# The Mennonites go to War: Revisiting Canadian Soldiers during the Second World War

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## Introduction

During the Second World War a large number of Mennonites enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces. This development was troubling to many who questioned the legitimacy of such people *as* Mennonites. In the ensuing years this story of departure from the foundational Mennonite tenets of faith was overshadowed by the moral victory of alternative service offered by Mennonite conscientious objectors. However, the issue has continued to linger in the fading history of twentieth century conflict, allowing for an uncomfortable reality that cannot be disguised. As T. D. Regehr, Frank H. Epp and others have pointed out the Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War were not united by their common confession of faith, but were divided along the lines of sacrifice, duty, theology and the practice of their traditional faith. Indeed, the most important works to date on the Mennonite enlistments in the Second World War are Regehr's article, "Lost Sons: The Canadian Mennonite Soldiers of World War II,"[1] as well as the

chapter entitled "Wartime Alternative and Military Service" in *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed.*[2] These sources acknowledge the many Mennonite enlistments in the war.

Just how many enlistments there were remains a question of contention. Employing the figures of historian Frank H. Epp, Regehr asserts that 3,905 Mennonite boys enlisted in the army, 316 in the air force, and 232 in the navy, along with 55 Mennonite women who enlisted in the women's corps.[3] This total of 4,508 Mennonite enlistments in the Second World War, while generally accepted by Mennonite historians,[4] may in fact not be high enough. Indeed, by combining the 4,508 names from Epp's list with the 267 names compiled by Peter Lorenz Neufeld that were not found in the former,[5] a total of 4,775 Canadian Mennonite enlistments is achieved. And while by Epp's calculation that thirty-seven per cent of Mennonite draftees served militarily, the ratio of 4,775 enlistments versus 6,891 conscientious objectors indicates an even higher percentage, forty-one per cent, who actively participated in the war effort in Canada, whether voluntarily or by virtue of the draft.

Thus, while Regehr, Epp and others have acknowledged this historic fact, Mennonite participation in the war may have been greater than often assumed. Certainly the public perception of Mennonite service, the pronouncement of Mennonite church leaders and the testimonials of Mennonites from this period suggest that they may have been more fully involved in war-time service than popular perception has acknowledged. Moreover, church leaders themselves acknowledged that one reason for this high percentage of Mennonite involvement in the war might well stem from the history of Mennonites in Russia during the First World War when all enlistees were expected to render non-combatant service on the front lines. And combined with the increasing degree of assimilation and the relative lack of sound teaching from church leaders, this figure of a forty-one per cent enlistment should not be surprising. It behoves us advocates for peace and nonviolence to more fully acknowledge this moment in Canadian Mennonite history.

## Mennonite Enlistment in the Canadian Armed Forces

This problem in which Mennonites ignored their own boys who went to war had an early voice. As early as 1942 it was becoming clear to some that an inordinate number of Mennonites were enlisting in the Royal Canadian Army (RCA).[6] I. G. Neufeld, a historian of Mennonite faith and background, wrote about this

trend in the middle of the war and made attempts to track it. Of particular interest to Neufeld was the Battle of Hong Kong, fought in December of 1941, and reports of the participation of Mennonite combatants in the Canadian infantry battalions who had come to the aid of British troops. Neufeld made the point that of the approximately 1,900 Canadian soldiers in Hong Kong, consisting mostly of regiments from Manitoba, twenty-two were Mennonite and all of them were either killed or captured by the Japanese.[7] This contingent constitutes approximately 1.16 per cent of the Canadian soldiers who were in Hong Kong, at a time when Mennonites comprised 0.97 per cent (that is, 111,554 of 11,507,000) of the national population.[8] One of Neufeld's contacts applauded this involvement:

> This, considering the total at Hong Kong is quite a large percentage in fact: considering the population of Canada as a whole [this] speaks well for the effort our young men are making. It is only the talk about Mennonites not going to war, that's causing whatever hard feeling there may be and not the lack of Mennonite recruits for regardless of what others may say our boys have joined up in as good a proportion as any other group.[9]

Such figures, though garnered from a single battle, raised for Neufeld the interesting possibility that Mennonites were taking part in the Canadian war effort in proportionately large numbers. The figures from the Battle of Hong Kong showed Canadian Mennonites as fully representing their people in the Armed Forces, which obviously only included those who were draft-eligible. The Hong Kong numbers were clearly disproportionate to the Mennonite war effort in its entirety, as it was well known that many of the men who had been drafted were currently serving at conscientious objector camps. The question was whether these figures were anomalous, or indicative of a significant representation of Mennonites in the Armed Forces.

There were other indications that a disproportionate number of Mennonite men were joining the military. When Neufeld began to search on a wider scale he wrote W. A. Tucker, the Member of Parliament (M. P.) for Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and was told that it would be "impossible" to track down the numbers of those enlisted in western Canada. Tucker suggested that the difficulty lay in the fact that the Mennonites who had enlisted would often write their religious affiliation as "United Church, Anglican or something else" in order to hide their apparent departure from the traditional faith.[10] Neufeld was left estimating, likely from information provided by Mennonite leader B. B. Janz, that 1,000 active service

enlistments came out of western Canada's Mennonite communities by the midpoint of the war. An M. P. from Fraser Valley, British Columbia, George A. Cruickshank, concurred with Janz's suggestion that a significant group of Mennonite men had enlisted from western Canada, especially noting the mass enlistments in some of the towns in his province that were heavily populated by Mennonites . He further mentioned that he personally knew a number of Mennonite families with two or three sons serving overseas.[11]

The wider media also reported on significant numbers of Mennonite men joining the military. In fact non-Mennonite newspapers reported on an increasing number of Mennonite names turning up in stories related to military service. On 11 April 1945, *The Morden Times* newspaper of Morden, Manitoba contained an article describing the activities of five brothers serving Canada in uniform.[12] Although the five Hoeppner brothers were not mentioned as Mennonites in the short article, their surname and the fact that they were stated as being from the heavily Mennonite-populated Morden district was, to those of similar background, a giveaway as to the nature of their heritage. Similar accounts appeared in the national media. On 17 September 1943, *The Globe and Mail* carried the dual headline of "Mennonite Youth Break With Pacifism of Fathers to Fight for Canada" and "Younger Generation Discards Yoke of Pacifism as Old Beliefs Fade Out."[13] The article boldly proclaimed that the non-resistant ways of the Mennonite people in Canada were coming to a rapid end, as the young Mennonites acknowledged the war and did their duty as Canadians, taking up arms despite the confused protests of their parents. The article did not attempt to simply show that there were Mennonites who were willing to fight. Rather, it portrayed the non-resistance of the Mennonites as a thing of the past, with the new generation ushering in a new age of the patriotic bearing of arms:

> The Mennonite people, as a whole, had sought for years to outlaw war. Now their young people will tell you that that is a very fine thought, "but we have to fight sometimes to be able to do it." That's when this new generation gets around to pointing to their record to show you that they are willing to fight; that they are entitled to be called Canadians, just like your neighbours; and the old-style beliefs of their parents are something that are slowly fading from the picture.[14]

The *Globe and Mail* article focused in particular on the town of Herbert, Saskatchewan, and even more specifically on a Mennonite family in which five out of nine sons were fighting overseas. Nevertheless, the article was emblematic of the fact that the shift in Mennonite wartime participation was becoming noticeable. And

it pointed to the trend of military service by the Mennonites in Herbert as representative of the growing pattern in the Canadian Mennonite community as a whole.[15]

It was not simply inquisitive Mennonites or the wider media who were taking notice. The Canadian government, which, with the National Resources Mobilization Act of 1940, began to slowly implement a plan calling forth larger numbers of men for military service, also began to pay closer attention to the state of their Mennonite draftees. Although historians have emphasized how Mennonite leaders outlined their non-resistant intentions to the government, it was the actions of the young men on which the government was focused. It was the task of mobilization boards across the country to recruit young men for military service and the boards paid close attention to the attitudes and patterns being displayed by young recruits.[16]

While officially and publicly staunch in their adherence to non-resistance, these young Mennonite men's actual response to the mobilization efforts of the government described a different reality. The mobilization boards hoped to divide the official position of the leaders and the practical actions of the young, draft-eligible men who were already showing a propensity towards departure from their traditional stance. Ken Reddig cites Judge J. E. Adamson of the Manitoba mobilization board as carefully observing the concessions that many Mennonites were making and attempting to exploit them in his recruiting efforts: "I am not overlooking the fact that a considerable number of young Mennonites have enlisted," Adamson stated during a speech in Steinbach, Manitoba, before a group of Mennonite draftees, many of whom were about to apply for CO status.[17] This position of the Mennonites was one of particular interest to the boards.

The actions of the Mennonites during the Second World War countered their own traditions to such an extent that it created confusion among the Mennonites as well as in those observing them. In his letter to I. G. Neufeld, M. P. Cruickshank wrote, "[a]s you no doubt are aware a large number of young men from Yarrow and Abbotsford have volunteered for service and I do not see why the Mennonites do not publish this list as they are being very unfairly criticized at the present." Cruickshank admired the way in which the Mennonites were beginning to serve their country in military service and rued the wasted opportunity in making the information more widely known.[18] *The Globe and Mail* somewhat more astutely commented that given the importance of the peace witness to Mennonite identity, rather than receiving a sense of

pride from high numbers of enlistments, "to the old [Mennonite] folks it is all very bewildering."[19]

## Compromise, Conflict, and Conformity

Regardless of personal perspectives on the legitimacy of military service as a worthy sacrifice, and regardless of the motives of those who enlisted, the advent of the mass enlistments is a transition point in Canadian Mennonite history. In a meeting of the Peace Problems Committee of the Mennonite Church in 1942 leaders described the gravity of Mennonite enlistments by appealing to the government's own perspective of active service. The Mennonite leaders understood that service in the military was an all-encompassing effort, and that enlistment, even with the intention of conscientious objection within the service, meant the possibility of combat:

> You have a variety of appeals for service such as – Postal army service, mechanics, ambulance corps, dental and medical corps, professional engineers, radio and wireless operators. In world war No. 1 many of those services were called non-combatant but we are advised in world war No. 2 there is no such a service department in the Canadian army and if you accept service in his Majesties' [sic] Army, Navy, or Air Force you are in the Military and subject to orders…we need to recognize once [and] for all that there is no such a thing as doing service in any phase of the Military and yet be out [of service] because the War department has made it plain that we are either in or out and there is no such a thing as doing service without basic training and a call to any duty if an emergency arises.[20]

The Mennonite leaders during the Second World War recognized that there were many different ways in which Mennonites were enlisting. However, they regarded any form of active service as a departure from the accepted Mennonite stance. The fact that over forty-one per cent of those called into service in the Second World War chose to enlist, regardless of the nature of their individual service, was a deeply important occurrence in the history of the Mennonite church, suggesting important social, cultural and political factors at work.

## Russian Legacy

The association of Mennonites with military service during the Second World War was not unprecedented given the previous experiences of Mennonites in Russia. One set of such experiences centred on the 4 November 1870 announcement of Tsar Alexander II that his government intended "to require military service of all classes in the nation"[21] and the subsequent migration of one third of the Mennonites in Russia to North America. This narrative also recounted that two-thirds of the community remained, resigning themselves to the fact that they would now have to render some form of national service.[22] Of those who emigrated from the colonies and made their way to North America, 7,442 ended up in Canada.[23]

A second wave of immigrants would arrive in Canada from Russia (or the Soviet Union as it was renamed) in the 1920s. While both groups of immigrants had shared almost a century of community establishment on the Ukrainian steppes, by the time that they were reunited in Canada after the Russian Revolution they had undergone distinctive formative experiences. Indeed, they would become distinguished from each other by the names *Kanadier* (Canadians) and *Russländer* (Russians), denoting the 1870s and 1920s immigrants, respectively.[24] These vastly different experiences of the 1870s and 1920s Mennonites, added together with a third experience by Swiss-American descendant Mennonites in Ontario, meant that significant divisions characterized the different groups of Mennonites in Canada. These divisions would have severe consequences for the Mennonite peace position during the Second World War.

By fleeing Russia when they did, the *Kanadier* managed to avoid government service, thereby avoiding military involvement and any association with violence. Their time in Canada leading up to the Second World War, similarly, would be free of significant government interference. The two-thirds who stayed in Russia, on the other hand, accepted government involvement, serving in the *Sanitätsdienst (*medical corps)[25] and the *Forsteidienst*, a forestry service with military undertones.[26] As their young men were drafted into these services and the communities found themselves increasingly forced to interact with the government, the Mennonites wrestled with their thoughts on military service.[27] There were stirrings among the community that perhaps certain forms of violence were unavoidable; perhaps those Mennonites who might choose to bear arms in self-defence or military service should not be condemned.[28] Such voices represented a small minority of Men-

nonites, but their influence would carry on into Canada during the Second World War.

In a 1939 letter, Ontario Mennonite leader, S. F. Coffman, himself descended from the long-settled Swiss Ontario Mennonites who had arrived from Pennsylvania in significant numbers after 1800, observed that "Some of those people are trying to introduce the Russian method into [North] America. We do not ask for such experiences. Our attitude differs from that and we may continue to take the position we have taken in the past. They may profit by our experiences."[29] Clearly, by the Second World War, the Canadian Mennonites were firmly divided as to the nature of non-resistance.

The implications of their division would only begin to be felt by the midway point of the war. *Kanadier* and Swiss Ontario leaders believed that the strong tradition of avoidance of military participation had been compromised. The large numbers of Mennonite men enlisting in the Canadian Armed Forces shocked these leaders and many believed that the enlistment figures reflected a changing perception on the acceptability of violence. They sensed that the line between the acceptance and non-acceptance of the teachings of Christ was beginning to blur among many of the young Mennonites. They came to believe that this compromise had begun two decades prior in Russia with the formation and activity of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* ("self-defence" or "self-protection"), a militia in operation from October 1918 to March 1919,[30] involving up to three thousand men and inflicting death upon hundreds of Ukrainian anarchists.[31]

Some historians agree with this perception. John B. Toews surmises that it was the *Selbstschutz* that first saw the Mennonites depart from their consistent adherence to non-violent principles in large numbers: "[T]he Selbstschutz represented a massive participation in armed violence unknown to a group whose loyalty to the peace principle had remained intact for 400 years."[32] Later in Canada, younger relatives of these men who had chosen self-defence were called to fight the overt aggression of Nazi-ruled Germany. Self-defence, it had been reasoned prior to the *Selbstschutz*, was a necessary evil which did not compromise the peace tradition. As Al Reimer states in his recollection of the Second World War, "Some of the most respected ministers led the way, arguing that non-resistance didn't apply in this dire emergency."[33] Judge Adamson and other mobilization board officials exploited this perception among Mennonite leaders; they emphasized that the war with Hitler was one of self-defence in which the Germans were the aggressors. If they were not stopped they would eventually attack

Canada as well. In light of this, Canadians who fought in the war were acting in self-defence.[34]

It is not surprising, therefore, that by the Second World War the steadfast refusal to engage in fighting was softening. The attitudes toward non-resistance proclaimed in the home had the ability to affirm or seriously compromise the wartime reaction of Mennonite youth. One Mennonite bishop offered these remarks before a large group of leaders: "The pure gospel is still being preached from the pulpit, but how many homes have we where fathers are ashamed to call the family to worship, to read the Word of God and to pray? Where shall we land? From where did the 'Self-defense Army' (Selbstschutz) originate?"[35] To his mind, the *Selbstschutz* had contributed to this mitigation, regardless of the attitudes of its members by the time that they reached Canada.

## Empty Leadership

Even as the Canadian Mennonites faced a violent precedent in the Second World War, their leaders proved unable to effectively direct their young men and women with regard to the peace position. Prior to the Second World War, the Mennonite leaders had the opportunity to maintain their peace witness as a nationwide community in Canada. The historic peace position of the *Kanadier* before the Canadian government, for example, had been established by their *Privilegium* of 1873. While the government in the 1940s did not accommodate this peace stance, the precedent had nevertheless been set for Mennonite refusal to accept military service. In the First World War, Mennonite leaders had guardedly watched the moves made by their government. When it was demanded that the men between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five register for national service cards, a precursor to conscription, the Mennonite leaders responded with clarity to both their own men and to the government: they would not allow themselves to be subject to service.[36] When language of "exception" and "exemption" within the Military Service Act of 1917[37] raised suspicions,[38] Mennonite leaders sought legal opinion and then brought their findings before the government as a group, united in their convictions and well informed as to their rights.[39] These experiences in the First World War taught these *Kanadiar* Mennonites that they had rights with regard to their peace tradition which could be upheld before the law and before their government.

Twenty years later, with the outbreak of a second global conflict, the Mennonites found themselves once again called to re-

establish their peace tradition before the government. Historian Frank H. Epp writes that Canadian Mennonites had been warned at the end of the First World War that the government might equivocate on their exemption status, as the government had made it clear that the immigrants from the 1870s and those from the 1920s carried unequal rights.[40] However, unlike Mennonite leaders during the First World War, the leaders during the Second chose not to research their historic peace position or present it to the government as a unified body before war broke out. Though their American counterparts made a strong case to their government before the war, dialoguing with them in the calm before the storm,[41] the Canadians waited too long. By the time they were somewhat ready to try to re-establish their position before the government, the war had already started; they were deeply divided and their quiet, equivocating voices were not heard.[42] Indeed, the divisions among Canadian Mennonite leaders themselves ran deep. In *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada During the Second World War: 1939-1940*, editor David Reimer laconically remarks, "[w]e regret to learn from the minutes of October 14 and 28, 1940, that the first and the latter immigrated Mennonites fell out on account of various experiences and opinions, and consequently two different divisions were being formed."[43] The different war-time experiences of the *Kanadier* and the *Russländer*, for example, caused some Canadian government officials to argue that the two groups should be considered separately. Most significantly, their variant views on alternative military service caused such bickering that it distracted from the task of finding viable service solutions for their young men and women.[44]

Young Mennonites simply were not receiving adequate direction from their leaders on how to approach the service called of them by their government. The leaders understood the necessity of providing guidance for their young people. At perhaps the first meeting between *Kanadier* and *Russländer* leaders on May 15th, 1939 in Winkler, Manitoba, the leaders had made four resolutions which they held to be important in preparation for the war. Among these was a statement concerning the desperate need for the principles of non-resistance, which had been passed down through the centuries, to be taught more explicitly, as they were in danger of being lost. The leaders were united in their view that "We feel it to be urgently necessary to much more fully teach the doctrines of non-resistance in our churches and especially to our young people."[45]

Though they were very much consumed with finding alternatives to military service, deep divisions between the various

Mennonite groups prevented their leaders from actually introducing practical solutions. There were options for the Menno-nites; the alternative service camps, for example, drew nearly 7,000 Mennonites. However, there were thousands of others for whom the lack of direction and aid from their leaders prevented them from exploring a similar route. This leadership seemed unable to educate their young people in the ways of the non-resistance. This failure is reflected both in the number of Mennonites who were unable to convince the mobilization board judges that they had true non-resistance convictions, and by the large numbers who truly lacked non-resistance convictions and were content to serve in any way deemed necessary by their government. The chance to educate the younger generations in the traditional ways of peace had passed as thousands of the Mennonites flocked to enlist, eventually returning home to communities which would struggle to accept their decision, ostracizing them and pushing them further from a crucial element of their own faith heritage.

## Canadianization

The divisions between the *Kanadier* and *Russländer* were problematic in providing education in the peace tradition, as well as service solutions for all of their young people. But as in the United States, the assimilation of the Mennonites to the ways of the host society also played a key role in their willingness to enlist.[46] Polarizing elements were at play before the war: while many Mennonites retreated into their culturally German background with the rise of the Third Reich, others pulled away from their ethnic background as they merged into Canadian culture. The young people in particular found themselves drawn into Canadian modes of thought. In this development the *Kanadier* and *Russländer* were on similar trajectories despite immigrating half a century apart. The conservative *Kanadier* were finally beginning to succumb to the pressures of assimilation which sociologists at the time noted to be imminent in such people groups in Canada, while the more liberal *Russländer* were similarly assimilating despite having arrived far later.

That many Mennonites were retreating into a form of Germanism had an ostracizing effect on many young people, who faced suspicion and even anger by their countrymen and women. That some Mennonites were indeed Nazi sympathizers somewhat legitimized these suspicions.[47] Some young Mennonites thus felt compelled to prove their Canadian loyalties in light of the dubious

loyalties of some of their community members. Other Mennonites simply chose to enlist with a sense of national obligation. Yet others were impacted by their more immediate history of embracing self-defence in the anarchy of post-revolution Russia. Both the embracing of the will of the Canadian state, as well as violence in Russia, had made their way into the Mennonite church in Canada.

## A Nuanced Perspective

This history blurred the lines between non-resistance and self-defence, between violence and nonviolence. Indeed a wide range of perspective on the issue of violence can be found among Mennonite servicemen and women. Many of the enlistees were intentional in their wishes not to fight; they still subscribed to the basic principles of non-resistance and did not favour the war. Many considered themselves to be conscientious objectors despite their service,[48] insisting that they would not under any circumstances bear arms, though they wished to serve their country. Yet the Armed Forces' records listing the personnel makes no distinction between the various types of service. Only the memories of enlistees, including those related in interviews, can tell this story

Bill Friesen, for example, describes how his own platoon in the medical corps consisted of twenty Mennonites out of a total of forty-two men.[49] Their unit, he says, was granted "restricted" status, meaning that they were not forced to bear arms in training. However, after they began to mobilize for their service in England, they were simply amalgamated into the rest of the army and no longer identified by their restricted status. As Friesen relates it, though the men in his platoon considered themselves to be COs, they were indistinguishable from the other men. His discharge papers, issued on 17 July 1946, state simply that he "Served on Active Service with the Canadian Army," making him and his Mennonite CO comrades in his platoon indistinguishable from any other member of the RCA.[50]

A number of other distinctions divide the Canadian Mennonite enlistee experience. The first division is between those who were willing to fight and those who adhered to the Mennonite principles of non-resistance in their personal actions even within the Armed Forces. This divide is illustrated in the responses of Peter Engbrecht, a Sergeant in the Canadian Royal Air Force who served as a gunner in the 424 ("Tiger") Squadron, Number 6 Group of Bomber Command, and Bill Friesen of the RCA medical corps. By the end of the war, Engbrecht would be officially credited with five

and-a-half confirmed kills and two "probables," although his personal count stood at nine. Engbrecht would be known as a Canadian war hero, awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal and decorated on the battlefield by King George. The only ace in the RCAF who was not a pilot, he would eventually be acknowledged with a Parliament Hill fly-past and parade.[51] Engbrecht had been willing to bear arms, stating that he decided to enlist because he realized that "Canada deserved fighting for."[52] Friesen, on the other hand, had stated before the mobilization board that he did not desire to fight but wished to do anything else necessary to take part, which would eventually lead him into the restricted medical corps.[53]

The process of enlistment in the Armed Forces for these two men also followed divergent routes. Engbrecht recalls that he had desperately wanted to join the Armed Forces once the war broke out. He was opposed by his home congregation, the Whitewater Mennonite Church in Manitoba, which saw his hopes to join the fighting as directly opposing their pacifist stance. However, after consulting with his family and his Mennonite bishop, Engbrecht eventually enlisted in March 1941. Similarly, Jake Froese of Virgil, Ontario remembers being eager to volunteer for service, in fact so much so that he, along with a few friends, tried to enlist at the age of sixteen: "They looked at our age and they said, 'Just come back in a few years time.'"[54] He did, and ended up in the European theatre of war serving as a scout in the infantry.

In contrast with Engbrecht and Froese, many Mennonites waited until they were drafted to make their decision to enlist, whether in combatant or non-combatant units. Bill Friesen, for example, did not share this initial fervour. Waiting until the draft had been initiated by the Canadian government, Friesen says he responded to the call from the army in November 1941. At that point he and his brother chose to make use of their potential privileges as Mennonites by seeking out conscientious objector status. As they were from Ontario, they were ordered to stand trial in order to prove their claim. However, at the trial, rather than try for conscientious objector status Friesen and his brother stated that they "did not come there to be tossed into jail or go to bush camp but…wanted to help relieve the suffering in the medical field."[55] At that point the mobilization board officer left his seat and put his arms around the brothers, asking them if they truly meant what they had said. They assured him of their sincerity, and they were enlisted into the Royal Canadian Army in the Medical Corps on 2 December 1943.[56]

Pacifists who joined the Armed Forces took a wide range of routes to do so. Many of these enlistees had initially applied for

conscientious objector status and ended up in the service due to varying circumstances and convictions. In some cases, conscientious objector status was denied to the young men. For example, Peter Boldt, a Mennonite from Calgary, Alberta, ended up serving in the air force from 1943 until 1946 despite his convictions that killing was wrong and that the war was a vain pursuit. Boldt's application for conscientious objector status was rejected and his only alternative to enlistment was jail. Enlisting, he wrote to a Mennonite leader stating, "I am a real C.O. in uniform."[57] In other cases conscientious objector status was granted, but the individual chose to enlist in active service in either combatant or non-combatant units anyway. One Mennonite from St. Catharines, Ontario began as a conscientious objector, but after realizing that he could not make enough money, he enlisted in the army. He remained consistent, however, in his conviction that his desire was not to kill.[58]

While the Mennonite enlistees' experiences were varied and many of the men maintained a non-resistance perspective, the very fact of their enlistment is a major departure from the traditional Mennonite community and a historically significant shift in perspective. In early Anabaptist and then early Mennonite teachings, participation not only in armies but in any form of government service was thought to be contrary to following Christ. As Hans J. Hillerbrand writes, "The emphatic Anabaptist affirmation that no true Christian can participate in a government position, must be seen – in light of its early existence and uncompromising representation – as one of the major points of the 'Anabaptist Vision.'"[59] During the war, the Mennonite leaders were aware of this vision as they struggled to maintain their non-resistance faith confession in the traditional ways. Although some Mennonites were enlisting in non-combatant roles, many of the leaders, particularly but not exclusively the *Kanadier*, felt that enlisting and then attempting to be placed into a non-combatant role was not a viable solution. Their very association with the government, and especially the efforts of the government in the war, was still regarded by many as full participation in military service.

## Reluctant Acknowledgment

From the perspective of many in the Mennonite community who held to the more traditional beliefs in non-resistance, the Mennonites who served in the military were seen as undermining the larger faith tradition. These reckless young Mennonites were seen

as harming their own people. In direct contrast with the views of Canadian society at large, said the most stalwart of the non-resistant leaders, it was the COs who had exemplified selfless sacrifice. Not surprisingly, the two groups regularly received very different receptions upon their return to their communities. As Henry Neufeld recalled: "[Conscientious objectors] were welcomed back with open arms by church and community, the returning military men were not."[60] For the Mennonite servicemen and women, homecoming was often a matter of shame.

The very presence of those who served in the military, both in their churches and their communities, would be squelched. In some churches, enlistees were not welcomed back into the fellowship. In other cases they were allowed to come back to the church only after publicly confessing the sin of their acquiescence to the military. Some strongly Mennonite towns made it difficult for veterans to remain living in the community. Veteran Jake Neisteter remembered returning to Winkler, Manitoba: "People shunned you. Veterans were the last ones to be considered for jobs. All the clothes I had after five years in the army were uniforms, but when I went to church in my uniform, they threw me out." He found that he was expected to apologize if he wished to join the church.[61]

Even the funerals for Mennonite soldiers revealed this attitude. Often, Mennonite communities simply did not know how to handle their returning dead who had been killed for a cause which they did not esteem. Bergthaler Mennonite Church historian Henry J. Gerbrandt acknowledged the way that his church struggled with the sacrifice which many of their young men had made:

> Funeral services for boys who had died in battle were always embarrassing. Pallbearers or honor guards would be Canadian Legion men, and Mennonite ministers were somewhat tongue-tied, to say the least. One minister had the courage to be totally honest according to his understanding and conviction. When the coffin was lowered he intoned in a solemn voice, "…and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."[62]

Al Reimer recalls similar war-time experiences as a young boy growing up in the overwhelmingly Mennonite town of Steinbach, Manitoba. The Mennonites who had enlisted were, in some cases, better left forgotten in the mind of the community, a fact not lost on the young enlisted men. Many wished the young servicemen to be neglected and received the distain of the enlisted men. Reimer recounts an interaction between his community and a young recruit:

> I have an even more vivid memory of a young Mennonite soldier … standing arrogantly in our churchyard one Sunday morning in full military dress complete with a long, wicked-looking dress sword … basking in the envy of the older youths and defiantly returning the disapproving stares of older people … I guessed even then that he had only come to mortify his elders. And he had not miscalculated. Had a Martian suddenly dropped into our midst he could not have created a more startling or alien effect.[63]

In a third instance, David Ewert and Colin Neufeld describe the funeral of John Ewert, a radar instructor in the air force, as something of a balancing act between the desire of the RCAF to honor his service and the attempts of his own family to graciously decline full military honors while still allowing the air force to attend the funeral in an official capacity. The end result was the presence of an air force honor guard at the funeral at Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church, as well as a military gravestone, while the family wrestled for decades with questions as to the faith of their fallen son due to the divergent choices leading to his death.[64]

A non-resistant people found the thought of their own children involving themselves in the military difficult to handle. Many Mennonites viewed those who had enlisted but refused to bear arms as indistinguishable from those who had openly joined as combatants. The compromise of military service in any form was seen as the same breach of the historic peace principle.[65] During the war, the sight of a military uniform (with a sword, no less) was shocking to Mennonite sensibilities. Youth who chose to serve in the military in non-combatant roles, adhering to the principles of non-resistance, were seen as compromising in the eyes of the older Mennonites.

In the half century following the Second World War, Mennonites continued to struggle with reminders of war or Mennonite participation therein. Communities across Canada sat quietly under the blanket of silence that covered the stories of military service during the war years. Indeed, every stirring of acknowledgment was felt deeply. The raising of cenotaphs in memory of those who died during the war was seen as an inappropriate glorification of sacrifices made in war. In Altona, Manitoba, a conflict ensued after the installation of a war memorial in 1995. Letters in local newspapers, as well as in Canadian-wide Mennonite publications, were written to protest the memorial.[66] A war memorial in Winkler, Manitoba, dedicated in 1999, raised similar ire among many residents.[67] As was the case during and immediately after the Second World War, Mennonites continued to declare that "the conscientious objectors who did not go to war were the heroes, not

the war veterans."[68] The pain experienced by some of the veterans, as well as the hurt of those who felt that their own faith tradition had been undermined by the veterans, remained.

In an editorial column in the *Canadian Mennonite* magazine in 1998, Ellie Reimer wrote of the conflict that was connected to military service in the Mennonite community and the need to address the neglect of the servicemen:

> We don't know what to do with Mennonite war veterans. For many years, it was a source of shame for Mennonite parents to admit their sons were on active duty in the war. And when they were killed in action, quite often the grieving families were left to mourn alone. When the fortunate survivors returned, there was little celebration and even less room in our Mennonite community for them. They were mocked and sneered at, shunned and excommunicated. Their sacrifices for their country were ignored. Fifty years is a long time to wait for recognition.[69]

Some Mennonite Second World War veterans proudly speak of their time in service of Canada, take part in local Legionnaires groups and display their war memorabilia around their houses. However, many other veterans find themselves still constrained by the pressures of the Mennonite community. This experience was apparent in a series of interviews I conducted, as some of the veterans expressed concerns about creating tensions in the community by sharing their experiences, and one of the veterans requested that his name and any identifying features be withheld. He felt that it would be better not to risk reawakening any resentment within the Mennonite community towards veterans by speaking of his war experiences. A few of the men interviewed also mentioned that no Mennonites outside of their immediate family had ever asked them about the war. As Frank H. Epp began to collect information regarding the Mennonites in the Second World War, Mennonite veteran Dick P. Sawatsky noted a similar sentiment, writing, "To my knowledge this is the first time anyone has asked for a personal contribution from us, the Mennonite boys who chose to go into active overseas service in World War II."[70] They are burdened with the sense that they should be ashamed of their time of service and are unable to voice their memories and experiences. In 1974 Second World War veteran Herman Rempel wrote a short paper, entitled "Mennonite Mavericks," concerning his fellow Mennonite servicemen and women. Rempel attempted "to persuade the reader not to be too judgmental of these Canadian Mennonites but rather to consider the contribution they made in their various roles. Many gave the supreme sacrifice which so far

has never been publicly acknowledged by Mennonites officially."[71] The perceived need to ask his readers not to condemn the veterans for their service may be perplexing to Canadian Mennonites, but it is a reality which persists.

## Conclusion

While Mennonites have been tempted to ignore what they view as the somewhat ignominious side of their community's involvement in the war, it is irresponsible to regard the large number of enlistees as simply a group of men who rejected Mennonite principles. Many of the young Mennonites, insufficiently led by their quarrelling leaders, took the matter of their conscience into their own hands and offered their own solutions to the problem of non-resistance, duty and sacrifice. These Mennonites are not easily identifiable in any official manner, but they must be acknowledged nonetheless. Arguably, the men who attempted to serve within the Canadian Armed Forces as conscientious objectors best exemplified Mennonite tradition, combining the objection to violence with a willingness to sacrifice. Where they did not embody their Mennonite heritage was in their individualism. Their inability to act within a fellowship of mutually supporting believers, however, is indicative of the fact that the Mennonite church in Canada during the Second World War was not prepared to act as a community, let alone as one which was willing to exemplify both sacrifice and non-violent resistance.

The Mennonites have a storied peace tradition since their beginnings with the rise of the Anabaptists in the midst of the Protestant Reformation. Their acceptance of the teachings of Jesus as both practical and necessary, in the midst of a world which largely finds these teachings both chimerical and unreasonable, has caused them to tread a difficult path over the centuries. Theirs is a history of the inability to reconcile themselves to government, as well as one of persecution and flight. This was true of the Mennonite people in Russia in the 1870s, as many fled at the realization that they would have to compromise their convictions were they to remain in the old homeland. The two-thirds of their population who stayed put did so prepared to adjust old teachings. Almost seventy years later these choices reflected collectively in the Mennonite community across Canada. While their decisions are surprising in light of their history as a whole, in light of their more immediate experiences in Russia they are less so. The Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War were a product of their own choices

both in Canada and in Russia in the previous decades. Though their many enlistments in the Armed Forces during the war would not seem to cohere with the ideals of their traditions, they are certainly representative of the state of the Mennonite people in Canada in the mid-twentieth century. Even so, this story has been allowed to fade back into the recesses of history. The question that remains is to what extent the peace tradition truly remains intact among the Canadian Mennonites. Perhaps the Canadian Mennonites were the most visible group among the conscientious objectors in the Second World War, but their subscription to the peace traditions for which they were known was by no means overwhelming.

## Notes

1 T. D. Regehr, "Lost Sons: The Canadian Mennonite Soldiers of World War II." *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 66, no. 4 (1992).

2 T. D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

3 "I do not know of any other calculations which report more accurately Canadian Mennonite military enlistments during World War II." T. D. Regehr, "Number who Enlisted Based on Careful Research," *Canadian Mennonite*, 18 January 1999, 13.

4 See Sigfried Bartel, "Lessons for Today from Mennonite History," *Canadian Mennonite*, 22 October 2001, 5; Timothy Dyck, "Wrestling with Peacemaking," *Canadian Mennonite*, 7 Feb 2005, 2; A. James Reimer, "Weep with Those who Weep," *Canadian Mennonite*, 12 February 2001, 6; Ellie Reimer, "Decision of Conscience not Respected," *Canadian Mennonite*, 26 October 1998, 12; Ellie Reimer, "Some went to War, Some Served at Home: A Trustworthy Soldier," *Canadian Mennonite*, 26 October 1998, 12. An article written by a Mennonite and published in the largest newspaper in St. Catharines, ON in 2009, when the M. A. thesis on which this article is based was in progress, similarly referred to the figures of 7,500 conscientious objectors and 4,500 enlistees. See Larry Cornies, "Distant Kin is a War Treasure," *St. Catharines Standard*, 10 November 2009, A12.

5 Peter Lorenz Neufeld, *Mennonites at War, A Double-Edged Sword: Canadian Mennonites in World War II* (Deloraine, MB: DTS Publishing, 1997), 70. By way of example Neufeld mentions John Friesen, air force Flying Officer and recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, as a name which was left off of the Epp/CGCA list. Neufeld was directed to Friesen, from Altona, MB, through personal correspondence with Art Braun, also of Altona, as he was directed to others through personal correspondence. See Neufeld, *Mennonites at War*, 26, 70, 134. Neufeld also notes the surname "Striemer" as a Mennonite family name not acknowledged as such in the Epp Collection/Conrad Grebel College Archives (hereafter CGCA) lists. Neufeld's own "Neufeld Supplementary List" contains five Striemers, of Waldheim, SK and Plum Coulee, MB, both heavily Mennonite-populated towns. See Neufeld, *Mennonites at War*, 48, 70, 137.

[6] The terminology used in this paper generally refers to men, as men were the targets of the draft and were the vast majority of those both being recruited and enlisted. However the research done by Helen Epp and Marlene Epp on the Canadian Armed Forces records suggests that there were 55 Mennonite women who enlisted as well. (CGCA), Epp Collection. The figures presented throughout this thesis concerning the total numbers of Mennonite military enlistees include this group of women.

[7] Mennonites were determined simply through recognition of culturally Mennonite surnames. "[G]oing over the list I found 22 names which were definitely Mennonite or of that origin," Abe Friesen, letter to I. G. Neufeld, 25 March 1942, CGCA, Epp Collection, WWII 1940 War.

[8] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada*, 431. Other reports give even lower figures for the total Mennonite population. In 1942 I. G. Neufeld held the number to be closer to 80,000 (I. G. Neufeld, "Mennonites and the War," CGCA, Epp Collection, WWII 1940 War, I. G. Neufeld Papers, 4), and the Mennonite Yearbook showed that only 50,000 were actually members of Canadian Mennonite congregations. Regehr, "Lost Sons," 464.

[9] Abe Friesen, letter to I. G. Neufeld, 25 March 1942, CGCA, Epp Collection, WWII 1940 War.

[10] W. A. Tucker, letter to I. G. Neufeld, 19 March 1942, CGCA, Epp Collection, WWII 1940 War, I. G. Neufeld Papers. This is presumably only for air force enlistments.

[11] George A. Cruickshank, letter to I. G. Neufeld, 5 April 1943, CGCA, Epp Collection, WWII 1940 War, I. G. Neufeld Papers.

[12] "Peter Hoeppner, One of Five Brothers in Uniform, Home From the Sea," *The Morden Times*, 11 April 1945, 1.

[13] "Mennonite Youth Break With Pacifism of Fathers to Fight for Canada, Younger Generation Discards Yoke of Pacifism as Old Beliefs Fade Out," *Globe and Mail*, 17 September 1943, 1.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Kenneth Wayne Reddig's 1989 M. A. thesis for the University of Manitoba outlines the relationship between the mobilization boards and the Canadian Mennonites during the war. Kenneth Wayne Reddig, "Manitoba Mennonites and the Winnipeg Mobilization Board in World War II" (M. A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1989).

[17] Ibid., 101.

[18] George A. Cruickshank, letter to I. G. Neufeld, 5 April 1943, CGCA, Epp Collection, WWII 1940 War, I. G. Neufeld Papers. Refer to Chapter Three – Canadian Mennonite Patriotism.

[19] "Mennonite Youth Break With Pacifism of Fathers," 1.

[20] "The Task We Face," Peace Problems Committee of the Mennonite Church, 1 October 1942, CGCA, Epp Collection, 1940 WWII Specia.

[21] Lawrence Klippenstein. "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church-State Relations: 1789-1936." (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1984), 45.

[22] Epp, *Exodus*, 26.

[23] Ibid., 3.

[24] As Frank H. Epp notes, disparaging use of the names *Kanadier* and *Russländer* escalated throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The *Kanadier* found the well-educated and progressive *Russländer* to be aggressive, domineer-

ing, arrogant and haughty from their years of upscale living in Russia, despite the ensuing years of persecution and poverty. The hardworking and traditional *Kanadier* were seen as unsophisticated, uneducated, simple and overly old-fashioned by the *Russländer*. See Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940: A People's Struggle for Survival* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982).

25 While under the auspices of the military, the *Sanitätsdienst* was not strictly a part of the military. F. C. Peters shows that the medical corps service in Russia was different than that in Canada and the United States during the Second World War, whose units were military, whether combatant or non-combatant. See F. C. Peters, *Mennonite Life*, January 1955, 31-35.

26 Klippenstein, "State Service," 85-111.

27 During the First World War the Mennonites continued to be involved in various capacities, in the forestry services, medical corps and other branches of the military. It was not until the dust settled after the war that it became clear just how much the Mennonite mentality had changed. 12,000 men in total ended up enlisting. Out of the 12,000, six thousand actually found themselves on the front lines of the fighting in the hospital and ambulance corps service. A small number joined military combat units. Epp, *Exodus*, 28.

28 Klippenstein, "State Service," 148-49.

29 S. F. Coffman, letter to Moses H. Schmitt, 11 May 1939, CGCA, S.F. Coffman Papers.

30 John B. Toews, "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in the Ukraine (1918-1919)," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 46 (1972): 5. Toews' article is the most significant comprehensive description of the *Selbstschutz*. More recently, Lawrence Klippenstein's article, "The Selbstschutz: A Mennonite Army in Ukraine 1918-1919," *Надійшладоредколегії* (10 September 2007): 175-205, provides even more information on the entire *Selbstschutz* period with detailed footnotes. Harvey L. Dyck et al, eds. *Nestor Makhno and the Eichenfeld Massacre: A Civil War Tragedy in a Ukrainian Mennonite Village*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2004, details the actions of the *Makhnovtsy* in one of their most brutal attacks on a Mennonite village.

31 Although the total numbers are unknown, in one three-day battle alone, just prior to its disbandment, the *Selbstschutz* killed 760 men. John B. Toews, *Czars, Soviets and Mennonites* (Newton, KA: Faith and Life, 1982), 90-91.

32 Toews, "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in the Ukraine (1918-1919)," 5.

33 Henry Neufeld, "Peace Makers or Takers?" *Canadian Mennonite*, 7 December 1998, 30.

34 Adamson's campaign carrying the theme "IF Manitoba Were Occupied" was displayed in newspapers such as *The Morden Times* and became well known throughout Manitoba.

35 David P. Reimer, *Experiences of the Mennonites in Canada During the Second World War 1939-1945* (Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen, 1946), 49. In stories of veterans that occasionally appear in Mennonite publications the pattern of relatives who had fought in Russia is difficult to ignore. There are few instances where veterans are mentioned in Mennonite publications, so the fact of association with *Selbstschutz* members may be incidental, but it bears mentioning nonetheless. Family histories of veterans often show simi-

lar patterns, with Russian army combat participation also mentioned by some.

[36] Epp, *Exodus*, 369.

[37] J. L. Granatstein, and J. M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), 63-64.

[38] The importance of the difference between exemption and exception are noted in David Warren Fransen, "Canadian Mennonites and Conscientious Objection in World War II." (M. A. thesis, University of Waterloo, 1977), 23, and Reddig, "Manitoba Mennonites and the Winnipeg Mobilization Board in World War II," 34-36, and explained in Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), 374-76, 384-85. Essentially, the Mennonites in Ontario were initially "exemptions in" the act, meaning they did not have to fight, but could still be called to do non-combatant service, whereas those who were "exceptions from" the act did not have to do even non-combatant service.

[39] Fransen, "Canadian Mennonites and Conscientious Objection in World War II," 23; Reddig, "Manitoba Mennonites and the Winnipeg Mobilization Board in World War II," 34-36; Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920*, 374-76, 384-85.

[40] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920*, 385.

[41] American Mennonites were familiar with dialogue with their government through the Peace Problems Committee, as they intentionally contacted each new administration in order to create avenues for allowing the government to know the collective Mennonite stance on various issues at different points. By way of example, Hershberger notes the intentions behind a series of letters which the Peace Problems Committee (which he would eventually join in 1959) had written to President Hoover's administration in 1927: "We owe it to the 'powers that be' to let them know our position on this question." See Guy Franklin Hershberger, *The Mennonite Church in the Second World War* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1951), 5. By the time that Canada declared war on Germany on 10 September 1939 the American Mennonites had already organized themselves and their collective position before their own government, despite the fact that they were not to enter the war until 8 December 1941, over two years later. It should be noted that, as is the case with the Canadian Mennonites, the numbers of American Mennonite enlistments reflect high numbers in service in the Armed Forces. Of the 9,809 drafted men affiliated with a Mennonite group, 4,536 ended up in Civilian Public Service (the American wartime service for conscientious objectors) and 5,273 ended up in the Armed Forces. That is 46.2 percent in CPS and 53.8 in the Armed Forces. In the Second World War, the Americans were establishing their official wartime alternative service, while the Canadians were starting from an already well-established official position. Rather than viewing the American Mennonite figures with regard to those who opted to go along with military service when drafted, the Americans may be seen in light of the fact that their leaders were able to set a new precedent to allow many of their people the option to refuse armed service. See Hershberger, *Church*, 39. For the American story see also: Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998) and Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Women Against the Good*

*War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[42] Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970,* 42. The delegation sent to Roosevelt on 10 January 1940 to offer what Hershberger would call "concrete proposals for alternative service in case of conscription" was emblematic of the organized manner with which the American Mennonites were able to approach their government. As Hershberger had written earlier, such straightforward and early initiative would offer the Mennonites the greatest possibility of the government agreeing to their proposals.

[43] David P. Reimer, *Experiences of the Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945*, 7. These strongly held divergent positions would be continuously and arduously debated throughout many meetings between the church leaders before and throughout the war.

[44] A meeting held in Winkler, Manitoba, on 15 May 1939 was perhaps the first instance of recorded debate between the *Russländer* and *Kanadier* leaders concerning the issue of the acceptability of different forms of alternative service. *Russländer* leader B. B. Janz offered the opinion that alternative service in the medical corps would be acceptable, which was hotly contested by the *Kanadier* leaders. The mutual disagreement would continue to prevent the Mennonite leaders from establishing an organized front to present to the government. Incidentally, this meeting was largely the result of a meeting held in Chicago on 10-11 March 1939 at which the American organization had "finally inspired the Canadian leaders to move towards organizing their people." See Fransen, "Canadian Mennonites and Conscientious Objection in World War II," 23.

[45] Reimer, *Experiences of the Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945*, 51.

[46] See Leo Driedger, *The Ethnic Factor: Identity in Diversity*, McGraw-Hill Ryerson Series in Canadian Sociology (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1989), 40-41.

[47] See: 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. diss., University of Minnesota, 1965), 116. Well-known Mennonite leaders also contributed articles to *Der Bote* that promoted Nazi concepts of German national identification and racial supremacy. B. H. Unruh, "Zur Aufklärung," *Der Bote* XI (1934): 3; C. F. Klassen, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote* X (1933): 2; J. H. Janzen, "Deutschland's Erwachen," *Der Bote* X (1933): 4; Janzen, "Geschichte," 3. ; David Toews, "Einige Reiseeindrücke," *Der Bote* XIII (1936): 1; B. H. Unruh, "Um die deutsche Sache," *Der Bote* XIV (1937): 2.

[48] One Mennonite Second World War veteran enlisted in the army and was part of an infantry unit despite his personal conviction of conscientious objection towards violence. He stated that, regardless of his convictions, he also felt that "you were in the army, and what the army did you gotta [sic] do." Name withheld by request, interview by Nathan Dirks, McMaster University, 27 May 2009.

[49] Friesen was a Lance Corporal with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, 22nd Canadian General Hospital. Bill Friesen, Pamphlet, Personal Collection, "Restricted Enlistment Dec 2/1943: Canadian Army Medical Corp [sic]"; Bill Friesen, interview by Nathan Dirks, McMaster University, 15 October 2009.

[50] Bill Friesen, interview by Nathan Dirks, 15 October 2009.
[51] Combat Report Pro-Forma, 10-11 June 1944, 17A and 16A, Nanton Lancaster Society, Nanton, AB; Peter Lorenz Neufeld, *Mennonites at War* (Deloraine, MB: DTS Publishing, 1996), 17. A detailed history of the Canadian bomber group of the Second World War is found in Spencer Dunmore & William Carter, *Reap the Whirlwind: The Untold Story of 6 Group, Canada's Bomber Force of World War II* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).
[52] Neufeld, *Mennonites at War*, 17.
[53] Bill Friesen, interview by Nathan Dirks, 15 October 2009.
[54] Jake Froese, interview by Nathan Dirks, McMaster University, 16 May 2009.
[55] Bill Friesen, Pamphlet, Personal Collection, "Restricted Enlistment Dec 2/1943: Canadian Army Medical Corp."
[56] Epp/CGCA list.
[57] Peter Boldt, letter to B. B. Janz, n.d., Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Benjamin B. Janz fonds, vol. 982 file 68.
[58] Name withheld by request, interview by Nathan Dirks, 27 May 2009.
[59] Hans J. Hillerbrand, "The Anabaptist View of the State," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 32 (1958): 94.
[60] Henry Neufeld, "Peace Makers or Takers?," 30. For some references see the following: Ellie Reimer, "Some Went to War, Some Served at Home: A Trustworthy Soldier," 12; Ellie Reimer, "Decision of Conscience not Respected," 12; Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba* (Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen, 1970), 314; Al Reimer, "The War Brings its own Conflict to Steinbach," *Mennonite Mirror*, June 1974, 15.
[61] Ellie Reimer, "Some Went to War, Some Served at Home: A Trustworthy Soldier," 12.
[62] Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba* (Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen, 1970), 314.
[63] Al Reimer, "The War Brings its own Conflict to Steinbach," *Mennonite Mirror*, June 1974, 15.
[64] David Ewert and Colin P. Neufeld, "Tribute to John Ewert (1921-1943)," *Newsletter – Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta*, Vol. IX, No. 2, May 2007, 7-8.
[65] Veteran Bill Friesen remembered that, regardless of whether one was serving in forestry or the Red Cross, in the eyes of the Mennonite community it was "a terrible thing to have a uniform on," Bill Friesen, interview by Nathan Dirks, 15 October 2009.
[66] Conrad Stoesz, "Some did Protest War Memorial in Altona," *Canadian Mennonite*, 26 March 2001, 11.
[67] Out of 132 names on the Winkler Honor Roll only twenty-seven are not traditional Mennonite names (although Frank Brown holds the figures at 126 men and women on active service who gave their addresses as Winkler, 108 of which had traditionally Mennonite names. See Frank Brown, *A History of Winkler: 1892-1973* [Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen], 116). Similarly, out of 106 names noted as having served in the Second World War from Altona, only six are not traditional Mennonite names. See Altona & District Cenotaph, Program, Official Dedication Ceremony, 29 July 1995.

[68] Conrad Stoesz, "Some did Protest War Memorial in Altona," *Canadian Mennonite*, 26 March 2001, 11.
[69] Ellie Reimer, "Decision of Conscience not Respected," 12.
[70] See Dick P. Sawatsky, letter to Frank H. Epp, 14 January 1980, CGCA, Epp Collection, WWII Military Service 4.
[71] Herman Rempel, "Mennonite Mavericks," *Manitoba Memories, 1874-1974: A Century Past But Not Forgotten*, ed. Julius G. Toews and Lawrence Klippenstein, 146-48.