Jacob. One observer identified the *Okhrana* as a unit from Halbstadt commanded by Ljachov, who had gone to Ohrloff and then returned via Blumenort, where the Volunteers had shot at them. According to this account, Ljachov and two others escaped, though one died of his wounds. See Jacob Neufeld, „Die Schreckenstage in Blumenort; Halbstaedter Wol., *MBI*, 19. Juni 1920, 9-10.

⁸² The eleven men slain in Altonau were listed in the B.B.Janz papers, "Etliche Hauptmomente von dem Mordtag in Altonau im Okt., 1919," 2; and twenty of the Blumenort victims, in a letter to "my dear friend" by B.B.Janz dated 20 June 1963, 3.

⁸³ Zagradowka, a daughter settlement of the Old Colony founded in 1871, had 16 villages in all. It formed an independent administrative unit with a municipal office at Tiege. The settlement had three churches and a total population of about 5000 at the time of the Civil War. The volost of Kronau lay just to the east of the settlement, with the Russian villages of NovoKurskoje, Shesternja, Sagradovka and Natalino to the north, and east of the Inguletz River. The villages that came under attack were mostly those along the eastern part of the settlement adjacent to the Russian villages of the river region. They included Gnadenfeld, Reinfeld, Ohrloff, Tiege, Muensterberg and Schoenau, in that order.

⁸⁴ See Diedrich Neufeld, *Mennonitentum in der Ukraine. Schicksalsgeschichte Sagradowkas* (Emden: by the author, 1922), 9-16 (cited below as *Mennonitentum*). Neufeld was bitingly critical of these communities for taking up arms earlier, and especially for allying themselves with the White forces, a move which, he contended, had been supported by young and old alike. The situation is also described in a more recent book on the subject, Gerhard Lohrenz, *Fire Over Sagradowka* (Winnipeg, MB; by the author, 1983).

⁸⁵ Personal accounts of the raids are found in Gerhard Lohrenz, *Sagradowka. Die Geschichte einer Mennonitischen Ansiedlung im Sueden Russlands* (Rosthern, SK: by the author, 1947), 90 ff (cited below as *Sagradowka*), and others in Bernhard B.Fast, „Die Schreckenstage in der Ohrloffer (Kotschubejewer) Wolost, Gouv. und Kreis Cherson am 29. und 30. Nov. und 1. Dez., 1919 (Sagradowka)," *Vlfd*, 19. September 1920, 3-4 and preceding issues. Fast's report was dated 15. Januar 1920 and excerpted in Lohrenz above.

⁸⁶ See Neufeld, *Mennonitentum*, 18.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 19. Neufeld suggested that the Muensterberg attack had been especially brutal because of the general resistance of the Mennonites to land distribution, and the particular arrangements which had finally been worked out for the area. Here the land given to the Russian peasants was given not in solid blocks, but in allotments from each of the sixteen villages. This means that the Russians had to travel long distances into the settlement to reach their new acquisitions. The presence of the Makhnovtsy, Neufeld felt, gave the Russian villagers the opportunity to alter this system of landholding, hence their cooperation in the raids. *Ibid.*, 22-23. Neufeld may have been especially bitter about the Zagradowka tragedy and possible

Mennonite responsibility for it, because his father and two brothers, Henry and John, were also killed in the attacks.

⁸⁸ Lohrenz, *Sagradowka*, 98, and Neufeld, *Mennonitentum*, 21. The latter doubted reports of White assistance, noting that "Denikin's officers, who as ardent nationalists during the War had been bitterly hostile towards the alien colonists, had watched with malicious satisfaction as the terrorists raged among the Mennonites."

⁸⁹ The presence of the Whites was a part of the general retreat from Orel which had begun some months before. During this period General Wrangel became the commander for the Volunteer Army in the Tauride region, but due to difficulties, was soon shifted back to the Kuban. See William H. Chamberlin. *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921. Vol. II* (New York: Macmillan, 1952) 279-281; Kenez, 182-183, 214-215.

⁹⁰ See Dyck diary entries for December, 1919. Helpful parallel accounts of events covered in this study include the following: Abram H. Neufeld, trans, and ed., *Herman and Katharina: The Autobiography of Elder Herman A. and Katharina Neufeld in Russia and in Canada* (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for MB Studies, 1984), David P. Heidebrecht, *ein holperiger lebensweg* (Abbotsford: by the author, n.d.), John P. Nickel, trans, and ed., *Hope Springs Eternal: A Legacy of Service and Love in Russia During Difficult Times* (Nanaimo, BC: Nickel Publishers, 1985), 169 ff., N.J. Kroeker and David G. Rempel, *First Mennonite Villages in Russia 1789-1943* (Vancouver, BC: by the author, 1981) and others.

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