

Heinrich Hajo Schroeder: The Allure of Race and Space in Hitler's Empire

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The once lost purity of the blood led exactly among Nordic tribes also to the loss of their faith: Because true faith is always composed of a synthesis of space, blood and the holy ghost.
Heinrich H. Schroeder

Who in his right mind could possibly embrace a trinity of “space, blood and the holy ghost?” He was a Russian Mennonite born to a factory owner in Halbstadt, a major town in the Germans-speaking settlement called Molotchna, founded and largely populated by pacifist farmers in what is now Ukraine, east of the Dnieper River in the Oblast of Zaporozhe. But Heinrich Hajo Schroeder was anything but a pious pacifist steeped in a sacred tradition harking back to sixteenth-century Anabaptism in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. As official speaker of the Nazi Party in Gau Weser-Ems in Germany, he organized political rallies and delivered some 96 propaganda speeches during the 1937-1938 electoral season, emphasizing racial purity, the colonizing achievements of Russian Germans based on racial pedigree not confessional adherence, and the worldwide danger of Bolshevism for

his generation. He revealed a fascinating character and an obdurate commitment to militarism and racial extremism that suffused his life from early youth in prewar Russia. This article seeks to determine the nature of Schroeder's ideology and behavior in terms of the prevailing Nazi doctrine of race and imperial conquest. Was he representative of a large segment of the Russian Mennonite community and its émigré settlements in South America and Canada in particular, and also parts of Europe? The Russian Mennonites and their derivative communities were caught in two world wars and several major revolutions, which made it difficult to follow in the pacifist footsteps of their forbears. Their resort to race¹ and violence is one of the darkest chapters in Mennonite history. It can no longer be ignored or whitewashed if we want to maintain our integrity and influence in a world perpetually at war.

The Background Literature

Only a few Mennonite scholars have addressed the subject thus far. Frank Epp devoted a dissertation to it at the University of Minnesota when he examined the pro-Nazi attitudes of correspondents in a Canadian-German Mennonite newspaper, *Der Bote*.² Only B.B. Janz, a prominent religious leader and political organizer back in Russia, seemed to resist the pro-Nazi tone among the so-called *Russländer* in Canada. Hans-Jürgen Goertz also examined the German Mennonites and their fascination with Hitler and the National Socialists with some searing commentary largely in the language of theology and theory.³ Since the trailblazing work of Epp and Goertz in the 1960s and 1970s, the first Mennonite historian to speak of Nazis and Mennonites in the same breath was John D. Thiesen of Bethel College. He did so with two articles and a book published in a well established series on Mennonite history.⁴ His pioneering effort provoked indifferent reviews and relative silence among Mennonite scholars and educated readers, even though some 15 years earlier an Israeli scholar and Kibbutz bibliographer, Meir Buchsweiler, highlighted Mennonites among other *Volksdeutsche* in an influential study of German Russians on the eve of World War II. One perceptive response came from Mennonite scholar Colin P. Neufeldt, but few seem aware of that response even today.⁵

John Thiesen's pioneering book on the Nazi flirtation among South American Mennonites was indifferently received by mainline Mennonite publications, or largely ignored. He remains nonetheless the first Mennonite scholar to tackle this sensitive subject seriously. More recently younger scholars have made attempts to deal with the subject directly, among them Steve Schroeder,⁶ James Regier,⁷ Robert Martins⁸ and James Lichti.⁹ But no one has thus far faced up to Mennonite

involvement with the Holocaust in print.¹⁰ Hopefully this article and similar efforts¹¹ will stimulate more research in this neglected area of Mennonite history.

Biography of a Mennonite Racist

In the 1930s and 1940s there were strong Hitler admirers and propagandists for national socialism among Mennonite leaders, mostly Russian-born. John Thiesen has selected the top three and ranked them as follows: Benjamin H. Unruh, Jakob Walter Quiring and Heinrich Hajo Schroeder. The latter could not match the intellectual perspicacity and wide influence the first two enjoyed in the Mennonite community, but he could match them in terms of publication. Unruh wrote few books of any size, but composed hundreds of lengthy reports for the leadership from his location close to several government officials in Weimar and Nazi Germany while residing in Karlsruhe, where he had a teaching position.¹² Quiring earned a Ph.D. from the University of Munich in the Low German dialect and linguistics. He wrote numerous articles and several books for thoughtful readers and scholars promoting Nazi doctrine and policy, especially anti-Semitism. After the war he served as editor of *Der Bote* for many years, incongruous as that may seem given his shady – some suggest “murderous” – war-time career with the Waffen-SS.¹³ Schroeder taught in elementary schools in several German provinces and served the Nazi Party as propaganda speaker, especially during elections. He finished his pedagogical career as a Russian language teacher in the SS elite leadership school called Ordensburg Kroesinsee.¹⁴ Schroeder had good command of the language and a dramatic emotional flair that made him popular among common readers, especially in Canada and other countries welcoming the Russian-German diaspora. Benjamin Redekop believes his numerous articles submitted to the largest German-language newspaper in Canada, the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, “helped to ‘introduce’ Hitler to Canadian Mennonites in 1932, claiming” among other things that the Führer was in favor of “positive Christianity” and would promote the welfare of all Germans living abroad.¹⁵ Editor H. H. Neufeld, a well-known Nazi sympathizer who had surrendered a large portion of the newspaper to the pro-German propagandists, appears to have given Schroeder a wide berth for explicit delineation of his pet causes: the natural confluence of Mennonite Christianity and the National Socialist movement; the preservation of the blood and soil ideology underlying the Nazi regime *Erbhof* (hereditary farm) legislation, and the racial superiority of the Friesen-Germanic clan culture and preservation of the purity of *kinship* lineage. These were racial issues

that go far beyond mere recreational genealogy. Kauenhowen, Unruh, Quiring and even J. H. Janzen were connected in various ways with the *Sippenamt* (kinship office) in the *Deutsche Auslands Institut* in Stuttgart. Quiring headed the *Sippenamt* during its formative years in the mid-1930s and Kurt Kauenhowen started a *Sippengemeinschaft* specifically for Mennonites.¹⁶

After the Nazi seizure of power, the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* (DAI)¹⁷ decided to fill a vacant spot in the developing ideology of race by creating the Department for Foreign German Genealogical Research.¹⁸ The underlying justification for this departure was the belief that existing state and party agencies were not prepared to register and study the one third of the world-wide German population living outside the confines of the German national border. More than a research center or think tank, this department (created on March 22, 1934) was designed to function in close cooperation with all other organizations and official agencies dealing with ethnic Germans abroad. When National Socialism began to spread among these ethnic Germans in foreign lands, the need to prove Aryan heritage increased dramatically. In its first year of existence this DAI department answered some 5,000 inquiries from foreign countries about individual kinship information, or racial pedigree. To create a resource for this sort of activity a fast-growing name registry was created in Stuttgart in 1936, and so-called association archives were inaugurated in various countries where large German minorities existed. The latter was circumscribed by various national restrictions on accumulation of personal information. While the original aim was to create a comprehensive database of ethnic Germans within a certain region, additional goals were soon added encompassing historic, statistical and bibliographic functions. In the end only three areas actually reached this ultimate goal: Chile, Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil and Bessarabia. It is clear from the beginning, however, that the agency had an overarching political purpose, expressed quite frankly by its first director Manfred Grisebach. He believed that the department had in its first five years made significant strides in “reversing the influence of foreign national education and preserving the distinctive ethnic character and personality” of Germans abroad. This purpose was also evident in the scholarly publications on the subject, at first scattered among various periodicals published by the DAI, and then concentrated in the *Jahrbuch für auslanddeutsche Sippenkunde*¹⁹ between 1937 and 1942.²⁰

An exchange of letters between Jacob H. Janzen and the DAI should be seen in the light of the above historical development and the specific activities of Walter Quiring in the *Sippenkunde* department of the DAI in 1938. Janzen seemed eager to provide the *Sippenamt* with the latest accurate name and address of every Mennonite minister in

Canada.²¹ Kinship “science,” or genealogical research, during the war and under the jurisdiction of the SS, was to take on a far more virulent and deadly radical form.²² In effect what this meant was holocaust and genocide on a massive scale. Inferior human types measured by physical characteristics and biological evolution – such as Jews, gypsies, homosexuals and the handicapped – had to be eradicated in order to preserve the Aryan master race. Himmler institutionalized this radical conception of race by creating the Race and Settlement Main Office within the SS, but gave them a wide field of operation once he assumed national office in 1936.²³

Heinrich Hajo Schroeder was born in 1902 when the Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia was in its heyday and the prosperous farmers, craftsmen and industrialists called life “forever Sundays.”²⁴ Paternally, he could trace his ancestry back several generations to Klein Lubin, the Neuenburg lowlands on the Vistula, where Mennonites had lived since the sixteenth century. The Schroeders had lived in various Mennonite villages as hereditary farmers for three generations, with his father Heinrich Schroeder as the eighth child of the Schroeder *Erbhof*²⁵ earning his merchant certificate in Halbstadt and founding the *A.G. Heinrich Schroeder*, a naphtha motor factory, in 1912. The motor in question called “The Karles” found wide distribution in Ukraine and the Crimea. On his mother’s side, he boasted of his Frisian farmer background over a sojourn in the Vistula-Nogat triangle in Prussia all the way back to West and East Friesland in the Netherlands. The Frisian²⁶ element was important to him because it allowed him to claim à la Nazi doctrine a special racial pedigree, as he made clear in his book, *Rußlanddeutsche Friesen*.²⁷ He was a child of privilege and attended the best schools: the Alt-Halbstädter Volksschule and the Halbstädter Kommerzschule, graduating in 1914 and 1921 respectively, with some interruption in the latter institution.

The Russian Revolution and civil war interfered with Heinrich Schroeder’s education and life, as they did with thousands of other young Mennonites. He volunteered in the summer of 1918, at the youthful age of 16, for the Halbstadt Selbstschutz or Self-Protective Militia, which officers of the German Army of occupation were training. For five months he fought in the Frisian-Schwäbisch Selbstschutz after the withdrawal of the German Army from Ukraine. During Christmas 1919 he joined the Wrangel Army, as did his father, who provided the counter-revolutionary fighting force with assistance in the economic field as leader of the economic department. This may have had something to do with the son’s rather privileged job as a noncommissioned officer on the staff of the 1st German Regiment of Wrangel’s Army. Both remained in this combat unit until May, 1920, although it is unknown whether either one of them actually ever fired a weapon. Certainly

their fellow Mennonite soldiers in these units were involved in actual combat, since Schroeder dedicates his book *Rußlanddeutsche Friesen* to the fallen heroes, many of them fellow students from the School of Commerce, of what sounds like a “holy crusade” against Bolshevism.

Not unlike many of his fellow young Mennonites, Schroeder had his experiences with Felix Dzerzhinsky’s secret police known as the “Cheka” and the infamous prison Lubyanka, as he recounts in another little booklet, “The Systematic Destruction of the Russian Germans.” This sensationalist pamphlet, in fact, consists of a series of descriptive “destructive military campaigns”²⁸ against the Russian-German population. We will return to this issue later, but suffice it to say here that the Cheka arrested Schroeder and several of his fellow students from the Commerce School in August 1921. They knew that the police were taking them to Aleksandrovsk “to be shot,” without official charges or a trial of any sort. On the way, Heinrich Schroeder was able to escape and – mostly on his own – spent an adventurous four months in flight, arrest and flight again, until he finally reached “the holy mother soil” of East Prussia at Christmas time in 1921.

He was now without funds and career, like many other Mennonite young men who had escaped from revolutionary Russia only to be stuck in a Germany trying to recoup from the war and plagued by unemployment and recession. Nonetheless, he got married in Berlin on August 27, 1923 to Magdalena Gallmart. These Mennonite wanderers appeared to believe almost automatically that America was the solution. So he went to the United States with his wife, found a job in a Ford automobile factory in Detroit, and stayed in place for four years (1923-1927) to earn the money that would allow him to continue his studies in Germany. He says that his goal during those years was always Germany, a statement that appears to have impressed the readers of his resume, although the sincerity of his Germanic patriotism was never in question. So, at Christmas time, he and his family returned to Germany and on October 1, 1927 he matriculated at Jena University to study pedagogy. He completed those studies in 1931, having meanwhile joined the National Socialist Student Association in 1929 and the National Socialist German Labor Party in 1930, thus acquiring sought after early membership numbers in both organizations. This fateful step locked him into the orbit of the Nazi world, since 1930, the prime year of the depression, brought the Nazis their first major electoral success.

The formal study of education was not that demanding for Schroeder it appears, since he simultaneously embarked on a political career as an official Nazi Party orator participating as propagandist and organizer in all elections and plebiscites since 1929. In 1931 he organized the Hitler Youth in the District of Camburg/Saale. “In hundreds of

meetings and rallies I spoke for Führer and People," he boasted. "In the last campaign season (1937/38) alone I organized and conducted 96 meetings and rallies in the Gau of Weser-Ems."²⁹ He emphasized three particular ideas in all of his activities: the threat of Bolshevism for the entire world; the colonizing achievements of "our" Germans abroad, including the racial basis of these achievements rather than their locus in some religious confession; and the notion that National Socialism is applied nature study or racial science (*Rassenkunde*). Schroeder was meticulous to point out that his speaking activities were carried out in his official capacity as Gau speaker in a voluntary, unpaid position for the Party, implying this was his main job, although he was gainfully employed since 1931 as elementary school teacher first in Thuringia and then in Oldenburg. It was also important for a good Nazi to note that the couple had three children, two girls, Adelfried (1925) and Gudrun (1926) were born in America and Karin was born in Germany (1932).³⁰

To summarize, from 1930 to 1936 Schroeder was an elementary school teacher in Thuringia and from 1937 to 1939 he was *Volkschullehrer* in Oldenburg. From the first day of 1939 he served as *Hauptlehrer* in Ordensburg Krössinsee in Pomerania, with the post of Lecturer in Russian.³¹ This prestige posting to one of the Nazi regime's elite schools training party cadres was no doubt a reward for giving some 500 speeches as Gauredner in Thuringia beginning in 1929. During his time as Hitler Youth leader in the rural District of Camburg he was allowed to concentrate on special questions dealing with ethnic Germans, especially the Russian German community. Another special interest he was able to pursue since 1929 had to do with "racially-clean border colonies," in the sense in which Hitler himself had written in *Mein Kampf*, suggesting that ethnic Germans should return to the motherland but continue to support and preserve German culture abroad. In July 1939 he acquired the support of SS-Standartenführer Wilhelm Luig of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* and brought some 70 ethnic German young people from abroad to visit in the Gau Weser-Ems.

With the outbreak of World War II he seems to have reached the crowning achievement of his life: "Since 27.8.1939 I am once again a soldier and fight with positive enthusiasm as I did once before in 1919-1920 when merely a tender youth of seventeen." For the second time he became a non-commissioned officer, as he had been at age 17 in the Crimea. From June 20, 1941 he participated in various campaigns on the western front, serving in bridge-building Battalion 12, and was named a *Sonderführer 'Z'*³² at the end of the year and transferred to the Karelian front in Finland with functions as translator. Most likely this involved the interrogation of captured Soviet prisoners of war, since Finnish was not in Schroeder's linguistic repertoire. By this time he

had earned two medals, the *HJ Ehrenzeichen* and the *Kriegsverdienstkreuz mit Schwertern, II Klasse*. But he had much bigger plans than to waste his time and talent on the frozen tundra of the Nordfront, and began to cajole various important people trying to get involved with Himmler's demographic projects in occupied Ukraine. He updated his biographic sketch from a field hospital in Finland and displayed his connections to the Gauleiter of Oldenburg and a legation counselor in Paris.³³ Since Himmler indirectly promised him³⁴ that his ultimate wish to become a leader in a "racially clean border colony," preferably in the Crimea, or even on the Nordfront if necessary, he was now putting that goal in the permanent record of his official *Lebenslauf* update of November, 1941. He was bold enough to suggest that a promotion to company commander would help to prepare him for this significant task in Himmler's long-range demographic schemes.³⁵

From the same military hospital bed where he composed his biographic sketch update, Heinrich Schroeder, Mennonite farm boy and fighter against Bolshevism at 17, decided to write to the Führer of the Greater German Empire himself. Himmler's friendly response must have persuaded him to dare such a bold initiative. Schroeder wrote:

During a time when our troops are conquering my former home in North Taurida and the Crimea, I politely allow myself, my dear Führer, to present you with a request that has been on my mind since the year 1929. It has to do with the problem of "Racially-pure Border Colonies," which you dealt with in your work *Mein Kampf*, and which has captured my interest above all other questions.³⁶

He elaborated by discussing in some detail his propaganda work in Thuringia as Hitler Youth Leader and then went on to describe all the activities he engaged in for party and people, citing names of important people, including those of SS leaders and Gauleiters. Nothing seemed to hold him back from making impertinent demands and pouring shameless adulation on the "greatest field Marshall of our times." He could not resist telling the Führer that he (Schroeder) barely missed an opportunity to shake his hand during a visit Hitler made in Thuringia. Had they actually made contact, Schroeder said he would have told the great man what his long held obsession, namely the project of establishing "Racially-pure Border Colonies" on the eastern frontier, which Schroeder in 1942 – the high point of German imperial power – thought would be his homeland. This was a stretch of terrain along the Dnieper south to the Crimea. By the end of the year, the Wehrmacht was far east of this location – all the way to Stalingrad and Kursk – but Hajo could not have anticipated that success, or perhaps did not think the Germans

would get all the way to the continental divide along the Urals. As for the “border colonies” idea, that was not new but rather a Himmlerian fantasy expanded from ancient Roman examples of farmer-soldier frontier fortresses, as Robert Koehl argued 50 years ago.³⁷

He also told Hitler that he was not getting much help from the National Sozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (NSV) or the DAI in realizing his ultimate dream, but Carl Röver, the Gauleiter of Weser-Ems, had been a great supporter and helped him bring over some 70 Germanic youngsters (he meant Mennonites) from Canada, the United States and Paraguay to spend some time in the Gau and the new Germany. It is not clear whether this project was a tourist event or some sort of “repatriation.” Himmler, of course, later simply kidnapped hundreds of children in the occupied East and brought them to Germany to be nurtured as permanent new members of the master race. There are some instances where Mennonite children were shipped to Germany just before the war and became soldiers in the Wehrmacht or Waffen-SS, but how extensive this was is not known.³⁸ Schroeder goes on in his letter to Hitler to explain his particular qualifications for becoming a leader in the projected border colony of the aryanized Crimea of his dreams. He even attached his updated *Lebenslauf* and suggested that it could be distributed widely. Schroeder asked Gauleiter Carl Roever to convey this letter to Hitler. There is little reason to doubt that Roever did so before his death later in the year. SS-Standartenführer Luig (of the VoMi) wrote to SS-Gruppenführer Greifelt (head of Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, that is, the RKFDV) in March, 1942, that he thought Schroeder’s membership in one of the “settlement staffs would be very valuable.”³⁹

The Explanation of an Ideology

But this set back is not the end of the story by any means. Three major publications by Schroeder address three major issues raised by his life and work for the Mennonite community and all those interested in the history of this era. The first two are mere pamphlets and the third is something like a Master’s degree thesis. *The Systematic Destruction of the Russian-Germans* (25 pages) raises what might be called “the Mennonite Mars complex” present as a nagging irritation from Münster to Stalingrad. *Germans Abroad in the Elementary School* (35 pages) is a pedagogical rant or screed designed to turn education into indoctrination. It is an especially sensitive topic for Mennonites who long insisted their schools and teacher training be entirely under their own control so as not to lose their children to the outer world. Teacher-preachers were the natural leaders of the community. Did

this history influence Schroeder's prescription and practice within the Nazi world? *Russian-German Frisians* (120 pages) is a history of the Russian Mennonites as seen through a Frisian telescope manufactured by the Herman Göring Werke. It raises fundamental questions about the Mennonite view of themselves as a Volk or Voelklein with a racial-religious agenda. We will examine these notions in turn before reaching a conclusion.

The first tract, *The Systematic Destruction of the Russian Germans*, is a tentative attempt to portray the Russian-German element as a major culture factor in Russian society, or rather to take a look at what is being destroyed. He cites three reasons why it is a cultural factor to reckon with in the first place: settlements, land ownership and exemplary achievements. Taken together, the Black Sea Germans owned about 45,000 square kilometers of valuable black soil scattered in some 2,000 villages from the governments of Kherson to the Caucasus. Further east the so-called Volga Germans owned another 20,000 square kilometers and in Siberia and other isolated regions one could find another 60,000 square kilometers and some 800,000 people. Thus Schroeder saw a total of two million Russian Germans owning and working a landmass roughly equal to Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden and Saxony. No other minority group or ethnic community in the Russian empire could match this.⁴⁰

Accumulating this much land was largely due to the special nature of the landownership among Russian-Germans, most of whom practiced primogeniture (or some form of impartible inheritance) and thus kept the original land grant of 40 to 60 hectares intact and in the family. Only the Volga Germans followed the Russian mir system and subdivided the land endlessly, thus creating an agrarian proletariat. Mennonites in particular early established a fund to lease commonly owned land, the so-called *Pachtartikel*, and used the money to buy land elsewhere for the establishment of daughter colonies. That is why all Mennonite villages other than those in Chortitza and Molotchna were daughter colonies in the manner of the ancient Greek colonial practice.⁴¹

Finally, it was the extraordinary achievements of the Russian-Germans driven, according to Schroeder, by the Frisian racial element, exemplified and personified by the Mennonite benevolently authoritarian Johann Cornies. With the patronage of the tsars behind him, Cornies drove the shift to grain production, especially wheat and rye, but also wine in the Crimea and the Caucasus. In all of the Mennonite settlements and the German elements in larger cities like Odessa and Melitopol, factories and flower mills soon contributed to the exemplary accomplishments of the German minority in Russia. These were the earliest industrial ventures that soon found Russian imitators everywhere. This development attracted thousands of Reich-German

technical craftsmen, who found well-paid jobs in the colonies' emerging industry. Meanwhile, the colonists set up an educational system to train their own future managers and technicians. Each village had an elementary school and many larger towns had secondary schools. Three schools, two of them Mennonite, had extraordinary reputations for excellence: the Halbstadt Commerce School, the Chortitza School for Girls and the Realgymnasium in Tiflis. Illiteracy, for all practical purposes, did not exist among the Black Sea Germans. Of course, Schroeder believed this was due to the influence of the Frisians and that it was therefore a matter of superior "bloodlines."⁴²

At this point in the argument Schroeder becomes autobiographic and puts himself at the center of the process of destruction. The entire period from the start of World War I to the beginning of the New Economic Policy in 1923 was a campaign of destruction. It began with the "Halbstadt Days" of 16-19 February 1918 when a chaotic group of sailors went on a robbing and murdering binge. One of the first victims was Schroeder's revered teacher Peter Loetkemann, who had dared to challenge the drunken sailors. In April the chaos ended with the arrival of the German Army, but it had to leave following the November Revolution in Germany, which threw out the Kaiser and left the Russian colonies without any military protection. During the course of the summer, officers of the 182 Infantry Reserve had helped to organize and train a Mennonite *Selbstschutz*, which included the 16 year-old Heinrich Schroeder in the so-called Halbstadter Company under Sergeant Sonntag. These pacifist boys did well in fighting the bandits and anarchists led by anarchist Nestor Makhno, whose rowdy militias, raping and plundering, soon came to respect these "Jesus columns," as they called them. But when the Bolsheviks combined with the Machno forces, the battle was over and the *Selbstschutz* was soon disbanded, with the Bolshevik terror and banditry resuming. Some order was restored when two former tsarist generals, Denikin and Wrangel, separately formed counter-revolutionary armies and came through the Molotchna and Chortitza settlements recruiting many Mennonite volunteers. Both Schroeder and his father joined the 1st German Colonial Regiment of the Wrangel Army, as noted earlier. When these anti-Bolshevik forces also failed, the elder Schroeder managed to escape with about 100 German-Russian officers through Constantinople to America, while Hajo ended up in the custody of Lenin's Checka police. Because of his linguistic skills and his chameleon-like flexibility, Heinrich Hajo Schroeder was eventually able to escape and go to Germany.⁴³ Twenty members of his own family did not evade the Checka. His mother was able to contact a Jewish agent and gave him a diamond ring that bought freedom for one of his uncles.

Schroeder tells of his own adventurous tale with intrigue and panache. He joined two of his old school mates from the School of Commerce and another ethnic colleague to find a route of escape by first going to Melitopol and finagling travel permits from Jewish government officials. After a long week of waiting for a train they made their way to the German consulate in Kharkov to negotiate for German travel papers. With many delays they eventually got to Moscow only to find that the German Embassy refused to issued visas, leading Schroeder to denounce them as leftwing German officials "in cahoots with Soviet Jews."⁴⁴ They then made their way back to Halbstadt over Kharkov with difficulty, only to find that most males were in prison and the whole atmosphere very inhospitable. So, Schroeder made his way back to Kharkov and eventually Moscow, but on the way the train was stopped at Belgorod and he and some new companions were arrested. The inhuman conditions in prison and rumors that they were all about to be sent to Halbstadt and delivered into the hands of a "murderous Commissar" named Blogon, who was in charge there, forced Schroeder to attempt an escape that succeeded. He made his way to Moscow again by riding freight trains and living off the land. After a few days of freedom the Checka once again arrested him and sent him to the infamous Lubjanke prison with its 70,000 inmates. Because the authorities there knew nothing of his previous imprisonments, they let him go after seven days. This time he received the help of Swiss consulate officials and finally got his papers to leave Russia. He crossed the German border on December 7, 1921. Later he discovered that his old schoolmates, with whom he began the escape, had been captured and executed by the secret police. Some 10,000 fellow Russian-Germans had met the same fate by that time.⁴⁵

The first five-year plan was nothing more to Schroeder than another campaign of destruction that began with 17,000 colonists gathering in the suburbs of Moscow to seek exit visas. But since the "Marxist-liberal Reich government of Hilferding-Curtius" could not make up their minds about accepting some or all of the Russian-German refugees, the Soviets began to deport them to the North and the East. He then briefly described life for the Russian Germans as a "terrible" struggle for mere existence. But he seemed to be unaware of actual events in the early 1930s leading up to the famine of 1933-34 and the beginning of the great purge. He does note that only 5% of the remaining 400,000 Black Sea Germans still lived on their original farms, according to official 1928 statistics, and that the remaining 95% had long since been forced to leave their homes and land behind.⁴⁶

If the first pamphlet can be characterized as a screed revealing a Mennonite Mars complex, the second can be described as an explanation of pedagogy as racial imperative. It is a sort of underlying philosophy that moved him during the boring day-to-day chores of

teaching school children.⁴⁷ The following opening sentence could be identified as a leitmotif for his educational philosophy:

The mission of the Elementary School in relation to the fostering of the border and foreign German community is welded to the overall responsibility, which is the ultimate victory of Adolf Hitler's National Socialism.

Not surprisingly, Schroeder was all for practical education. Mere knowledge of things was insufficient and sterile without consequential action. It was necessary to train a pupil with willpower to take national and social action as a matter of course. With Helmut von Moltke, Schroeder believed that "mere knowledge does not raise a person to the point where he is ready to sacrifice his life for an idea, the fulfillment of a duty for honor and fatherland. For that there has to be a total education of the person." Bringing Moltke up to date, Schroeder clearly proclaimed his own educational philosophy, which was "to transform every pupil into an enthusiastic little fighter; he must become a little frontline soldier in the brown army of Adolf Hitler and he must understand and feel why this has to be!"⁴⁸ This brash political indoctrination was not wartime propagandizing in the Nazi-controlled schools; he practiced it before the Nazi power seizure in the 1932 classroom, during the supposedly democratic school regime of the Weimar Republic. This sort of political electioneering was hardly different from his out-of-school job as Nazi Party election speaker on the turbulent streets of German cities and towns.

During his initial teaching apprenticeship in a small rural school in Tümppling near Camburg, he set up an interesting program of letter-writing exchange for students with German schools in several foreign countries (Canada, Paraguay, Brazil, Austria, and Russia), mainly in Mennonite settlements. Most interesting was the exchange with a Mennonite school in Russia, which was apparently monitored by the GPU (the Soviet Union's State Political Directorate) and eventually shut down by them. The free flow of pro-Nazi propaganda under guise of childhood innocence was a bit too much for the guardians of Soviet probity. Here is a sample of the sort of information the GPU found to be dangerous. Twelve-year old A. Braun wrote to pen pal in Tümppling:

1 January 1932

Dear Friend!

Since we received letters from pupils, I should like to write to you how we work in our school. We do not only learn how to write, read and do mathematics, but also work in the field.

From a hectare of vegetables our school took in 150 rubles. We have a radio in our school; we will learn how to operate it when we receive batteries. This spring we plan to set up a chicken-raising barn. It will soon be complete. When your letters came in we immediately decided to answer. Answer us soon. I am 12 years old. Don't you want to set up a chicken-raising project?

With greetings your friend A. Braun.⁴⁹

A Canadian boy who confessed that he did not like having to learn the German language got a scolding from one of Schroeder's *Jungvolk* charges: "When you say you like the English language much better and no longer like German, this makes you a traitor." When another Canadian boy named Peter told his German pen-pal that he liked to catch field mice, Heinz the German replied, "We don't catch mice here but in Germany we catch many 'bananas' right now. You know what that is? They are the *Reichsbanner* people (Social Democrats), who have in 14 years killed the German economy. They did more damage to us than those mice did to you. During the World War we called them '*Etapenhengste*,' because they refused to fight for Germany and hid behind the front." This boy sent along an application form so that the Canadian could join the Nazi *Jungvolk* of Tümping, the junior branch of the Hitler Youth.⁵⁰

In Schroeder's classroom there was an extensive discussion every day on a specific topic such as "the battle for the German language." For example:

- L.: What do we actually understand about the German language? Complete silence.
- Rudi: The language has to do with feelings.
- L.: What is it based on therefore?
- Rudi: It is based on the heart!
- L.: How can we tell, when the language, the act of speaking, is based on the heart?
- Karl: The language is the voice of the blood.
- L.: But many people cannot grasp this fact.
- Fritz.: That is because with them there is no merging of head and heart.
- L.: How can that happen?
- Theodore: When head and heart fight with each other.
- L.: What Karl says, namely that the language is the voice of the blood, many do not want to grasp.
- Karl: Because they have no German blood.
- L.: Right. What can they not grasp?

- Inge: The German language.
Karl: Being German.
L.: For example.
Karl: The Jews.
L.: But the Jews speak German.
Ernst: Because they moved to Germany and learned the German language.
L.: Learned?
Rudi: They learned the language, but did not feel it!
L.: Gut! Sehr gut!⁵¹

It seemed to be a matter of course that Jews came up in a negative way with every classroom discussion, no matter what the actual topic was. The choice of topic was usually limited to the basic points of the Nazi Party program.

In his only serious attempt at writing a book, *Rußlanddeutsche Friesen*,⁵² he seeks to delineate, define and develop the history of a racial group who called themselves Frisians, and who originated in an area of the Netherlands known as Friesland and a part of northwest Germany adjacent to it. It had a rural character and was closely associated with the soil and farming. That it had a religious orientation, more specifically generic Christian flavoring, is not surprising; but one would have thought it would have had Wotan worship or at least a primitive Germanic perspective. That race, blood and soil were part of their essential vocabulary is familiar to students of nineteenth-century notions of race and *Stamm* akin to the German vernacular. As Schroeder notes, Frisian tribes are mentioned as far back as Tacitus in *Germania* and the writings of *Dio Cassius*.⁵³ Schroeder believed that the Frisians outside of Friesland of his time were mainly found in Russia and widely scattered in America. With B.H. Unruh he believed that Prussian Mennonites were largely of Frisian origins.⁵⁴

The Frisian "race", according to Schroeder, developed a reputation as fighters for freedom from all forms of restriction and subjugation. Hence their homeland was an area where Luther's reformation took a somewhat more deviant, non-conforming shape and spread rapidly through Friesland under Menno Simon's strong leadership. By clinging to core Frisian values – close proximity to the soil and avoidance of "racial mixing" – they managed to maintain themselves through early modern times. They also followed the spread of Protestantism to the northeast – the Vistula estuary and East Prussia – and finally New Russia (modern Ukraine). A key survival test came with Stalin's assault on the kulaks, especially those of Frisian-German stock, many of whom found themselves isolated in the Gulag; but a substantial remnant managed to escape to Germany, Canada, Mexico, Paraguay and other

places.⁵⁵ In the midst of this tale, Schroeder launches into a discussion of racial theory and research expounded by Keiter, Günther and others centering on physical height as a determining factor. This silly notion was practically applied by Himmler to SS applicants who had to be at least six feet tall to be accepted. Even the Russian-Mennonite leader B.H. Unruh seemed to succumb to this racist obsession with physical characteristics when he said, “The end of God’s ways is transfigured spiritual physicality.” Schroeder declared unequivocally that “body and blood are never side issues, but rather determine fundamentally a healthy moral existence and life.” He also wrote:

Wide awake, we Russian Germans of Frisian stock stand on the ground of the national socialist world view, stand on the ground of racial realism, and want to develop more and more into a true community of national socialist combatants.⁵⁶

This initial chapter on the “racial history of the Russian-Frisians” ends with an appeal to the Hitler Youth as an international phenomenon demonstrating ties between the German organization and similar pendants in the original Frisian homeland in the Netherlands, and scattered groupings in all other lands where the Frisians have managed to establish a considerable body or ethnic enclave. It is supposed to forecast a glorious future for the Frisian race.

The following four chapters elaborate on some aspect of his thesis. Johann Cornies, the great Mennonite innovator and reformer among Molotchna farmers, becomes a heroic historic Frisian figure in Schroeder’s fevered *voelkisch* view. From Schroeder’s perspective Cornies is clearly the greatest agrarian, educational, social, business and financial creative force in early Russian-Frisian culture. Mennonite scholars are examining some of these overblown views more critically.⁵⁷ This makes up the content of chapter two; chapter three you might call the military chapter, since it describes the heroic battle against Makhno’s bandits, a crucial moment in Russian-Frisian history which ends in defeat and flight from the emerging Bolshevik Russia for a few lucky survivors, including himself. It does not change the picture we have already of this episode in pacifist history, except for the Frisian twist.⁵⁸ Chapter four might be called the cultural chapter, since it is a collection of sketches from the anthropology of the Russian-Frisians covering such staple elements as the distinctive Frisian house, a series of unique customs and uses, as well as the peculiar dialect of the Russian Frisians. Chapter five contains a long list of typical Russian-Frisian family names, their origin and brief description of genealogical roots. It differs very little from similar more thorough studies, such as that by Benjamin H. Unruh.⁵⁹

In the conclusion he draws up a dozen principles which summarize and solidify his view of the Russian-Frisian race. The appendix is simply an elaboration of typical Frisian place names and family names, hence a purely linguistic reinforcements of his earlier pronouncements and findings. As a book it is not a particularly noteworthy achievement, but as an elaborate statement of Russian Frisianism and racial view of their historical evolution from the perspective of a pacifist Mennonite it has no competitors.

A Racial and Geopolitical Fantasy

Not satisfied with mere correspondence with important people, even if from a field hospital bed, Schroeder decided at Easter time in 1942 to put his thoughts on paper in the form of a think-tank memorandum. It was written in a combat bunker called "Bunker Herz Bubi" on the Karelian Front and carried a rather long and pretentious title: "The Crimea and North Taurida as Future Bulwark of the Germanic Reich of the German Nation: Realizations and Recommendations."⁶⁰ He writes:

The road from Europe to the Persian Gulf must be kept free and secure. The road runs over the Ukraine and Caspian Sea. The Crimean Space on this road would provide a good security stronghold on the flank.⁶¹

There is nothing new or unique here, you might say, but there is more to his notion. He wants to secure the sea lane through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles by controlling the Caucasus and the Black Sea via a stronghold in the Crimea. "A rounded-off and strong Reich" had to have strong points on the wings, and this had to be the core substance of a national socialist foreign policy the little Mennonite upstart lectured to Joachim von Ribbentrop and his *Auswärtiges Amt*. All this required millions of settlers to fill in the sparsely populated eastern Gaue with German settlers, thus finally erasing the "Czech Arrow" pointing at the heart of Germany. In Schroeder's words, what was needed most desperately was "a rounded-off biological German-Germanic space to be created over the span of the next two to three centuries."⁶²

Schroeder's audacious suggestion rivals Himmler's Hegewald project and is even more unrealistic, although who knows what would have happened if Himmler had adopted it and Stalingrad had not turned out to be the beginning of the end of all such plans. He envisaged a number of advanced military strongholds filled with "the best Germanic-German folk substance" strung along a line reaching from Saaremaa on the Estonian coast to the Crimea:

From a thickly settled Crimea and North Taurida coming generations could advance into the area between Dnieper and Bug and then reach their hand to settlers coming from the Northwest and that way could put the right Dnieper District under the German plow within a single century. Thus, within a hundred years the biological line running from Berdjanks-Saporoshye-Kiev-Minsk-Riga to Saaremaa could be reached. That is to say, the Germanic Empire of the German Nation could contain about 300 million enterprising settlers, including about 95 million Germans with incorporated Volksdeutsche and 15 million Scandinavians, plus 15 million Flemish, reaching a doubling of population in 50 to 70 years. This does not constitute an over-estimation under normal circumstances.⁶³

But normality in Schroeder's mind meant some rather fantastic measures had to be taken, including human downgrading and dislocation of entire nations. The Czechs and the "Polaks" would have to leave their homeland "so oder so," and the west-bank Ukrainians would be moved en masse to the Tambov-Voronezh-Don region if they had not already done so by fleeing from the approaching *Wehrmacht*. He did not think this sort of gigantic population transfer was "really a problem," since there was "plenty of room" in the huge expanse of Russia. Himmler did not have to create clones or kidnap Ukrainian children with blond hair; he already had a Mennonite promoter firmly in his grasp.

In the Sonderführer's view, "the racial problem" in the Crimea was easier to solve than it was in other areas because the population of the peninsula was a "colorful racial mix" made up of Russians, Tartars, Ukrainians, Greeks and Jews, to name just a few. Since no minority could claim an absolute majority, his solution was a "total expulsion" of everyone from the Crimea. He saw this as justified revenge for the destruction of the entire German community by the Soviets, since it meant ipso facto the erasure of "the carriers of culture on the half-island." At a minimum it would make it easier to transplant these splinter groups to other places such as the Caucasus, which contained many of their own kind for the 150,000 Tartars in the Crimea. In order to create a "strong autarkic bulwark" in the region, Schroeder recommended that the Crimea and North Taurida be combined into a single economic and political unit, incorporating the rural districts of Priednjeprovsk, Melitopol and Berdjansk. It should then be handled as a Gau in Germany proper. After a total expulsion of the current population, the new Gau was to be filled with the best Germanic-German settlers from areas containing people of high racial value. On the new area's approximately 65,000 square kilometers (Crimea 28,000

and North Taurida 37,000) one could at first settle about 500,000 new settlers, which in a matter of 30 years would provide the area with a population of one million, if the high reproductive rate of selective racial Germans could be maintained.

Schroeder even had specific recommendations to make for the practical implementation of his grand scheme. In South Tirol he found about 150,000 peasants who were without a home on account of political decisions and could be moved as a group to replace the Tartars in the Crimea. In the north of the Crimea, the areas around Yevpatoria and Simferopol (although these cities seem to be more central than north), and the northern part of Taurida should be made available to Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche from so-called Niederdeutsche and Schwaben, as well as the Flemish folk and the Frisians of Flanders and Holland. The Kerch peninsula our Mennonite demographer wanted to offer to willing settlers from Westphalia. His reasons had to do with sponsorships (*Patenschaften*), so that a Westphalian Gau would assume sponsorship of the new Kerch region and nurture it to maturity. The 5,000 square kilometers around Feodosia were to become a new industrial center patterned after one in Westphalia, and settlers from the latter would be the driving industrialization force in the new Crimea. The region of Simferopol east of the railroad was also to go to the few Swabians left in Russia after the Soviet deportations and a new group from the Stuttgart area. Why the Swabians were suited for this part of the Crimea Schroeder leaves to the imagination, although he probably would have explained had anyone asked. After all, he was writing in a bunker of the Northern Front near the Arctic line. He was more explicit about the area of Yevpatoria located west of the railroad – some 8,000 square kilometers – which was well suited for cattle raising and was intended for settlers from his own Gau of Weser-Ems and cattle breeders from Ost Friesland, as well as from North Oldenburg and Russlandfriesen – where ever they were located at the time. The area north of Perekop on the isthmus all the way to the Dnieper and west of the railroad trek – some 20,000 square kilometers – would go to the Flemish and Volksdeutsche settlers from Lower Saxony. Finally, the area of 15,000 square kilometers encompassing Melitopol-Halbstadt-Berdjansk all the way to the Sea of Azov, was reserved for settlers from Dithmarschen-Eiderstadt-Nordfriesland along with Volksdeutsche (he means Mennonites, of course) originally native to Halbstadt:

A smartly developed educational system and a proper schooling in general should be able within a space of 10 to 20 years to turn Flemish, Dutch, Frisians, Swabians, Tirolese, Northern Saxons, ethnic Germans into a solid community on colonial soil.

Not only would this measure create a Crimean-Tauridian bulwark but it would also turn the region into the “pearls of the East,” making a variety of tribal virtues accessible without destroying what Schroeder thought was an “organically cohesive structure.” He promised further thought along these lines to pass away the boring hours in his “Heart Boy” bunker on the frozen tundra of Finland. Then he got down to the core assumption underlying his memorandum and had hitherto only suggested broadly:

Only a selection of men and women according to the ground rules of the SS can in my opinion solve the problems....I know the Führer does everything right and makes the final decisions, but still we must help him: “...and you should act as if fate depended on you and your deeds alone to make sure that the German things are your responsibility alone,” says Fichte.⁶⁴

The odd thing about this fevered vision of Heinrich Hajo Schroeder is that it is pretty much the vision of his godfather Adolf Hitler.⁶⁵ The Führer tried several times – in defiance of military reality – to order the Wehrmacht to clear certain ethnic groups out of the Crimea because he wanted this pristine “land of the Goths” to become a national socialist paradise, a cultural and racial bulwark against intrusions from the sub-human trans-Ural eastern hinterland. The military command refused to obey. Using sparse equipment to move that many people and replace them with Hitler’s favorite Volksdeutsche settlers was not possible in the prevailing precarious military situation on the Eastern front, especially the Crimea. Without telling Hitler, Wehrmacht commanders conspired to ignore the Fuehrer’s order, except for the killing of 86,000 Jews in the Crimea, thus removing them from Hitler and Schroeder’s precious future “Gotenland.”⁶⁶

Schroeder’s Impact in the Diaspora

There is one final question about Schroeder’s career that remains to be considered and that has to do with his apparent success among Russian-born Mennonites abroad or beyond the small provincial school towns in which he lived and worked. Canada is perhaps the best example to use in this respect.

Between the Nazi “seizure” of power and the outbreak of the war, Schroeder wrote a total of 78 newspaper and journal articles, largely for the German language Mennonite press of Canada: 23 for the *Mennonitische Rundschau* in Winnipeg, 15 for *Der Bote* in Rosthern and 20 for the *Volkswarte* in Winnipeg, 15 for *Deutsche Post aus dem*

Osten in Berlin, two for *Deutsche Zeitung für Kanada*, two for *Ostfriesische Tageszeitung* and one each for local journals in Hanover and Oldenburg.⁶⁷ In terms of sheer volume and response from Mennonite readers this concerted media effort surpassed the publications of his two more prestigious colleagues Unruh and Quiring. He reached more common people than they did and hence had greater influence, even if his ideas and notions were more simplistic and superficial. Unruh was wordy and pretentious (according to Redekop) if voluminous, while Quiring was certainly more scholarly and academic in tone, and addressed himself clearly to that group of Mennonites. Schroeder cut across all groups, although his appeal was higher among the *Rusländer* than the *Kanadier* because with them he shared common traumatic experiences in revolutionary Russia and Soviet persecution. He was able to persuade them that only Hitler could save the West from communism and that he was one of them, a man of the people. In fact Unruh increasingly called Hitler “our glorious *Volkskanzler*.”⁶⁸

Part of Schroeder's success in Canada was the important backing of one of their best writers, poet and publisher Arnold Dyck.⁶⁹ Dyck and a group of like-minded friends thought the time had come to create a purely secular and literary Mennonite culture free from the oppressive dominance of the evangelistically oriented ministers and religious leadership. The *Mennonitische Volkswarte*, a non-religious journal, was to be the instrument of this progressive venture. It lasted for several years, was published by Dyck in Winnipeg, sold in Germany and became quickly a natural vehicle for reformers and national socialist propagandists like Schroeder. One might regard the postwar revival of this secular effort in the *Mennonitische Welt* a continuation of the *Warte* episode, a continuation which lasted longer. These non-traditional Mennonites behind the *Warte-Welt* endeavor – some looking for their own state with all the political requirements of sovereignty – were ready to drop their pacifist pretensions and non-resistance with their religious trappings.⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, the pages of their journal soon engaged in free-wheeling discussions of all things German, and even covered the violent street politics of the Hitler party paramilitary group the Brownshirts, known as the SA. Military institutions, and battle scenes appeared on the pages of the *Volkswarte*. Schroeder's articles displayed an aggressive and militant tone not quite appropriate for *Der Bote* or *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*. The shunned men of the *Selbstschutz* episode in Russia⁷¹ and its fiasco were suddenly transformed into heroes, and their exploits became points of pride and honor. It was a prelude to the rush of Mennonite young men for the *Waffen-SS* during World War II.

Conclusion

Essential elements are missing in Schroeder's three epistles, numerous articles, and memoranda and that is a systematic discussion of anti-Semitism and an open recognition of the resulting holocaust. He lists Jews in the mixture of various ethnic groups living in the Crimea, but he says nothing about what had happened to most of them just a few months before when the Einsatzgruppe D made the Crimea basically *judenfrei*, that is, killed nearly all of them. And before this time, they and the other Einsatzgruppen did the same thing in Taurida and the rest of Ukraine, resulting in a death toll of nearly two million.⁷² Yet in his discussion of teaching techniques, especially in regard to Volksdeutsche, he is explicit in showing how successful he has been in



Heinrich Hajo Schroeder in the official uniform of the NSDAP.

teaching his students to identify the classic Nazi image of the evil Jew. He is very much a part of the conspiracy of silence, which another Mennonite writer, Alexander Rempel, noted during the same time period in early 1942.⁷³ Schroeder was more typical of this generation than his competitor, although he was more extreme in his views and proactively Nazi than the silent majority. Even today the Mennonites as an international pacifist group with a stellar reputation for doing good works are still reluctant to deal with the holocaust openly and frankly. It is time that the lessons of history, apparent in the hate-filled life and work of Heinrich Hajo Schroeder are taken to heart.

Notes

- ¹ The use of race and racism in this article assumes the readers understand how the theory of racial superiority is used by scholars of the holocaust and genocide. For those who want to know the roots of Nazi race theory as used by Schroeder see Hans F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde Europas* (München: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1926). An update can be found in Jennifer Michael Hecht, "Vacher de Lapouge and the Rise of Nazi Science," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61/2 (April 2000), 285-304. For these two fathers of modern race theory physical and biological factors were most important, excluding almost completely the social and cultural aspects of racial identity.
- ² Frank H. Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1965).; Ibid. *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites Since the Communist Revolution* (Altona: D. W. Friesen & Sons, Ltd., 1962); Ibid., "Kanadische Mennoniten, das Dritte Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg." *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 31/26 (1974): 91-102.
- ³ Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Nationale Erhebung und religiöser Niedergang Missglückter Aneignung des täuferischen Leitbildes im Dritten Reich," in *Umstrittenes Täufertum 1525-1975: Neue Forschungen*, 2nd edition, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 259-289. Also, Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Das schwierige Erbe der Mennoniten* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2002).
- ⁴ John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite and Nazi? Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933-1945*. (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1999); It is 37 in the series *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History*, edited by Theron F. Schlabach; Ibid, "The American Mennonite Encounter with National Socialism," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 27 (1992), 127-158; Ibid, "The Mennonite Encounter with National Socialism in Latin America, 1933-1944," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* Vol. 12 (1994), 104-117.
- ⁵ Meir Buchweiler, *Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine am Vorabend und Beginn des Zweiten Weltkriegs— ein Fall doppelter Loyalität?* (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1984). Cf. Colin P. Neufeldt, "Fifth Column? New Light on the Soviet Germans and Their Relationship to the Third Reich," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 13/1 (Summer 1988), 65-81. While accepting the major contribution of Buchweiler's work, Neufeldt pointed out a number of shortcomings in terms of defining the distinctive Mennonite role and function as Nazi collaborators or actually answering his own question about a fifth column. Neufeldt went unnoticed by Mennonites and Buchweiler did not respond to Neufeldt.
- ⁶ Steve Schroeder, "Mennonite-Nazi Collaboration and Coming to Terms With the Past: European Mennonites and the MCC, 1945-1950." *The Conrad Grebel Review* 21/2 (Spring 2003): 6-16; Steven Mark Schroeder, "Prussian Mennonites in the Third Reich and Beyond: The Uneasy Synthesis of National and Religious Myths" Master's Thesis: University of British Columbia, 2001.
- ⁷ James Peter Regier, "Mennonitische Vergangenheitsbewältigung: Prussian Mennonites, the Third Reich, and Coming to Terms with a Difficult Past," *Mennonite Life* 59/1 (March 2004).
- ⁸ Robert Martins, "Adolf Hitler and Mennonites," *Mennonite Historical Society of BC Newsletter* 14/3 (August 2008).
- ⁹ James Ivine Lichti, *Houses on the Sand? Pacifist Denominations in Nazi Germany* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008). This is based on his dissertation under Saul Friedlander at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2000. The study

attempts to answer the question “whether liberal denominational characteristics deflected or facilitated the penetration of Nazi ideology into German free churches (understanding the free church as a variant of the modern denomination).” He based his analysis on the German Mennonite, Seventh-day Adventist, and Quaker periodicals during Weimar and the Third Reich and chose these churches since all three had reservations about bearing arms. The Mennonites and Adventists do not fare well in this comparison.

- 10 Cf. unpublished note by James Urry, “The Mennonites, the Nazis and the Holocaust in Ukraine 1941-1943.” These extensive notes for a graduate seminar at the Victoria University Wellington in New Zealand, dated June 1, 2001, are suggestive of his penetrating view of the subject at hand. He takes issue with prevailing interpretations while pursuing the Mennonite connection to the holocaust.
- 11 Gerhard Rempel, “Mennonites and the Holocaust: From Collaboration to Perpetration,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXXIV (October 2010), 507-549; Gerhard Rempel, “Mennoniten und der Holocaust: Von der Kollaboration zur Beteiligung an Verbrechen,” *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*, 67. Jg., 2010, S. 87-133.
- 12 Heinrich B. Unruh, mit einem Nachwort von Peter Letkemann, *Fügungen und Führungen: Benjamin Heinrich Unruh, 1881-1959: Ein Leben im Geiste christlicher Humanität und im Dienste der Nächstenliebe* (Detmold: Verein zur Erforschung und Pflege des Russlanddeutschen Mennonitentums, 2009). See my review in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXXIV (April 2010), 275-278.
- 13 Ted Regehr, “Walter Quiring: Mennonite Historian and German Propagandist, 1893-1983,” in *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets: Leadership among the Russian Mennonites* Ed., Harry Loewen (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2003), 313-35. Jakob Quiring, *Die Mundart von Chortitza in Süd-Russland* (University of Munich dissertation, 1928). Buchsweiler, *Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine*, 93-94.
- 14 David Schoenbaum, *Hitler’s Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1966), 269. “Not only a kind of Party university, it was to be the institutional core of a band of brothers, united in mystic union and remote from the more prosaic world to which they were to return.” The three Ordensburgen and a 4th was planned with a 1000 students in each were to perpetuate and preserve the SS Order conceived by Himmler himself as a kind of modern version European medieval knighthood. See Robert Koehl, *The Black Corps: The Structure and Power Struggles of the Nazi SS* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 194.
- 15 Benjamin Redekop, “The Canadian Mennonite Response to National Socialism,” *Mennonite Life* (June, 1991), 18-24, especially 20.
- 16 “Sippenkundliche Werke und Beiträge über das Russlanddeutschtum,” in *Der Wanderweg der Russlanddeutschen, Jahrbuch der Hauptstelle für die Sippenkunde der Deutschen im Ausland*, 4 (1939), 279-85. The *Mennonitische Warte* 42/4 (June 1938), 214-20 has several interesting bits of information relating to Sippenkunde. It reprints an article from the *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* announcing the formation of Mennonite Sippenkunde project; reports that B. H. Unruh has been behind the scenes organizing these kinship projects; there is a concerted effort involving Kauenhowen, Janzen, Quiring in Brazil and Fritz Kliever in Paraguay with the Reichsstelle in creating a worldwide data base of Mennonite leaders whose lineage measured up to the new Nazi racial standards.
- 17 German Foreign Institute.
- 18 *Hauptstelle für auslandsdeutsche Sippenkunde*.
- 19 Yearbook of Foreign German Kinship Research.
- 20 Ernst Ritter, *Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut in Stuttgart 1917-1945* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1976), 84-5.
- 21 For the Jacob H. Janzen correspondence with Quiring and the DAI see US National Archive, DAI Records, T-81/606/396501-7.

- ²² For a definition and discussion of Sippengemeinschaft as it functioned within the SS see Koehl, *The Black Corps*, 118, 156, 227, 238, 318n1. Ernst Ritter, *Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut*, 84-5. For the radical escalation see Michael Fahlbusch, *Wissenschaft im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Politik?* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999), 133, 595.
- ²³ Isabel Heinemann, "Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut" *Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallsstein Verlag, 2003). This is by far the best book in the field.
- ²⁴ Paul Tiessen, John D. Rempel, Peter Gerhard Rempel, *Forever Summer, Forever Sunday: Peter Gerhard Rempel's Photographs of Mennonites in Russia, 1890-1917* (St. Jacobs, Ont.: Sand Hills Books, 1981).
- ²⁵ Schroeder used the "Blood and Soil" terminology of the Nazi world for hereditary farm when he wrote his short biography in 1938 for an application to membership in the Reichsschriftumskammer (National Writers Chamber). See Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, Jaderberg in Oldenburg, am 18. Im Gilbhart 1938, "Mein Lebenslauf," Reichsschriftumskammer, Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- ²⁶ On the Frisians in popular perception see the article in *Wikipedia Encyclopedia*. Some who might not be surprised by Schroeder's obsession with the Frisians will certainly be surprised to discover on a long list of famous people with a Frisian heritage that Menno Simons had some interesting company: Mata Hari, Anna-Marie Lampe, Theodor Mommsen, Jane Fonda, Jack Louisma and Hayley Westenra. Some may object to the use of Wikipedia in an academic paper, but if the German Bundesarchiv can sign agreements with them about the uses of public domain pictures from its massive archives, scholars should have more confidence in Wikipedia's legitimacy.
- ²⁷ Heinrich H. Schröder, *Rußlanddeutsche Friesen* (Döllstädt-Langensalza: Selbstverlag, 1936). In the foreword he asserts his purpose is to assist his fellow Mennonites to find their true and authentic racial origin in the völkisch peasant tribe of Friesland through the emerging craft of *Sippenkunde*. Frisian as opposed to Flemish was also a division in congregational organization and practice, the latter being more worldly and liberal, not to mention urban. See James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1989* (Winnipeg: The Hyperion Press, 1989), 41. The Nazis, of course, had a rural-peasant obsession believing it exemplified authenticity vis-à-vis urban artifice and watered-down civilization, in part influenced by Jews in prominent positions.
- ²⁸ Heinrich Schröder, *Die systematische Vernichtung der Rußland-Deutschen* (Langensalza-Berlin-Leipzig: Verlag von Julius Beltz, 1934), 9ff. See also James E. Casteel, "The Russian Germans in the Interwar German National Imaginary" *Central European History* 40 (2007), 429-466, where he makes the argument that Schroeder (455-457) among others was simply extending the argument of the "stab in the back" legend to include the Russian Germans.
- ²⁹ Heinrich H. Schroeder, "Mein Lebenslauf" (1938); Fragebogen zur Bearbeitung des Aufnahmeantrages für die Reichsschriftumskammer (Heinrich Schröder); Reichsschriftumskammer, Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- ³⁰ For various memberships see Bundesarchiv (ehem. BDC) NSDAP-Gaukartei, Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- ³¹ This and the following information comes from Schroeder's second biographical sketch: Sonderführer Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, Feldpost Nummer 00216, z. Zt. 30. Finnish War Hospital in Yereskyla, Finland, 1.11.1941, "Mein Lebenslauf," RKFDV, Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- ³² Sonderführer, special officer, was a rank the Wehrmacht introduced in 1937 to accommodate people with needed special talents, such as translators, engineers or finance experts, with the "Z" identifier standing for noncommissioned officers or Zugführer level. Some well-known individuals like Hans von Dohnanyi and Hans Bernd Gisevius had Sonderführer titles. Ironically, Schroeder's father, with whom

he served in Wrangel's Army, should have had Sonderführer rank as financial expert.

- ³³ *Ibid.*, fn. 31; See also Dr. Wilhelm Luig, SS-Standartenführer, Bozen, am 4. März 1942 an den Chef des Stabshauptamtes des Reichskommissars für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums, SS-Gruppenführer Greifelt, betr. Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, RKFDV, Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- ³⁴ Der Reichsführer-SS to Uffz. Hajo Schroeder, 9.6.41, "Lieber Schroeder!" RKFDV, Bundesarchiv Berlin. Himmler said: "Ich habe der Dienststelle des SS-Brigadeführers Greifelt die Anweisung gegeben, Ihnen mitzuteilen, wohin Sie sich unmittelbar nach Beendigung des Krieges in Ihrer Angelegenheit wenden können. Sie können versichert sein, daß Ihr Wunsch erfüllt wird." To Greifelt Himmler's chief of staff Brandt wrote that "he should be granted a position within the settlement staff;" *ibid.*
- ³⁵ The best study of those Himmler fantasies is Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
- ³⁶ Sonderführer Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, Feldp. Nr. 00216, Hauptlehrer an der Ordensburg Krösinsee, Persönlich, "Mein hochverehrter, lieber Führer!" 1.11.41. Der Reichsführer-SS, Persönlicher Stab, Bundesarchiv Berlin. Since Schroeder wrote to both Himmler and Hitler, his letters appear to have been filtered through the police apparatus, where nothing untoward against him was found. See Werth to Brandt, z.Zt. Führer-Hauptquartier, 11.2.42, Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD, Berlin, 11.2.1942; Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- ³⁷ See Robert L. Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939-1945, A History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 44. See also Gerhard Rempel, *Hitler's Children: The Hitler Youth and the SS* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 118.
- ³⁸ See the fascinating memoir by Bruno Friesen, *Panzer Gunner: From my Native Canada to the German Ostfront and Back: In Action with 25th Panzer Regiment, 7th Panzer Division 1944-45* (Solihull, England: Helion & Company, 2008). Friesen and his brother were sent to Nazi Germany just before the war began by their father, the well-known Mennonite writer and poet Fritz Senn.
- ³⁹ Luig to Greifelt, 4. März 1942, RKFDV, Bundesarchiv Berlin. See also Meine (of Himmler's Persönlicher Stab) to Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, 11.2.1942, RKFDV, Bundesarchiv Berlin.
- ⁴⁰ Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, *Die systematische Vernichtung der Rußland-Deutschen* (Langensalza: Verlag von Julius Beltz, 1934), 3-4.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² Schroeder, *The Systematic Destruction*, 5-9. See also A. von Haxthausen, *Studien über die inneren Zustände, das Volksleben und insbesondere die ländlichen Einrichtungen Rußlands*. Band 2. (Hannover, 1847), 196. What Haxthausen applied to the Molochna, Schroeder exaggerated and applied to all the German settlements.
- ⁴³ His character could be compared to that of Jack Reimer in some aspects. See the interesting new article by Eric C. Steinhart, "The Chameleon of Trawniki: Jack Reimer, Soviet Volksdeutsche, and the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 23 (2009), 239-262 and Gerhard Rempel, "Mennonites and the Holocaust," 535-540.
- ⁴⁴ Schroeder, *The Systematic Destruction*, 17.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15-20.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-25.
- ⁴⁷ Heinrich Schroeder, *Auslanddeutschtum in der Volksschule* (Langensalza: Verlag von Julius Beltz, 1933).
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

- ⁴⁹ Ibid, 9.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 18-19.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 31.
- ⁵² Heinrich H. Schroeder, *Rußlanddeutsche Friesen* (Langensalza: Selbstverlag, 1936).
- ⁵³ Ibid., 4-5.
- ⁵⁴ Cf. B. H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16. 18. Und 19th Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag, 1955).
- ⁵⁵ Heinz (Heinrich H.) Schroeder, *Meine Flucht aus dem Roten Paradiese* (Selbstverlag, 1923).
- ⁵⁶ Schroeder, *Rußlanddeutsche Friesen*, 6-31; quotations from page 31. The Unruh quote comes from a speech given on Nov., 19, 1935; Cf. Heinrich H. Schroeder, "Was heisst völkisch?" *Mennonitische Rundschau* (2.2.1938), 12, 23. Schroeder's readership outside of Germany was largely in Canada and Paraguay among Russian-Germans.
- ⁵⁷ John R. Staples, "Johann Cornies, Money-Lending, and Modernization in the Molochna Mennonite Settlement, 1820s-1840s," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 27 (2009).
- ⁵⁸ The best scholarly study of the *Selbstschutz* episode is still John B. Toews, "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine (1918-1919)," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (1972), 18. Toews is mildly critical of Schroeder's Nazi attitude and language. For a vivid account of Mennonites at war see Gerhard Toews (Georg De Brecht), *Die Heimat in Trümmern* (Steinbach, Manitoba: Warte-Verlag, 1936). The following comment in the preface makes clear what Toews' political orientation was: "Today a part of the rest of the world is already in ruin. But a strong fortress rises against the danger. A strong, united, German people gathers around its Führer."
- ⁵⁹ B. H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16. 18. Und 19th Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag, 1955). A large part of this book deals with names and lineage.
- ⁶⁰ RKFDV, Bundesarchiv Berlin. This is reminiscent of the Hildebrand fantasies having to do with the establishment of a Mennonite State in some remote region of the world. See James Urry, "A Mennostaat for the Mennovolk? Mennonite Immigrant Fantasies in Canada in the 1930s," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 14 (1996), 65-80.
- ⁶¹ Schroeder, "The Crimea and North Taurida as future Bulwark."
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ This fantasy of the Führer, fed by the alert Himmler, included the Mennonites. In his calendar notes for a meeting with Hitler on Sept. 22, 1942, Himmler wrote that 40,000 Mennonites from Halbstadt and 15,000 from Chortitza had been designated for eventual settlement in the racially pure Crimea. Norbert Kunz, *Die Krim unter deutscher Herrschaft 1941-1944: Germanisierungsutopie und Besatzungsrealität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 287.
- ⁶⁶ Kunz, *Die Krim unter deutscher Herrschaft*, chapter 7.
- ⁶⁷ Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, "Fragebogen zur Bearbeitung des Aufnahmeantrages für die Reichsschrifttumskammer," 22. Okt. 1938, Reichskulturkammer, Bundesarchiv Berlin. For some strange reason he did not include in his list 23 articles he wrote for the largest newspaper in Canada, *Mennonitische Rundschau* in 1932 to 1939. For a general description of their content see Redekop, "The Canadian Mennonite Response to National Socialism," 19ff. The *Rundschau* website has an index allowing readers to find all his articles. Nearly every piece he wrote stimulated replies by readers, many of which appear to have been printed.

It may be fair to conclude that most reading Mennonites in Canada and elsewhere interested in Mennonite history and affairs knew who Heinrich Hajo Schroeder was and what he stood for with regard to National Socialism.

- ⁶⁸ B. H. Unruh, Bericht LXXIV (July 5, 1934) Vertraulich! Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg/ C. F. Klassen Papers/Folder #18.
- ⁶⁹ Arnold Dyck, "Buchbesprechung," *Mennonitische Volkswarte* 2 (18), June 1936, 201. Heinrich Hajo Schroeder, "Erlebnisse in Rußland," *Mennonitische Warte*, 3 (34-36), Herbst 1937, pp. 196-200. Al Reimer, "Arnold Dyck: Writer, Editor, Publisher, and Cultural Entrepreneur, 1889-1970," in *Shepherds Servants and Prophets: Leadership among the Russian Mennonites (ca. 1880- 1960)* Ed., Harry Loewen, 69-84.
- ⁷⁰ Some of the information was provided by Professor James Urry in e-mails dated July 23, 24, 27 and 28, 2003 and February 17, 2009. He also conveyed information on the *Warte* periodical as publishing event provided by Al Reimer, Mennonite novelist and associate editor of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.
- ⁷¹ L. Klippenstein, "The Selbstschutz: A Mennonite Army in Ukraine 1918-1919," Питання німецької історії Збірник наукових праць (Problems of German History: Scientific Papers) http://www.nbu.gov.ua/portal/Soc_Gum/Pni/2007/index.html. 2007. This is a Ukrainian online journal published at the University of Dnepropetrovsk and edited by scholars familiar to Mennonite readers: Svetlana Bobylyeva Iosifovna and V. K. Klets.
- ⁷² The best accounts of the holocaust in the Crimea are Michael Gesin, *Holocaust: The Reality of Genocide in Southern Ukraine* (Brandeis University Dissertation, 2003); Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der südlichen Sowjetunion 1941-1943* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003); Cf. my review of Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine Under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004) in *JMS* 23 (2005), 251-253.
- ⁷³ See my article pending publication "Alexander Rempel's Conscience: Mennonites and the Holocaust in Zaporozhia." This is based on new sources from the Mennonite Heritage Center, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, recent dissertations and publications on the holocaust in Ukraine, especially Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower's *The Shoa in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).