

MCC and the Iron Curtain: Serving the Mennonite Family in the USSR after the Second World War

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From the outset of the Cold War, Mennonites found themselves on both sides of the Iron Curtain. As a result, they were forced to play a number of roles while adapting to other players in this global drama who acted both overtly and covertly. This article is intended to give an overview of the situation while focusing on communications strategies that were shaped by the Cold War information front.

After the Second World War, North American Mennonites in general, and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in particular, knew little about the condition of their Mennonite brethren behind the Iron Curtain. Just one month after the end of the war, the Canadian Mennonite German periodical *Der Bote*, published in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, announced a strategy designed to overcome this information vacuum. It would begin publishing private letters from persons in the USSR written to relatives in Canada.¹ A second German periodical, *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, published in Winnipeg, picked up the initiative several months later. Over the next two decades, the letters section—featuring writers from the USSR—became a regular feature in both periodicals.

Already the first letter printed in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* in 1946 revealed great changes among Mennonites who remained in the USSR.² The writer's return address was from western

Kazakhstan, which would have come as a surprise to readers as this was an area that had not witnessed Mennonite settlement prior to the war. The letter's author, Justina Martens, was extremely careful with her choice of words. Nevertheless, readers could learn that half of the former residents of Kleefeld (in the former Molotschna colony) had died after being deported to that location in 1941. Some had been conscripted into the *Trudarmia* labour battalions after 1942 and died in labour camps. Others had been arrested earlier during the Great Terror of the 1930s and had perished. Martens was no stranger to religious symbolism: to describe her situation she made references to Psalm 137 ("By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion"). A large part of the letter consisted of questions about the whereabouts of relatives and acquaintances.

A decade later, MCC knew much more about Mennonites in the USSR. MCC workers in Europe, namely, Cornelius F. Klassen, began a card index of Mennonites in the USSR before 1948.³ Compiled from a variety of sources, primarily the Red Cross *Suchdienst*, in 1956 the MCC index contained 3,907 names. By the end of 1979, the index had grown to include 17,719 persons.⁴ This index formed the MCC database of Mennonites behind the Iron Curtain and included more or less detailed information about Mennonites in twenty-four regions (*oblasts* or *krais*) of the country as well as the names of several elders and preachers. This database far surpassed information sources of other western institutions focused on the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the information could hardly be regarded as representative or complete in terms of geographical coverage and source. Most information came from people who maintained contact via letters with relatives in Canada or postwar refugees. Persons without such connections were largely invisible. Furthermore, this information revealed little about church and cultural life.

With the outbreak of war Mennonites had found themselves dispersed throughout the Soviet Union. Traditional social foundations had been destroyed during the so-called cultural revolution of the 1930s. Aggressive anti-church policies completely destroyed the church environment. Political purges deprived Mennonites of their confessional and teaching elite. Furthermore, the mobilization and deportation of ethnic Germans to labour camps at the beginning of the war finally put a stop to the existence of separate colonies. Until 1956, deported Germans in general and Mennonites in particular were put under special supervision and were forbidden to leave their places of residence. After 1956, an internal migration from labour settlements in the Russian North, the Urals, and Siberia began. By the mid-1960s almost half of the Germans who had survived the

war found themselves living in Kazakhstan. The largest concentration of Germans in the USSR occupied the Karaganda region, an area with many coal mines and a harsh climate.⁵ A number of Mennonites found themselves in large cities closed to visitors from abroad. Others were scattered over vast rural areas. The war thus forged a new Soviet Mennonite geography. Of the former colonies, only those in the east of the country remained: Orenburg, Omsk, Altai, and a couple of villages in Kyrgyzstan. Chortitza and Molotschna lived on only in the memories of the older generation.

In this new Mennonite geography, religious policies were shaped by the Communist Party and implemented by the Soviet government through the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults. Established in 1944, at a time when the Soviet state was modifying its policies on religion, the council was intended as the government's interface with all religious communities except the Russian Orthodox Church, which had its own council; these councils were merged into the Council for Religious Affairs in 1965. The authority of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults extended to the legalization, or registration, of churches. The legalization policy was very restrictive, especially in the eastern part of the country. For example, out of twenty-four Russian Evangelical Christian-Baptist congregations in the Kemerovo region in Siberia, only five were registered.⁶ Registered churches were entitled to their own houses of worship while the unregistered ones were considered illegal and harshly prosecuted by law. The legalization process was halted in 1948.⁷ Furthermore, in the wake of Second World War, the Mennonite religion was considered illegal by definition because of its members' refusal of military service. Only after 1965 could Mennonite congregations obtain legal status.

Yet another central Cold War actor that influenced Mennonite communication strategies was the state security service, or KGB. It was responsible for monitoring all foreign communications, and domestically it was involved in the supervision of churches, especially illegal ones. Between 1947 and 1953, the KGB brutally suppressed illegal congregations. During these years sentences of twenty-five years in labour camps were typical for individuals arrested for illegal religious activity. Arrests affected on average one in four illegal communities.⁸

One of the most important confessional players was the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. Russian Baptists had much in common with the Mennonite Brethren, extending back to relations with Russian-speaking Baptists established in the 1860s and 1870s, particularly through the Mennonite Brethren minister and missionary Johann Wieler. The Mennonite Brethren had also

supported the Evangelical Christians, a second-generation Baptist movement founded in the early twentieth century. Congregations of both confessions were almost entirely destroyed during the 1930s. In 1944, their remnants received state recognition as the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, but at a high price. They were forced to introduce a rigid hierarchy modelled after the Russian Orthodox Church. In this way, the state achieved extensive control over 2,752 of the initially registered congregations in the country. Even with this concession, official registration did not provide guarantees against the closure of Baptist congregations. By the end of 1953 their number had reduced by 23 percent to 2,140.⁹ In this climate, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists fought hard for survival.

MCC's Postwar Initiatives toward Soviet Mennonites

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, brought about sweeping changes in society, but religion remained the enemy according to state ideology. It was not until late 1954 that signs first appeared of an easing of tensions between the state and religious communities. The cautious loosening of restrictions was apparent on the international communications front. At the end of 1955, the official organ of the All-Union Council published a major report on the visit of its large delegation to the Baptist World Alliance congress in England. Special mention was made of the banquet at the Soviet Embassy in honour of the church community. The magazine was read not only in churches, but also by local authorities, as well as by people overseas. The breakthrough of the All-Union Council on the international stage took place amid a continuing climate of deep mistrust towards the faith community in the Soviet Union. The KGB would certainly have monitored this overseas trip.¹⁰

One of the most respected North American Mennonites of the time, Harold S. Bender, then serving as president of the Mennonite World Conference and a member of the executive committee of MCC, learned of this visit while he was also in Europe. On July 28, 1955, he had a meeting in Birmingham, England, with the leadership of the All-Union Council that left him in a state of euphoria. As a result of the meeting, he immediately prepared a press release, which was printed in full in the *Mennonite Weekly Review* and the *Gospel Herald*.¹¹ Bender framed this press release as no less than "the first authentic report of the status of Mennonites in Russia . . . since World War II." The information obtained from the Russians was consistently positive: Mennonites were "still largely farmers

and as such are prosperous above other farmers.” Some were working in industries in the Urals, Siberia, and Karaganda. In the latter city, four hundred had Mennonites joined a thousand-member Baptist church. Bender considered it quite possible for Mennonites in North America to visit their brethren in the USSR at any time and even to preach in Mennonite congregations.

Along with the press release, Bender shared with his MCC colleagues other results of the meeting with Baptist leaders. Their general secretary, Alexander V. Karev, agreed to apply to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults for permission for a Mennonite delegation to visit the Soviet Union. Ideally, this would consist of three people who would travel across the country, with the visit arranged by the state tourist agency, Intourist. Karev, who spoke excellent German, even promised to accompany the delegation as an interpreter.¹²

The news caused a sensation in the Mennonite community. Tempered enthusiasm for the new possibilities was mixed with cautious disbelief. The latter prevailed. German-speaking Canadian Mennonite newspapers, whose readers were much more connected with relatives in the Soviet Union, also printed Bender’s press release in full, but prefaced it with words of caution.¹³ *Der Bote* even included a letter in the same issue from a former resident of Kubanka (Orenburg colony), written in a very different tone: “We do not preach as we used to in former times, but we sing a lot, recite some poems and sometimes someone reads a verse from the Bible and talks about it a little bit.”¹⁴ Even the editor of the original press release in the *Mennonite Weekly Review* added a subheading reminding readers that “Information Indicates All Removed From Former Homes to Ural Region.”

With this news, Mennonites in the Soviet Union now rose to the top of the MCC priority list. This was hardly surprising. A large number of North American Mennonites had roots in Russia, and over 7,000 had managed to reach Canada via Europe in the last major emigration, after the Second World War.¹⁵ Of the 35,000 Mennonites who had fled westward to Germany at the end of the war, some 23,000 were rounded up by Soviet forces and deported back to the Soviet Union, primarily to Siberia and Kazakhstan.¹⁶ A decade after this forced separation, Canadian Mennonites now saw the possibility of reconnecting with their family members.

Independent of the Mennonite World Conference, MCC decided to support a trip to the USSR by representatives of various Mennonite groups. It also decided to compile and systematize all available information about Mennonites in the USSR. MCC immediately detected inconsistencies and was aware of the overly optimistic tone of

Moscow's statements. As it considered the truth of the Mennonite situation in the USSR, MCC, perhaps naively, still did not seriously rule out the possibility of an organized exodus.¹⁷ In November 1955, Paul Peachey, the MCC director in Europe, submitted a proposal for an MCC delegation to travel to the Soviet Union.¹⁸ The proposal was endorsed by a group of distinguished American Mennonites who were by no means familiar with Soviet realities. Peachey's plan called for sending a goodwill team of four to six Mennonites through the Historic Peace Churches association, which included Quakers, who at that time were allowed entry into the USSR. The team was to undertake a six-month tour of the USSR and other countries. According to the proposal, the mission of this visit was to "dispel mistrust and spread the message of goodwill to ordinary people through contacts with individuals and groups; their Christian message was to be one of love and reconciliation."¹⁹ The goal of the team was support for peace churches and missionaries; its witness was to be apolitical. In addition, MCC also proposed sending a group of five volunteers from the US to work for a year in an agricultural or industrial enterprise of the Soviet authorities' choosing while prayerfully spreading the testimony of Christ, repentance, and reconciliation.²⁰

On May 28, 1956, a delegation of the All-Union Council, invited by the Baptist World Alliance to travel to the United States, made a stopover in Chicago to meet with more than two hundred members of the Mennonite community. The next day, a small meeting was held between the leadership of the All-Union Council and leaders of MCC and several Mennonite churches. In the meetings, the North Americans demonstrated a tremendous interest in the USSR, especially in the development of religious freedom. The Russians expressed a positive outlook, but acknowledged that religious legislation had not changed after Stalin's death. In keeping with the tone of Soviet propaganda, Karev, a member of the delegation, linked the cruel suffering of Christians in the USSR to the name of Lavrenti Beria, longtime secret police chief, saying that much had changed in the country since his death in late 1953. It was only in 1961 that the severe persecutions and numerous executions were attributed directly to Stalin.

As a manifestation of the improvement in religious freedoms, Karev cited the fact that many preachers who had been convicted of political crimes had been released from prison. The guests conceded, however, that since Mennonites were not registered with the authorities as a religious community, they still had no legal right to their own houses of worship. They would meet either in private houses or, especially in Central Asia, Siberia, and the Urals, together with Baptists. Karev, who was very sober in his assessment

of the chances for a legally separate Mennonite denomination, answered a question about the prospects for an independent registration of the Mennonites by referring to an association with the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. The Americans were impressed by the fact that military service could be refused in Soviet Russia, although Karev merely noted that no one had abolished the 1919 decree allowing for religious conscientious objection. He cited his own alternative service during the Civil War three decades earlier as an example, though, beginning in 1955, Mennonite young men were compulsorily drafted into military service.²¹

The inconsistencies of the Soviet delegation in their answers to questions were evident to the decision-makers within MCC. Moreover, from the very beginning, MCC leadership saw the All-Union Council as people who enjoyed the political trust of the Soviet authorities, which, in turn, raised doubts about their reliability.²² On the other hand, MCC had few alternatives to working through officially sanctioned channels, considering that its constituents and people on the ground in the Soviet Union were expecting action. Meanwhile, for the All-Union Council leadership, North American Mennonites were merely a sideshow in their struggle for survival. Their main focus was the Baptist World Alliance, and particularly American Baptists, who had invited the Soviet Baptist leadership to visit, the first such delegation since 1928. The 1955 delegation was preceded by a visit to the USSR a year earlier by Baptist World Alliance president F. Townley Lord. For that visit, the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults had secured permission from the First Secretary of the Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev himself.²³

During Stalin's last year, Soviet political leaders had found that, in the context of the global confrontation of the Cold War, religious organizations could be instrumentalized to serve their purposes. The Baptist leadership in the USSR, in turn, discovered that participation in international peace diplomacy was an important factor in their own survival. This tendency was more pronounced after the death of Stalin, as the Soviet Union became ever more concerned with broadcasting a positive image abroad. Religious figures, domestic and foreign, were caught up in this state objective. Naturally, the Baptist leaders could only act within narrow limits, set by the government, even as they were permitted to travel abroad to the Soviet Union's ideological enemy. However, they could hardly be classed as passive servants of the will of the state. Their behaviour reflected a pursuit of independent goals, different from those of the Communist government, and from those of their overseas brethren.

In courting overseas support, Baptists from the USSR successfully employed the proven tool of the charm offensive. Baptist World

Alliance representatives accompanying the delegation noted that “nowhere had the Baptist delegation talked about conditions in the Soviet Union as they did here with the Mennonites in Chicago.”²⁴ In an outburst of good feelings, the planned MCC delegation to the USSR was advised to confide in the leadership of the All-Union Council.

The most important event for MCC’s emerging Soviet project was the visit by Harold Bender and the Canadian Mennonite Brethren David Wiens (who had emigrated in 1924) in the fall of 1956.²⁵ Bender’s plans for the trip were ambitious but he was ultimately disappointed. They were travelling through the USSR on a tourist visa, so their visit there was not considered official. Instead of visiting Mennonites in different places in six provinces as planned, the two delegates only met with a few individuals in hotels in Moscow and Alma-Ata. However, they did arrange extensive meetings with the leadership of the All-Union Council to whom MCC offered a program of comprehensive support. This included financing for the construction of prayer houses and the extension of an official invitation to the Mennonite World Conference to be held in Germany in 1957 and a separate peace conference in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, Bender and Wiens were denied an audience with the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults due to the death of its chairman ten days earlier.

Despite the limitations of the trip, Bender returned home full of hope. A series of special church meetings in North America, where both delegates reported their impressions, were attended by a total of 40,000 people.²⁶ As a result, MCC adopted a new strategy for the USSR. Reflecting the importance of the project and its prospects, a separate department was established within MCC for Mennonite affairs in the USSR. Its tasks were to include family reunions, peace efforts, aid projects, the organization of a peace conference in Europe, and the exchange of delegations. A second delegate visit of fifteen to twenty people was also planned for 1957.²⁷

In the Soviet Union, Karev submitted a report on Bender and Wiens’s visit to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults two weeks after their departure. He demonstrated his loyalty by dis-tancing himself from the two men even as he reported on their activities. Most alarming for the state would have been Karev’s disclosure that Soviet Mennonites intended to establish their own Mennonite Union in the USSR, regardless of whether it would be officially registered; this detail was later highlighted by a reader of the report. Karev also gave the names of the most active Mennonites in the country. For his part, Karev recommended to the government that Mennonites be admitted to the All-Union Council of Evangelical

Christians-Baptists, while permitting them to preserving their specific practices, such as baptism by pouring. Karev's report concluded with a phrase about the guests' regret "that they could not speak of the religious freedom afforded to Mennonites living in the USSR, since they had not had the opportunity to see this freedom."²⁸

The voiceless majority of Mennonites in the USSR also benefited from Bender and Wiens's visit, which sent the Soviet state a strong signal that there was considerable interest in their situation in the West. This occurred only a few months after Mennonites had been given freedom to choose their own place of residence voluntarily. As a result, the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults began to pay special attention to this religious confession, which still had no legal status.

Bender's individual hopes for future relationship-building came to an abrupt end. In 1957, he was denied a visa and the MCC's plans were put on hold. Over the following year, the MCC was forced to respond to events in the USSR in other ways. In 1958, a new wave of religious persecution began, which would only subside somewhat in 1964, when the state made some concessions and significantly expanded the range of legal religions. It was during this period of greater openness to religion that the first Mennonite congregations were registered with the state in 1966. Some of them joined the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists as Karev had proposed earlier. Furthermore, a regular exchange of delegations between Mennonites in the West and the All-Union Council began to take place.

A New MCC Strategy

In 1973, MCC adopted a new strategy for the Soviet Union that included cooperation with agencies critical of communism. The main reason for this was the waning interest of the Baptist World Alliance in believers in the USSR.²⁹ The first Western confessional centre Mennonites chose to cooperate with was Michael Bourdeaux's Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism (CSRC), south of London, the future Keston College.³⁰ Bourdeaux, an Anglican priest, who by then had published several books, had a reputation as a voice for those behind the Iron Curtain who were persecuted for their faith.³¹ Although he was disliked by the World Council of Churches, Bourdeaux was not known as an anti-Soviet, unlike, for example, Richard Wurmbrand, the unapologetically anti-communist leader of Voice of the Martyrs. Despite his more moderate stance, the MCC feared cooperation with Bourdeaux's centre

could cause complications in its relations with the Soviet authorities and might even completely block its path into the USSR.

Nevertheless, MCC officials sent a young Canadian doctoral student named Walter Sawatsky to the CSRC. Sawatsky, a grandson of Russian Mennonite immigrants, was then working on his dissertation on the Russian nobleman and Pietist proponent Alexander Golitsyn (1773–1844).³² He was thus well-versed in Baptist-Mennonite as well as Orthodox themes, and gained the highest academic status among the centre's permanent staff. By assigning him to the CSRC, MCC leadership not only gained access to a breadth of information about the USSR, but also gained a channel of influence to related denominations in the West that were also working in the Soviet Union. During his appointment, Sawatsky read the popular newspapers *Soviet Russia* and *Kazakhstani Truth* daily; he also read the latest bulletins of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives, formed to support families of unregistered Baptists imprisoned for their religious activities, not to mention the periodicals of the official religious centres and atheist literature. The centre's staff were in close working contact with Western missions illegally working in Eastern Europe. Bourdeaux himself was active in the British Council of Churches and was a friend of the head of the Anglican Church.

A priority for Sawatsky was making his own trips to the USSR. In 1973, shortly before taking up his post at the CSRC, he was able to spend a month as a student in Leningrad. A year later, while a staff member and a doctoral candidate in history, he spent two months in the Soviet Union as part of a Soviet–Canadian cultural exchange program.³³ While working in the archives and libraries of Leningrad and Moscow, he also immersed himself in Baptist church life as much as he could. He spent about a month in Moscow, where he studied in detail the work of the All-Union Council. Prior to that he had been to Novosibirsk, Tashkent, and Alma-Ata, where he first met Soviet Mennonites, including their representative at the Union, Jakob Fast. When Sawatsky mentioned his work at the CSRC, Fast quickly changed the subject.

The question of Mennonite emigration and family reunification was always important for MCC. When significant German emigration from the USSR to West Germany began in 1972, MCC immediately established close contact with immigrants from both legal and illegal churches. However, long-term cooperation with them did not materialize, despite the best efforts of the North Americans. The Soviet policy of détente was reflected in the fact that Sawatsky's three-year participation in the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism had no negative consequences for MCC or for himself. Both Sawatsky and his direct supervisor at MCC, Peter Dyck, were

invited as guests to the congress of the All-Union Council in 1974.³⁴ In 1976, the relationship between MCC and the All-Union Council improved further: for the first time the USSR was visited by a Mennonite delegation of five people on an official invitation. In Kazakhstan, they were even allowed to visit two churches outside the capital, although Kyrgyz authorities, in defiance of their Moscow superiors, refused to allow them to visit Kyrgyzstan. Mennonites attached particular importance to their reception at the Council for Religious Affairs, where the delegation was received by Deputy Chairman Titov, who had represented the Soviet Union for five years at the UN in human rights discussions. The MCC delegation presented Titov with a list of 179 prisoners of conscience. The Soviet government preferred such behind-the-scenes meetings to street demonstrations in the West.³⁵

MCC's strategy proved successful. Sawatsky became an important MCC source on believers in the USSR. His materials were published not only in the CSRC's journal *Religion in Communist Lands*, but were also sent out as MCC press releases to the Mennonite and non-Mennonite denominational press. Moreover, Sawatsky proposed to the MCC the idea for a book on the modern history of the Russian evangelical movement, and he offered his services to produce one.³⁶ After defending his dissertation and completing his work at the CSRC in 1976, Sawatsky remained in Europe and assumed the position of research scholar within the MCC office.

In 1980, Sawatsky was tasked with organizing a Mennonite World Conference delegation to the USSR. At first it had been planned through the All-Union Council, but due to the US-led boycott of the 1980 Olympics, all religious delegation visits had been cancelled, and a decision was made to travel to the USSR through Intourist. Sawatsky and the secretary general of the World Conference, Paul Kraybill, were welcomed in Moscow by a delegation of the All-Union Council. At the Council for Religious Affairs they had an hour-and-a-half conversation with the head of the non-Orthodox department, E. A. Tarasov, to whom they laid out the plan for their forthcoming trip around the country and the prospects they saw for international cooperation. Tarasov had no objections to their plan. Sawatsky and Kraybill went on a trip around the country as tourists, without the usual escort from the All-Union Council. They spent two days in Alma-Ata from May 28 to 30. On the first day, they spoke extensively with Baptist representatives. On the second day they had their first (and last) meeting with Mennonites in their prayer house, which was not attended by any of the Baptist leadership. Twenty Mennonite ministers from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan attended. The free three-hour fellowship continued with a two-hour

dinner at the same location. It left a lasting impression on the Americans. A similar meeting was held a few days later in Novosibirsk.³⁷

The meetings in Alma-Ata in a free atmosphere caused an explosion of indignation among the local authorities. The Council for Religious Affairs commissioner in Kazakhstan, K. T. Begimov, gave the Baptist and Mennonite leadership a stern warning, and two weeks later he reported to his supervisors in Moscow with a set of anti-clerical claims: "The arrival of foreign Mennonites helped to intensify religious life among Baptists and Mennonites, aroused interest among young believers in the situation of religion in the West, and to some extent led to the excitement of nationalist sentiments among believers of German nationality. In connection with the increasing frequency of trips of Sawatsky and Kraybill to Kazakhstan with missionary purposes, I consider it expedient to raise the question before the appropriate agencies to limit them."³⁸

Neither MCC nor Sawatsky were aware of the protest from Kazakhstan. In September 1980, Sawatsky was promoted to secretary of the MCC for Europe. In 1981 he published his well-known book *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*. To this day the five-hundred-page monograph remains the only volume on the history of the Soviet postwar evangelical movement written in a confessional discourse. Unfortunately, after a series of refusals for a Soviet visa, MCC concluded that Sawatsky had inexplicably become inadmissible to the USSR. For this reason he had to leave Europe in 1985 and look for a new job. However, his problems with the Soviet authorities were not a serious obstacle to MCC's projects in the East. With perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Eastern direction of MCC's work was given new emphasis, although this was soon curtailed.

Conclusion

The postwar activities of MCC in the USSR are vivid testimony to the power of confessional solidarity. The agency found ways to penetrate the Iron Curtain and formulate its own strategy. Though not in line with Soviet religious policy, these actions were nevertheless accepted by Soviet authorities. This example from a marginal confessional community also illustrates the evolution of Soviet religious policy, from one of total suppression of religion to one of tolerance under the influence of international forces. Some Mennonites still reside in Russia and hold a memory of MCC's postwar assistance. There are many details of this process that could be the subject of further study.

Notes

- ¹ D. C., "Volk in der Zerstreuung," *Der Bote*, June 13, 1945, 2.
- ² Justina Martens, "Brief aus Russland," *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, Aug. 14, 1946, 5.
- ³ C. F. Klassen to William T. Snyder, Jan. 21, 1954, file 61/48, collection 1-278, Mennonite Church Archive, Goshen, IN (hereafter MCA).
- ⁴ MCC: Europe & North Africa Refugee Files, SUCHDIENST, boxes 36, 37, 38, collection IX-19-16.5, MCC archive, Akron, PA (hereafter MCCA). The work of Margarete Grunau in digitizing the files is much appreciated.
- ⁵ "All-Union Population Census of 1979, Urban and rural population of regions of the USSR republics (except RSFSR) by gender and ethnicity," http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/resp_nac_79.php, accessed July 17, 2022.
- ⁶ A.V. Gorbatov, *Gosudarstvo i religioznye organizacii Sibiri v 1940-e – 1960-e gody* (Tomsk: Izdatel'stvo Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta, 2008), 283.
- ⁷ Nadezhda Beljakova, "Kollektivnye praktiki tipichnoj obshhiny evangel'skih hristian-baptistov v pozdnem SSSR," *Gosudarstvo, religija, Cerkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* 30, no. 3–4 (2012): 284–311, 286.
- ⁸ J. Dik, "Kontury, detali i posledstvija sovetskoj religioznoj politiki poslednego stalinskogo desjatiletija na primere nemeckih baptistov i menonitov," in *Konfessional'naja politika sovetskogo gosudarstva v 1920 – 1950-e gody: Materialy XI Mezhdunarodnoj nauchnoj konferencii, Velikij Novgorod, 11–13 oktjabrja 2018 g.* (Moscow: Politicheskaja jenciklopedija, 2019), 400–408, 404; cf. Jamanov, *Informacionnyj otchet*, June 26, 1951, file 74, inventory 3, fond 6991, State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereafter GARF), 132–172, 135.
- ⁹ *Svodka o kolichestve religioznych obshhestv*, Jan. 4, 1954, file 102, inventory 3, fond 6991, GARF, 63–69.
- ¹⁰ Dmytro Koval, "Osoblyvosti vzajemvidnosyn Komitetu derzhavnoi' bezpeky URSR z gromadamy protestantiv u 1945-1960-h rokah (na prykladi jevangl's'kyh hrystyjan baptystiv i hrystyjan viry jevangl's'koi)," in *Reformacija ta poshyrennja protestantyzmu na Volyni: Materialy Mizhnarodnoi' naukovy-praktychnoi' konferencii'. Luc'k, 26–27 zhovtnja 2017 r.* (Luc'k: PVD Tverdynja, 2018), 356–80, 359.
- ¹¹ Harold S. Bender, "Report on Mennonites in Soviet Russia Today," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, Aug. 11, 1955; and Harold S. Bender, "Mennonites in Soviet Russia Today," *Gospel Herald*, Aug. 16, 1955, 775.
- ¹² Harold S. Bender to Orrie O. Miller, July 30, 1955, file 90/35, collection IX-6-32-92, MCCA.
- ¹³ Harold S. Bender, "Etliche Informationen über Mennoniten in Sowjetrussland heute," *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, Aug. 17, 1955, 2; Harold S. Bender, "Zur Heutigen Lage Der Mennoniten in Russland," *Der Bote*, Aug. 17, 1955, 3.
- ¹⁴ Maria Dückmann, "Sowjetrussland, Kubanka, Orenburg," *Der Bote*, Aug. 17, 1955, 8.
- ¹⁵ Royden Loewen and Steven Nolt, *Seeking Places of Peace* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2012), 19.
- ¹⁶ See Harry Loewen, *Between Worlds: Reflections of a Soviet-born Canadian Mennonite* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2006), 65.

- 17 William T. Snyder to Harold S. Bender, Aug. 5, 1955, file 90/35, box 154, collection IX-6-3-92, MCCA.
- 18 Paul Peachey, "Proposal for a Goodwill Team to Russia and the Orient," Nov. 14, 1955, file 42, box 35, collection IX-12-01, MCCA.
- 19 Paul Peachey, "Proposal for a Goodwill Team."
- 20 Harold J. Sherk, Minutes of a Meeting for Consultation, Nov. 14, 1955, file 42, box 35, collection IX-12-01, MCCA.
- 21 The Russian Baptist Delegation Meeting, Mennonite Biblical Seminary, May 28, 1956, 7:30 p.m.; MCC Executive Meeting with Russian Baptist Delegation and Visitors, May 29, 1956, file 4, box 9, collection IX-12-04, MCCA.
- 22 William T. Snyder to Harold S. Bender and Orië O. Miller, Aug. 4, 1955, file 90/35, box 154, collection IX-6-3-92, MCCA.
- 23 Poljanskij to N. S. Khrushchev, Mar. 9, 1954, file 102, inventory 3, fond 6991, GARF, 84–85.
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