

Protecting Mammon. Some dilemmas of Mennonite Non-resistance in late Imperial Russia and the origins of the Selbstschutz

Helmut-Harry Loewen, *Camrose Lutheran University College, Alberta*
James Urry, *Victoria University of Wellington New Zealand*

“A Question” from a “Young Man about to embark on life”

In the spring of 1907 a Mennonite youth posed a question to the foreign colonist readers of the German language newspaper the *Odessaer Zeitung*.

When a young man is about to go out into the world, he is confronted with the most diverse questions. The young man would like these questions answered, but how? Who will answer them? I am of the opinion that this must be done by those who have acquired experience [of life], that is, by those who know the answers to these questions.

I have come across a question which I do not know how to answer. But I would nevertheless wish for an answer. The question is “**Why do Mennonites employ Cossacks?**” In a number of villages one comes upon Cossacks armed with sabres, firearms, and daggers. A foreigner would laugh and say “What! Even the Mennonites keep Cossacks in their employ? But that does not accord with their confession of faith! Well, they know how to do it! Instead of carrying weapons themselves they pay others to do so. Well, the one who condones the crime is as bad as the one who commits it!”

Indeed! The Mennonite faith does not permit us to carry weapons and it just as clearly forbids us to employ Cossacks to carry arms for us. Usually a farmer says to his neighbour with confidence: “Today we did this and that, and tomorrow we’ll have to do that.” By the word “we” he means the worker and himself. He pays the worker for his labour. What would the same Mennonite farmer say if one of his Cossacks were to strike a person dead? Would he still say “We killed such and such a person?” I find this difficult to believe, since this does not conform with his beliefs. But it is exactly the same as that which he has done with his worker.

One is accustomed to saying “[The Russian Emperor] Alexander I beat [geschlagen ie. defeated] Napoleon [the French Emperor].” In reality, however, Alexander never struck anyone and Napoleon was not beaten [geschlagen] in person. Russian soldiers struck [schlagen] the French [ie. did the actual fighting].

And so it is with us. The village hires Cossacks to maintain order. But how do Cossacks maintain order? They strike [*schlagen*] and even kill people, albeit in the name of the government. So, now they will do the same in the name of Mennonites! Unfortunately, yes unfortunately, they will do this in the name of the “quiet in the land!”

I find all this quite gruesome [*grauenhaft*]. In my opinion this is not in keeping with the words of Jesus: Place your sword into its sheath, Peter. For he who lives by the sword shall die by it.” Or “Love your neighbour as yourself.” I believe that if only we would love our neighbours as ourselves, then we would not have to resort to hiring Cossacks. We Mennonites claim to be against the death penalty, yet we have Cossacks in our employ. It is as though we believe that God our Father cannot protect us any longer and so we need Cossacks to do so. Well, I think that God will not want to protect Mammon.

What is peculiar, though, is that the leaders of our people permit this. From at least one of them I know that such things are allowed in his village. Of course, he will have his own reasons [to justify his stance]. If he were not a minister, then I would simply say that it is his foolishness, his indifference and dishonesty — characteristics of which even some of our people can boast — which allow him to tolerate [the hiring] of Cossacks. But I must not say such things, since the leader in question is known as a pious and upright Christian who will have his own reasons on this matter. But what kinds of reasons? These I cannot discern. That is why I am turning to those Mennonites who keep a warlike people [*Kriegsvolk*] in their employ and ask them to inform me on these matters.

A young man about to embark on life .¹

The youth’s question prompted by the employment of non-Mennonites, especially Cossacks, to protect life and property, raised important issues concerning Mennonite nonresistance and drew two responses which are examined below. First, however, the wider social and political situation, particularly in relation to law and order in late Imperial Russia is examined along with Mennonite responses including the employment of guards to protect life and property. Finally Mennonite employment of Cossacks is considered in the light of the emergence of Mennonite self-defence units (*Selbstschutz*) in the period of revolution, anarchy and civil war which followed the collapse of the Imperial regime in 1917.

Property, life and crime in rural Russia

By the first decade of the twentieth century most Mennonites were generally well educated, prosperous and privileged, at least in comparison with their mainly peasant neighbours.² Throughout the nineteenth century Mennonites had prospered in Russia and by the early twentieth century had spread from southern Russia to Central Asia and Siberia in search of economic opportunity. A majority were property owners, living in rural areas on farms either privately owned or more commonly situated in colonies. Farming, the major commercial operation for most Mennonites, provided a

good income for most households and farms were usually well stocked and equipped. A small but influential group of estate owners possessed large areas of land geared to extensive farming, often with substantial livestock, living quarters and outbuildings. In Mennonite colonies, at railway junctions and in developing urban areas some Mennonites owned businesses, including factories to produce agricultural machinery, breweries, flour mills, ships and trade agencies. In Mennonite areas there was also a complex institutional structure consisting of schools, hospitals and other welfare institutions, usually built and maintained at Mennonite expense.³ As well as personal safety, by 1907 there was a great deal of Mennonite mammon to protect.

But who threatened Mennonite property? Petty theft was an everyday occurrence and in Mennonite eyes most suspects were peasants, beggars and other itinerants, travelling Jewish salesmen and Gypsies. More dangerous were professional thieves acting alone or in gangs, bands of brigands and members of extreme political groups carrying out terrorist attacks and raiding banks to appropriate funds to finance their activities. But the causes of crime were more complex. In part Mennonite property was at risk because they were surrounded by people poorer than themselves, usually peasants who felt aggrieved for a number of reasons, the most important of which was their lack of rights in land. While much crime and unrest were caused by Russia's unresolved agrarian problems, the state's response to this and other threats to law-and-order was often brutal and ineffectual.

In southern Russia, and later in central Asia and Siberia, the Mennonites settled in frontier areas. If Russian state control was weak even in the older, more settled provinces, it was even weaker in frontier regions. In the early days of settlement there were incidents where Mennonites, particularly traders traveling beyond the colonies, had been robbed and even murdered.⁴ But throughout the nineteenth century government control increased and during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1854) old statutes were codified into a written legal code. The period of the great reforms (1861 - ca. 1880) saw a number of new legal reforms initiated, including the right to trial by jury and the appointment of local justices of the peace.⁵ In rural areas local policing and the judicial control of petty crime was transferred to the new institutions of local government, the *volosti* (cantons) and *zemstva* (municipalities).

Law and order, however, continued to vary from area to area. The state's ability to enforce its authority, especially in the countryside, was extremely limited. By 1900 it is estimated that there were only 47,866 police in a Russian population of 127 million and most of these were stationed in larger towns and cities. In rural areas there were only 8456 constables (*stanovoi pristavi*) and sergeants (*uriadniki*) to control 90 million people. Unlike police in western European states these officers fulfilled complex service functions in the local administration. They were charged not only with maintaining law and order, but also with tax collection, social welfare and health enforcement and some even acted as personal servants to the police chief (*ispravnik*) and other

important officials. Poorly educated and badly equipped, housed and paid, many were both inefficient and corrupt. In rural areas they were deeply distrusted and unpopular among the peasantry whom they often abused and exploited.⁶

At the village level, however, customary justice still operated among the peasantry. Many peasants, distrustful of officialdom, preferred their own long-established methods of maintaining order and enforcing social sanctions. Thieves and other wrongdoers, even if they were only suspected of offending, were often subjected to summary "justice" which could result in their death. Horse theft was particularly severely punished.⁷ As peasants and other rural inhabitants were allowed to elect their own representatives to act as law enforcers within their communities, there was often abuse of basic legal rules and human rights. In 1903 the government appointed 40,000 rural guardsmen (*strazhniki*) to replace the local elected village "police" (the *desiatskii* "teners", *Zehntmänner* among Mennonites) and further reforms followed or were planned in the years up to 1914.⁸

During the first half of the nineteenth century when most Mennonites had lived in small, localized communities there had been little need for the protection of either life or property. Within the colonies crime was rare. An account from the 1890s reported only a few incidents of lawlessness in the previous thirty seven year period.⁹ But as the nineteenth century progressed and Mennonites became more socially diverse and involved with non-Mennonites both within and beyond their settlements, so the incidence of criminal activity increased. A report from Khortitsa submitted to the Russian authorities noted that between January and July 1, 1904, 136 criminal cases had been presented to the local canton court compared with 190 civil cases.¹⁰ The increased use of non-Mennonite labour in agriculture and industry brought people with different moral standards into the community. Many were peasants who were envious of the wealth and material possessions of the colonists, but even poor Mennonites from the lower orders of Mennonite society resorted to crime. Horse theft was a particular problem for Mennonites and other foreign colonists in New Russia.¹¹ Most Mennonites, as good citizens and supporters of law-and-order, were willing to use the police, the courts and even the army acting in police roles to protect themselves and their property.

Criminal activity in both rural and urban Russia was increasing by the early years of the twentieth century. Immense social and economic changes had occurred since the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. The peasants may have gained their freedom, but they had not gained proper access to land and agrarian problems increased and became more complex. Following the emancipation peasants became more mobile, passport restrictions were relaxed and they could take advantage of the new railway networks which opened up the country. Peasants moved in search of work, either between rural areas or into the new urban, industrial centres. Not only were rural communities disrupted by such mobility, but some peasants also drifted into

crime, associating with established groups of professional beggars and thieves who inhabited city slums or who roamed the countryside. In the countryside, rural crime increased, prompting official enquiries into the problem.¹²

From 1881 onwards periodic outbreaks of peasant unrest and political terrorism saw the introduction of emergency measures in many provinces to enforce governmental control. These special measures included the death penalty for serious crimes, the establishment of special security divisions, factory police and the widespread use of military forces in policing roles, especially Cossacks.¹³ The massive disturbances associated with the unrest following Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-06) prompted the government to initiate new, special police measures.¹⁴ Mennonites directly experienced the breakdown of government control in urban and rural areas. In rural areas peasants refused to work for landowners, there were conflicts over rent, land was siezed for pasturage and tillage, timber was illicitly cut and isolated estates were even attacked, robbed and their buildings burnt.¹⁵ In Alexandrovsk Mennonite factories were attacked by workers engaged in strike action.¹⁶ Although the government eventually restored order, unrest continued and robbery and acts of violence increased.

Mennonites had good reason to fear that not just their property, but also their lives were at risk in the unstable conditions which prevailed in town and country after 1905. An examination of reports of criminal activities directed against Mennonite industrialists and estate owners in 1906-07 clearly reveals the extent of the problem. In 1906 the rich mill owner Abraham Niebuhr and his wife Katharina were attacked in their home, robbed and severely beaten. Abraham later died of his injuries. One of the suspected attackers, a Russian, was executed in 1907 for killing a Mennonite nightwatchman.¹⁷ The nightwatchman on the Reimer estate at Felsental in Molochnaia was also shot and killed in 1907 during a robbery.¹⁸ Abraham Neustätter and his wife were brutally murdered on their estate in Ekaterinoslav province.¹⁹

Mennonite estate owners in the countryside justifiably felt vulnerable to attack. They began to employ managers to run their farming operations and purchase houses in the colonies where, surrounded by fellow Mennonites, they felt more secure. But even in the colonies robbery and murder were becoming more common with a murder in Krons Garten (Khortitsa colony district) and two murders in the Molochnaia colony alone in 1907.²⁰ Estate owners who remained on their land employed guards to protect themselves and their property. For instance in the Melitopol area an estate owner employed Circassians on one estate to prevent thefts committed by particularly troublesome Great Russians, former serfs, living in a neighbouring village and at Wintergrün, the estate of the Goossen family, Cossack guards were employed up to the 1917 Revolution.²¹

It is unclear from the available evidence whether Mennonites had employed guards on estates, at factories or in villages before the disturbances in the early years of the twentieth century. However, it is likely that many did, particularly estate and factory owners. Under Russian legal codes business-

men and industrialists could hire police to protect their property and these police supported local police, especially in urban areas.²² But the post-revolutionary disturbances undoubtedly increased the use of private guards, including the employment of Cossacks and this obviously prompted the youth to write his letter.²³ Individual Mennonites had carried firearms for personal protection since the nineteenth century and in 1914/15, following the outbreak of the First World War, the Russian authorities seized a large quantity of firearms, including pistols, from Mennonites.²⁴

In colony villages nightwatchmen had been employed for some years. They were often outsiders, retired soldiers and occasionally other German colonists who had served in the Russian forces. While armed with sabres or shotguns their weapons were often symbolic. They would patrol the village during the night checking for intruders or signs of fire. Their progress through the village was often accompanied by the use of a rattle whose sound reassured residents that all was well. But after 1905 some villages began to employ fiercer Cossack guards who would be involved in the coarser side of Mennonite village "justice":

Our village [Steinfeld in the Baratov Shliachtin area] had a Cossack who served as a guard. Cossacks were very good and reliable people. Mennonite wrong-doers in the village, such as thieves, were 'corrected' in a strange way. A shroud was put over the head and the offender was whipped — he would never know by whom.²⁵

The employment of Cossacks and other more skilled guards was more common on estates, in mills and on factory sites than in villages. Mennonite mill and factory owners had particular reasons for employing Cossack guards. Towns and industrial areas were often centres of unrest after 1906. A report from the industrial centre of Ignatiev noted the employment of Kuban Cossacks to protect private homes and mills in the years before 1914. On one occasion Russian workmen who arrived to repair machinery at a Mennonite mill were fired on by the Cossack guards who, unable to understand the workers' speech, thought they were attempting to rob their master's property.²⁶ The Ignatiev report also clearly states why Cossacks were selected as guards:

The Cherkess [Kuban Cossack] guards were known to be reliable and not involved with any of the political agitations of the time. That is why they were preferred as guards.²⁷

Cossacks, both symbolically and in fact, were defenders of the Tsar and thus the system of autocracy which controlled the country. They were upholders of authority and order. In return, Cossacks enjoyed special privileges in Russian society. Young male Cossacks were conscripted into special military units (mostly cavalry) and after serving with other sections of the Russian army were placed on the active reserve. As a reserve military force Cossacks were always ready to be mobilized in the event of internal or external threats to the state.²⁸ Although their bravery and loyalty were admired by the ruling establishment, they were feared by peasants and workers

because of their brutality in the suppression of any kind of opposition to the establishment and they were infamous for their antisemitism.

During the political disturbances of the nineteenth century, and especially during the early years of the twentieth century, Cossacks were widely used in a police role to suppress both rural and urban unrest. They were often posted to guard estates, banks, factories or other places liable to attack and were therefore experienced in guard duties.²⁹ It appears that in certain areas their use as mercenary guards on estates and in factories had semi-official approval.³⁰ Employing Cossacks helped Mennonites feel secure, not just on their properties but also as loyal citizens, supporters of the Tsar and the established orders.

The “religious correspondent’s” response³¹

We have called the first response to the young man’s letter a “religious” response because the anonymous Mennonite writer justifies his arguments with Biblical references. The use of language, even allowing perhaps for a newspaper’s editor improving the German expression, and the use of Biblical references makes us suspect that this is a “lay” response as we would expect an educated Mennonite, especially a teacher-preacher, to provide a more sophisticated reply. This does not mean, however, that the letter is not instructive and indeed it may well be more indicative of ordinary Mennonite opinion than a response by a member of the Mennonite elite.

The correspondent begins by taking up the young man’s reference to the use of the sword at the time of Jesus’ arrest. Both the young man and the religious correspondent confuse the different versions of this event as it appears in the Gospels. Only in one of the versions (John 18:10–11; cf. also 18:26) is Peter named as the person wielding the sword in Jesus’ defence. In the other versions (Matthew 26:51–54, Mark 14:47–48, Luke 22:49–51) the aggressor is named as either one of Jesus’ followers, one of his party and even as one of the bystanders (Mark 14:47).³² And Jesus’ statement that those who choose to live by the sword shall die by the sword appears in one of the versions which does not name Peter (Matthew 26:52). The religious correspondent further confuses the issue by claiming that it was the ear of a Roman soldier which was cut off who, “only because of the dexterity ... [he had] experienced and proven in combat” avoided being “killed or mortally wounded.” One thing all the Gospels are agreed upon is that the victim was the servant of the High Priest, named Malchus in John 18:11.

The religious correspondent claimed that Jesus, before his arrest, never objected specifically to his followers carrying swords, carried presumably for their self-defence. According to the correspondent it was not the carrying of swords, nor even the use of the sword which was at issue; Jesus’ words merely warned those who used the sword that they would have to be prepared to die by the sword. The real issue was the motivation or intention of the user of the sword. If killing was motivated by hatred or anger, it was evil and threatened the user’s salvation. Here the correspondent quoted Matthew 5:22 and a

passage in 1 John 3:15³³ on the need for brotherly love and the dangers inherent in brother hating brother. A man who hates his brother is a murderer, but “when we kill a person either in our own or in another person’s defence – that is... when we are compelled to do so – we cannot be called a murderer [*Todschläger*].” Unable to find further justification for this argument in the New Testament, the correspondent drew on Old Testament references to support his case claiming that “we can see that it is not killing per se which is punished by God, but rather the maliciousness of the human heart which lies at the root of such a deed.”

The possible justification for the killing of another human being, the correspondent argued, should be considered under three categories of action:

1. killing for revenge, out of hatred, in the pursuit of theft of property and to realize some dubious political end;³⁴
2. killing in self-defence in the protection of family, dependents and property;
3. killing on orders from the government, namely during war.

The first category cannot be justified for Mennonites “or, indeed, for any person who adheres to the Christian church or professes its faith.” But the other points had to be considered separately.

Nowhere in the Bible, the correspondent argued, is there a direct injunction against “protecting our own life.” The correspondent then presented the young man about to embark on life with a hypothetical situation:

Assume, dear brother, that you have started your own household... and that you have a loving wife and growing children who are dear to your heart. Suddenly, one night as you and your family are sleeping peacefully you are suddenly awakened by a strange noise. As you arise you see standing at the bedside of your wife and children a figure armed to the teeth who is about to murder brutally his defenceless and unsuspecting victims. You know, however, that beneath your pillow is a loaded revolver (or shall we say a Browning, as this sounds more modern). You also know that you could shoot him down or at least disarm him with a well-aimed shot. Or, if there were no weapon close at hand, would you not grab the next best object to chase the criminal way? You will perhaps say: ‘But I am not permitted to shoot or hit him, since he is my fellow man, whom, as stated in Holy Scripture, I should love’. This is true. But where then is the love for your family which you must also love as you would love yourself? Where is the protection you promised to your wife at the altar when you married her?

The argument used by the correspondent so far concerns the classic dilemma faced by non-resistant Christians over the protection of life, particularly of family. But the writer also noted that his hypothetical husband and father only assumed that the intention of the criminal is to kill, when in fact he might only be intent on robbery. Should the armed Mennonite fire first or should he wait and hand over his property hoping that life will be spared? The correspondent argues that a Mennonite would be justified in shooting or striking the criminal because recent events proved that there are people “for

whom the spilling of human blood has become a deep need" and one cannot expect mercy from "such beasts."

But the correspondent further justified the use of self-defence to protect property itself, even where human life was not in immediate danger. According to the correspondent, Christians are instructed in the Bible to protect their property. To justify this opinion he cited a passage in Matthew 24:43. In this passage believers are warned to be watchful and to hold themselves in readiness for the coming of the Son of Man like the householder who, if he had known at what time the burglar would have come in the night, would have protected his house from theft. This rather literal interpretation of the passage is directly related to the Mennonites' present problems in Russia where theft had become commonplace. Mammon could be protected by force if property was deemed necessary for the continuance of life:

...let us assume that all your belongings consist of moveable property, for example, one or two cows or horses, as is often the case and on which the life of you and your entire family depends. Are you not in such a case duty bound to secure the well-being of your family's future by whatever means, if at all possible? You will now say to me: "I am placing my trust completely in God. He will surely protect me. I grant you this point. But say your house begins to burn one night, set alight by some evil doer. Would you quietly let it burn, believing that God had willed such to happen? Or would you feel obliged to douse the flames? I assume your house is uninsured.

The correspondent's arguments appear to claim that God allows Christians a degree of free-will to protect themselves, their fellow humans and property against criminals. But the correspondent also goes on to suggest that the use of force may in fact reflect divine ordinance:

History and recent events also demonstrate to us that God allows many things to occur which cannot possibly be His will and that He operates through individuals and entire groups of people in order to implement His will. So, are you entirely sure that God did not designate that through your hand the activities of a particular robber or murderer would be ended for all time? Your response might be: "The criminal will continue his activities until he is stopped." But is it not you who must stop such activities? If you fail to act will not others subsequently become victims? By acting to apprehend the criminal, are you not indirectly practising love for your fellow man? I surely think so.

This argument, that a Christian is fulfilling God's will by protecting others through apprehending criminals, quite clearly justifies Mennonite support of the established authorities in the enforcement of law and order. The reference to "recent events" points to this support; just as the Bible does not forbid "that when we are attacked we do not defend ourselves," so does it not forbid Mennonites to have "our life defended for us." The latter is important as "we are now living in a country in which the fires of revolution are burning and in which people are turning into hyenas."

Support of the government's "legitimate" use of violence, however, had its limits. The Mennonite confession of faith forbade them becoming soldiers in

times of war. But how did Mennonites react when the state used soldiers not just for external war and defence, but also for the maintenance of internal order? The correspondent obviously felt uneasy about this position, not just in terms of the argument put forward justifying the use of force for the protection of life and property, but also because it appeared to conflict with the Biblical injunction to obey earthly rulers:

...we find passages in the Holy Scriptures which specify what obligations we have towards the state, whereas there are none which expressly forbid the use of force for self-defence. And we must not forget that there were different laws, rights, circumstances, governments and types of national defence 2000 years ago than there are now. At the same time we want to enjoy the privileges which we have in Russia.

And in a poorly worded passage the correspondent appears to suggest that Mennonites would not be justified in resisting by force a legitimate government which even persecuted Christians on account of their faith, although defending oneself against individual attack by a criminal was justifiable. These statements clearly reflect how far by 1907 Mennonites had aligned themselves with the Russian state and an autocratic Tsarist regime which protected not just their lives, but also their property and their privileges. And in 1907 this protection was aimed not only against criminal elements, but also against those sections of society which threatened the autocracy: the peasantry, an incipient proletariat and an alienated intelligensia. And if the main forces which protected the autocratic regime were Cossacks, why should not Mennonites also take advantage of their services? The religious correspondent unequivocally stated that he was "totally convinced" that Mennonites had the right to employ Cossacks and ended his letter by reminding Mennonites "overly preoccupied with the employment of Cossacks and the carrying of weapons" that it was "Judas who carried the money sack" who betrayed Jesus, "not the sword-carrying Peter."

The estate owner's story

The religious correspondent's response drew a reply from an anonymous Mennonite estate owner.³⁵ The estate owner noted that when he had read the young man's letter he had "formulated" his "own thoughts" on the issue, but the religious correspondent's letter had convinced him even further "of the views of the questioning young man." Taking up the religious correspondent's final point on Judas and Peter he noted:

Peter, who bore the sword, did not betray the Lord... [so]... it is not the Cossack, armed with rifle and dagger and standing at the front door of the wealthy, who is sinning against the Lord, for he is acting out of ignorance. Rather [the betrayer is], Judas who carried the money bags. Put another way, it is the rich man who does not heed the words of Matthew 5:43 and 44 and hence is the person who betrays [Christ's teachings on non-resistance]. It is he who possesses the gold and in order to protect his property and pitiful existence is the leader of these ignorant Cossacks.

In spite of being an estate owner himself, the correspondent is highly critical of his fellow landowners, especially in their dealings with “impoverished Russian peasants” against whom Cossacks were primarily employed:

The peasant inflicts great harm on the estate owner who in turn looks down on the peasant. The peasant acts in part out of envy [of the estate owner's wealth], in part out of greed. But often, perhaps most of the time, the peasant is impelled to act as the result of [economic] suffering. In spring he uses the pastures of the rich man without paying for it. Later he drives his cattle into the so-called fallow hay fields (*sogenannten Heuschlag*), and indeed from time to time he does not even spare the fields of grain. Minor damage is also inflicted to the large orchards.³⁶ On larger estates, to prevent this damage even in a small way, one employs Cossacks or Cherkessians as guards. These protectors are granted the right to use force when necessary to keep all vermin away from the body of the wealthy owner [...um dem Reichen alles Ungeziefer vom Leibe fern zu halten].

Here the correspondent went to the heart of the issue. Behind much rural crime and peasant unrest lay the unresolved agrarian problem and the immense gulf that separated landowners from their peasant neighbours. While useful as cheap labour, peasants posed constant problems through their “illegal” action against what landowners viewed as their land and property. In his choice of language the correspondent was clearly being ironic. He wished to reflect as clearly as possible the attitudes of some estate owners to their peasant neighbours. If the actions of peasants could not be prevented by threats of force, then perpetrators were best treated as vermin and “eliminated.”

To illustrate the lengths to which estate owners would go to “protect” themselves, the correspondent presented a case of the wrongful use of force by a Mennonite estate owner and those employed to protect his interests. Close to the Russian parish-settlement (*Kirchendorfes*) of Krivo’oshye (Krywo’oshje) were several large estates owned by wealthy “German” colonists including that of a Mr. Klassen.³⁷ Klassen did not live on the estate but employed a manager, Mr. Rempel, to administer his affairs. Rempel had employed two “belligerent” farmhands to protect his master’s property, but they were dismissed for idleness. In their place a sergeant-guard (*uriadnik*) was employed with a few assistants (*strazhniki* ie. members of the rural guard). “In evenings and at night they roamed the fields to see if livestock belonging to others could be found.”³⁸ In spite of their vigilance, some local peasants became “cocky” and drove their horses to feed on the hay and even into the grain fields. These actions enraged the guards employed to protect the estate.

Some time earlier a few inhabitants of Krivo’oshye had stolen a young goat from the Klassen estate and severely beaten the goatherd. Two men of the peasant settlement were apprehended by police and interrogated on the estate. To save themselves they named a peasant, one of the poorest in the settlement, as leader of the trouble-makers. In fact they claimed that there

was a conspiracy afoot and that Krivo'oshye was a hot-bed of rebellion. The testimony of the two men was accepted because it suited the landowner's purpose. He decided to teach the local peasants a lesson in "law-and-order." A force, 35 strong, was raised in the district "in order to resist the rebellion."

Not only was there no rebellion planned, but the poor peasant named by the informers was also entirely innocent. The "police," however, surrounded the peasant's house late at night and broke down the door. When he escaped onto the roof the one peasant was roughly seized and thrown to the ground and then severely beaten. Meanwhile the neighbours gathered to discover what was going on and in the confusion the poor peasant tried to escape, but weakened by the beating he had received, he was shot. The "police" then killed him; "like raging beasts" they "jumped" on him and "mutilated him with their weapons." His wife and children were also abused, whipped and beaten with rifle butts. Having finished their work, the "guardians of the law" retreated, leaving behind misery and suffering.

In the house in which these deeds of horror were accomplished, a defenceless and impoverished widow, against whom great evil has been perpetrated, and seven poor orphans who have observed the gruesome death of their father, are wailing and sighing most dreadfully. The oldest child is not yet twelve. And although a few days have passed since that night of horror, no one can pass by the house without breaking into tears of compassion when hearing of the woeful cries of the unfortunate:

Where brutal forces hold senseless sway,
No creative forms can lay
(*Wo rohe Kräfte sinnlos walten*
Da kann sich kein Gebild gestalten)³⁹

The estate owner's story was clearly intended to warn of the danger of employing outsiders to protect property. Protection could easily lead to prevention, to punitive action; defence could give way to attack. Given the rudimentary institutions of law and order in Russia, many people obviously thought that taking the law into their own hands was perfectly justifiable. The line between what constituted "legal" and "illegal" action was apparently vague. Cossacks, other government troops and police units often acted on their own authority, sometimes in conjunction with local landowners and their hired hands to mount punitive raids on any suspected of "rebellion." Such "rebellious" acts sometimes involved merely the pasturing of livestock on estate owners' land or the cutting of his timber, but the raids could result in the injury of innocent peasants, even their deaths as well as the burning down of houses and occasionally entire villages.⁴⁰ Landowners, usually with the acquiescence of the local authorities and police, hunted down horse thieves, tracking suspects to villages where rough justice was meted out. "German" colonists formed posses to seize horse thieves, and Mennonite estate owners employed farm hands to chase horse thieves before official police could be mobilized.⁴¹

The estate owner therefore raised wider issues than just the protection of life and property. How much should Mennonites be involved in a system, official and unofficial, which relied on the threat or actual use of violence for the protection of their rights? And what if such actions also involved acts of retribution in the name of prevention? Was this not in conflict with notions of Christian justice? And did not support of such groups and their actions align Mennonites with the forces of oppression? "Why would we want to draw these evil forces nearer to us — nearer than is necessary — and then pay them?" the estate owner concluded. It was a good question, but no one answered his query, at least not in the correspondence columns of the *Odessaer Zeitung*.

"...if other times should come": premonitions of the self-defence units (*Selbstschutz*)

The religious correspondent had ended his letter with an ominous warning: "If other times should come," he wrote, " — and that is not improbable — I would like to leave the decisions regarding the important matter of non-resistance to older, more experienced and more competent people than I and the young man about to embark on life." His words were to prove prophetic. Just over a decade later Mennonites were embroiled in armed conflict in the name of self-defence and older people, however experienced or competent, did little to prevent this challenge to Mennonite non-resistant principles.

In the years between 1907 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 Mennonites had to face a number of challenges to their non-resistant stance. The Forestry Service ran into debt and its administrative structure and the means by which taxes were raised to cover costs were reformed in 1908/09.⁴² A fierce debate ensued in the Mennonite press and some correspondents questioned the value of maintaining the Forestry Service and the Mennonite pacifist stance. One writer noted that in employing Cossack guards to protect themselves, Mennonites were being inconsistent in their non-resistant stance.⁴³ At the same time continued attempts by the government to reform Russian society and its institutions after 1906 were viewed by many Mennonites as a threat to their established privileges and some policies were seen as threatening Mennonite non-resistant principles.⁴⁴

At the local level the authorities established a degree of order after the chaos of 1905-07. But petty theft and outbreaks of peasant and worker violence continued in the colonies, often associated with excessive alcohol consumption. Occasionally there were incidents of armed robbery on estates or on trains, sometimes resulting in death. In the towns and cities armed holdups of banks, Mennonite factory offices and the robbery of Mennonite businessmen, even in their houses, were reported in the press.⁴⁵ Gradually the incidents began to become more common and more violent, particularly after 1912. Unrest mounted as industrial production increased and a new wave of industrial unrest swept urban areas. In the countryside 85% of the 20,000 reported peasant disturbances towards landowners and richer peasants occurred

in the years 1912 to 1914.⁴⁶ In May 1912, on the estate of David Braun at Reinfeld in Ekaterinoslav Province, Braun, his wife and his son were shot and killed during a robbery by a factory worker; his daughter and the maid were seriously injured. Worse, in March 1913 near Davlekanovo in Ufa Province, close to the Urals, Jakob Toews, his wife and five children aged six to 16, were murdered by robbers. The murders were widely reported in the Mennonite, colonist and Russian press.⁴⁷

The outbreak of war in 1914 brought a new sense of insecurity for most Mennonites. Although young Mennonites volunteered in large numbers to serve their country in the hospital service and increased numbers served in the forests, Mennonites were accused of pro-German sympathies and were subject to official and unofficial restrictions and intimidation. Use of the German language was restricted and legal moves begun to expropriate their land and property. At the local level this meant increased harassment by police and other officials while peasants and others cast envious eyes over Mennonite land and property. The February Revolution of 1917 may have removed at least the threat of legal expropriation, but even before the Revolution government control of the cities and countryside had begun to break down.⁴⁸ The unpopularity of the war, government incompetence and corruption as well as a deep-seated distrust of the autocracy, fueled the Revolution in which radical political groups were to seize the initiative.

While many Mennonites and non-Mennonites initially greeted the February Revolution with enthusiasm, disillusionment soon followed. At the front there was still no peace, the economy continued to falter, and disorder mounted in town and countryside. The Provisional Government's policies on land reform and the competing policies of various other political groupings, encouraged many peasants to take matters into their own hands. Peasants formed local committees and expropriated land and property, dividing it among themselves. Sometimes this occurred peacefully, with "legal" agreements, but at other times it was accompanied by violence.⁴⁹ Old grievances were settled and the situation was compounded by a lack of respect for the police and the old institutions of local government and authority. Criminals and political prisoners released under the Provisional Government's amnesties and soldiers deserting their units and returning home, added to the confusion.

Mennonite estate owners and isolated farms were particularly vulnerable to peasant action. But even in the established colonies the incidence of theft increased. In the Molochnaia colony a Mennonite noted in his diary the uncertain situation and in May 1917 he and a group of farmers purchased revolvers while visiting the coastal city of Berdiansk; by October his village had established an all-night watch to prevent theft.⁵⁰ During this period it was still mainly property that was threatened, but with the Bolshevik overthrow of the Provisional Government in October/November the situation deteriorated rapidly, forcing Mennonites to flee to the established

colonies in fear of their lives.⁵¹ Peasant communities grew bolder, criminal bands formed to rob and kill and soldiers and sailors, radicalized by political extremists, seized administrative centres. In February Halbstadt in Molochnaia was terrorized by sailors and soldiers, and a number of Mennonites were executed.⁵²

The signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty between Germany and the new Bolshevik government in March 1918 brought troops of the Central Powers into the Ukraine intent on seizing the grain harvest and raw material to support their offensive on the Western Front. The mainly German and Austrian troops were welcomed by Mennonites who were delighted that "order" had returned after a period of terror. But the occupying troops meted out summary military "justice" to any revolutionaries they captured and local commanders assisted landowners, including Mennonites, to retrieve their property. Sometimes this took the form of "police" action against peasant villages in which detachments, accompanied by Mennonites, located missing property and identified wrongdoers who were beaten and even executed.⁵³ In many ways these actions were a continuation of pre-revolutionary "police" action, but commanders of the occupying troops and some Mennonites recognized that such action in the unstable conditions operating in the countryside merely created a legacy of ill-feeling and further alienated social and political groups.⁵⁴ This proved correct as attacks against troops and landowners increased as the peasants, now led by political extremists, organized themselves into armed bands. In response Mennonites began to form self-defence (*Selbstschutz*) units under the guidance of German and Russian officers.⁵⁵

The self-defence units were not a peculiar aberration, a response to extraordinary circumstances in which Mennonites were faced with an entirely novel situation. The protection of property, and in certain circumstances life, had been a matter of concern to Mennonites years before the Revolution and as such the self-defence units were in part a continuation of strategies designed to defend property and life established in earlier times. In the past, while some Mennonites had armed themselves for self-protection, the more common response had been to look to the state for protection and to employ non-Mennonites to act as private guards. With the collapse of the state and hence law-and-order, abandoned by their private guards and in a situation where anarchy reigned, the Mennonites fell back on their own resources. Not surprisingly many of the young men who joined the self-defence units were the sons of estate, mill and factory owners. They had seen their property seized and some had lost relations and friends in the disturbances they also were accustomed to the idea of protecting property and life as their parents had employed guards for a number of years and as children they had grown up with these "protectors."

The self-defence units were more organized than the ad-hoc private arrangements for protection which had existed before the Revolution; they were not condemned openly by the Mennonite leadership and were estab-

lished on a military rather than a police model. For three years Mennonites had been living in an atmosphere dominated by news of war and militarist rhetoric; young Mennonites were deeply impressed by the military bearing of the German occupation troops. While members of self-defence units acted in traditional roles as guards and on occasion carried out "police" actions, some had also served as soldiers and had received military training. But Mennonite self-defense could not hope to stem the forces of disorder and anarchy. Once the troops of the Central Powers withdrew in November 1918, the now well-organized peasant groups were free to roam at will and as civil war broke out the Mennonite self-defence units discovered that they had to face not just bandit and anarchist bands, but also the soldiers of the Red and White Armies.⁵⁶ Rural violence now became open warfare, human life became cheap and at issue was not just land, or property, but territory, ideology and political power.

John B. Toews has argued that the Mennonites before 1914 had developed an "institutional pacifism" based primarily on the Forestry Service. As such, pre-war pacifism "lacked... a personal conviction based on individual experience and tested by actual confrontations" and "remained something to be explained, reasoned and systematically defended." Non-resistance, "in spite of decades of invigorating growth ... retained a creedal quality" and Mennonites were unprepared for the events of 1917 and 1918.⁵⁷ But a closer examination of the pre-war situation clearly shows that some Mennonites were aware that non-resistance involved wider issues than the maintenance of the Forestry Service. These included Mennonite relations with the state as well as the dilemmas Mennonites faced in employing others to protect life and property.⁵⁸ And the central cause of rural violence which involved the problem of agrarian reform was not totally disconnected from Mennonite concerns. They were themselves facing similar problems of land shortages and the social and cultural dislocation associated with migration and resettlement in remote areas.⁵⁹ Although an awareness of the complexities of the issues involved in Russia's agrarian problems may have been restricted to a small, intellectual elite, ordinary Mennonites were not so isolated from Russian society after 1900 to have been totally ignorant of the situation.

Late Imperial Russian society, particularly in rural Russia, was a violent society and violence breeds violence. Gross social and economic inequalities and the failure of government to address the demands of a rapidly changing social and political situation created a fertile breeding ground for conflict. In the volatile world of late Imperial Russia Mennonites, as a privileged group in society, as owners of land and property, as supporters of the established order, protected themselves by employing others to defend their interests. The dilemmas of non-resistance in the complex world of late Imperial Russia were known and debated long before war and revolution forced Mennonites into more direct action.

Notes

¹ "Ein ins Leben tretender Jüngling, Eine Frage," *Odessaer Zeitung* 91 (19 April/2 May 1907), 3.

² On Mennonite society in late Imperial Russia see James Urry, "Prolegomena to the study of Russian Mennonite society, 1880-1914," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 8 (1990), 52-75.

³ On the development of the Mennonite economy see James Urry, "Mennonite economic development in the Russian mirror." In John Friesen (ed.), *The Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989.

⁴ James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia. 1789-1889*. Winnipeg: Hyperion, 1989, 93.

⁵ Richard Wortman, *The development of a Russian legal consciousness*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976.

⁶ Neil B. Weissman, *Reform in Tsarist Russia: the state bureaucracy and local government 1900-1914*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1981, 62, 209; Neil B. Weissman, "Regular police in Tsarist Russia, 1900-1914," *Russian Review*, 44, 1985, 45-68; Richard G. Robbins, Jr., *Tsar's viceroys: Russian provincial governors in the last years of the Empire*. Ithaca: Columbia University Press, 1987, 183-85; on urban police see the example of Moscow in Robert W. Thurston, *Liberal city, conservative government: Moscow and Russia's urban crisis. 1906-1914*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, Chapter 4.

⁷ Peter Czap Jr., "Peasant class courts and peasant customary justice in Russia 1861-1914," *Journal of Social History*, 1, 1967, 149-79; Stephan P. Frank, "Popular justice, community and culture among the Russian peasantry 1870-1900," *Russian Review*, 46, 1987, 239-65; on horse theft see Christine D. Worobec "Horse thieves and peasant justice in post-emancipation Imperial Russia," *Journal of Social History*, 21, 1987, 281-93.

⁸ Weissman, *Reform*, 62-65; 207-20; Weissman, "Regular police," 50, 63-64.

⁹ Jonas Stadling and Will Reason, *In the land of Tolstoi: experiences of famine and misrule in Russia*. London: James Clarke, 1897, 157. In this period there were only nine cases of "theft and roguery" reported, but 44 cases of adultery!

¹⁰ "Die Chortitzer Wolost," *Odessaer Zeitung*, 181-82 (14/27-15/28 August 1904), 2-3, 3. The established Mennonite colony centres which by 1900 had grown into extensive townships had local police, see the case of Khortitsa/Rosenthal in N. J. Kroeker, compiler, *First Mennonite villages in Russia, 1789-1943. Khortitsa-Rosenthal*. Vancouver: N.J. Kroeker, 1981, 77, 112; in January 1910 the Khortitsa police sergeant shot his wife, another woman, his children and then committed suicide; see "Aus deutschen Ansiedlungen," *Christlicher Familienkalender*, 1911, 63.

¹¹ On horse thieves see Worobec, "Horse thieves." In 1907 a hapless burglar in the Mennonite town of Rosenthal Khortitsa attempted to escape via the Nieder Khortitsa ferry to Alexandrovsk but was apprehended by Cossacks alerted by telephone from Rosenthal, see Heinrich Wall, [Letter from Nieder Khortitsa], *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 30(2) (9 January 1907), 10-11.

¹² Neil B. Weissman, "Rural crime in Tsarist Russia: the question of hooliganism, 1900-1914," *Slavic Review*, 37, 1978, 228-40.

¹³ Donald Rawson, "The death penalty in late Tsarist Russia: an investigation of judicial procedures," *Russian History*, 11, 1984, 29-52; William C. Fuller Jr., *Civil-military conflict in Imperial Russia 1881-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, 77-85. Ekaterinoslav, a province with a large Mennonite population, had been added to the list of provinces subject to "heightened security" in the late 1890s.

¹⁴ For a recent account of the Revolution of 1905 see Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

¹⁵ On the nature and extent of rural unrest see Maureen Perrie, "The Russian peasant movement of 1905-1907: its social composition and revolutionary significance," *Past and*

Present, 57, 1972, 123-155. A summary of Mennonite experiences in 1905-06 is reported in "Wie sieht es bei unseren russischen Brüdern?" *Mennonitische Blätter* 6, June 1907, 70-71; on Mennonite estate disturbances see also contemporary reports cited in James Urry, "Through the eye of a needle: wealth and the Mennonite experience in Imperial Russia," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 3, 1985, 26; see also Leonard Friesen, "Mennonites in Russia and the Revolution of 1905: experiences, perceptions and responses," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 52, 1988, 47-48.

¹⁶ On the Alexandrovsk strikes see David H. Epp, "The emergence of German industry in the south Russian colonies (edited and translated by John B. Toews)," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 55, 1981, 361-62;

¹⁷ "Wie sieht es bei unseren russischen Brüdern?" 70; Epp, "Emergence of German industry," 363.

¹⁸ "Raubüberfall auf das Gut Felsenthal," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 30(40) (9 October 1907), 9 from a report in *Friedensstimme*.

¹⁹ "Bestialischer Mord," *Odessaer Zeitung*, 129, (7/20 June 1907), 3.

²⁰ AB, "Raubmord in Polowiza (Kronsgarten) bei Jekaterinoslaw [of Agnetha Dyck]," *Odessaer Zeitung*, 89 (17/30 April 1907), 2; "Mord [in Blumstein]," *Odessaer Zeitung*, 170, (27 July/9 August 1907), 2; [Report of the murder of a Russian youth in Friedensdorf, Gnadenfeld volost], *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 30(46), (13 November 1907), 9-10; there are numerous other accounts in contemporary Mennonite newspapers of robberies in and beyond the colonies.

²¹ Information on the Melitopol area supplied to James Urry by the son of the owner of the estate; on Wintergrun see Helen Goossen Friesen, *Dreams and Nightmares: life on the Wintergruen Estate*. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, in press.

²² Weissman, *Reform*, 60-61.

²³ A contemporary report in the West Prussian *Mennonitische Blätter* noted that following the disturbances "Verschiedene Besitzer haben schon um Einquartierung von Kosaken zu ihrem Schutze gebeten," "Wie sieht es bei unseren russischen Brüdern?" 70.

²⁴ In 1886 the son of the Rosenhof (Brotsky) estate owner Jakob Dick shot himself in the foot with a revolver while trying to kill a snake (*Mennonitische Rundschau*, 7(21) (26 May 1886), 1); the firearm was undoubtedly carried for self-protection, but not against snakes! On the seizure of firearms (including over 700 pistols) in 1914/15 see S.D. Bondar, *Sekta mennonitov Rossii, v svyazi s istoriei nemetskoj kolonizatsii na iuge Rossii*. Petrograd, 1916, 96-97.

²⁵ Helen Martens in J. Bestvater, M. Harder, J.W. Martens and H. Peters, eds., *The Family of Abram P. Martens 1875-1985*. Steinbach: Martens Printery, 1984, 39; Cossacks and Circassians, described as "somewhat wild" were employed also in the Schonfeld area of Ekaterinoslav, interviews of James Urry with Carl Driedger, Winnipeg, 1974.

²⁶ Oscar H. Hamm, *Memoirs of Ignatyev in the light of historical change*. Saskatoon: Ruth F. Hamm, 1984, 68, 109-110.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁸ Robert H. McNeal, *Tsar and Cossack, 1855-1914*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 75-83; Fuller, *Civil-military conflict*, 141-68.

³⁰ McNeal, *Tsar and Cossack*, 80.

³¹ Y, "Eine Antwort auf die Frage eines Junglings," *Odessaer Zeitung*, 117(23 May/ 5 June 1907), 2.

³² The Luther version of Mark 14:47 has "Einer aber von denen, die dabei standen..."

³³ Incorrectly cited as John 3:15, although this may be a typographical error of the newspaper's typesetters.

³⁴ The text has "mad Party" ie, revolutionary or anarchist groups acting to overthrow the legitimate authorities of government. Between 1905 and 1907 the most active political group carrying out acts of terrorism, the Social Revolutionary Party, carried out almost 200 attacks, see Maureen Perrie, "Political and economic terror in the tactics of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary Party before 1914." In Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld eds. *Social*

Protest, violence and terror in nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982, 67.

³⁵ Ein Gutsbesitzer, "Illustration zur Frage eines Jünglings in Nr 92," *Odessaer Zeitung* 180 (9/22 August 1907), 2.

³⁶ Such cases of peasant action were extremely common in Russia at this period, see Perrie, "The Russian Peasant movement," 128-29 (Table 1 and 3); for a discussion of peasant, estate owners and colonists' attitudes to land and conflict over use and access in New Russia, see Leonard Friesen, *New Russia and the fissuring of rural society 1855-1907*. Unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Toronto, 1988.

³⁷ The names of the estate owner, his manager and the village may well be disguised. We cannot identify them.

³⁸ For similar cases of peasants pasturing their livestock on Mennonite estates during the 1905 Revolution see Friesen, "Mennonites in Russia and the Revolution of 1905," 47, note 19.

³⁹ The lines are from Friedrich Schiller's "Das Lied von der Glocke," (1799/1800), lines 350-51;

⁴⁰ Fuller Jr., *Civil-military conflict*.

⁴¹ On colonist posses see Worobec, "Horse thieves," 287; the Mennonite reports were given to one of us (JU) in interviews in 1974 particularly with the late Wilhelm Kaethler of Arnaud whose father had been a manager of an estate in Ekaterinoslav, just north of Molochnaia, quite similar to that described in the estate owner's account and Carl Driedger of Winnipeg who recounted the capture of Armenian horse thieves in the Schönfeld area who were severely beaten before being handed over to the police.

⁴² Lawrence Klippenstein, *Mennonite pacifism and state service in Russia: a case study in Church-state relations, 1789-1936*. Unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1984, 147-55; cf. James Urry, "The cost of community: the funding and economic management of the Mennonite Commonwealth before 1914." Paper presented to the Conference on Anabaptist Mennonite faith and economics: breaking the silence, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, May 24-27, 1990.

⁴³ Neo Mennonit, "Unser Forsteidienst," *Botschafter*, (August 14, 1909), 3-4, quoted in Klippenstein, *Mennonite pacifism and state service*, 148.

⁴⁴ Klippenstein, *Mennonite pacifism and state service*, 135-47; Friesen, "Mennonites in Russia and the Revolution of 1905."

⁴⁵ Regular reports of such events are found in the local news section of the Mennonite newspaper, the *Friedensstimme*, and annually in the section "Aus deutschen Ansiedlungen" of the *Christlicher Familienkalender*.

⁴⁶ On industrial unrest see Leopold H. Haimson & Ronald Petrusha, "Two strike waves in Imperial Russia, 1905-1907, 1912-14," in Leopold H. Haimson & Charles Tilly eds., *Strikes, wars, and revolutions in an international perspective*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989; on rural unrest see Dorothy Atkinson, *The end of the Russian land commune, 1905-1930*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1983, 106

⁴⁷ See Fr. N. "Ein bestialischer Raubmord," *Odessaer Zeitung*, 111 (16/29 May 1912), 2; A. Friesen, "7 Menschen auf bestialische Weise hingeschlachtet," *Odessaer Zeitung*, 19 (April 1913), 2-3; K. Klassen, "Über den entsetzlichen Raubmord" *Odessaer Zeitung*, 83 (11/24 April 1913), 2; *Mennonitische Jahrbuch*, 10, 1913, 203-06; on both murders treated as a trend and a warning see "Von zwei Raubmorden," *Christlicher Familienkalender*, 1914, 122-26.

⁴⁸ A police report on Ekaterinoslav Province quoted in E. N. Burdzhonov, *Russia's second revolution: the February 1917 uprising in Petrograd*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, 31, clearly indicates the degree of rural breakdown even before the Revolution.

⁴⁹ For a good account of these events see Launcelot A. Owen, *The Russian peasant movement 1906-1917*. London: P.S. King, 1937, Chapters 4-5; Graeme J. Gill, *Peasants and government in*

the Russian Revolution (London: Macmillan, 1979) and John L. H. Keep, *The Russian Revolution: a study in mass mobilization*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976, especially chapters 14–15, in particular, 197–98 on the situation in Ekaterinoslav, where there were large Mennonite settlements. On the positions of the various political groups on land reform, on peasant organization and the extent of rural disturbance between March and October 1917 see Gill, *Peasants and government* and Atkinson, *End of the Russian land commune*, Chapters 7–9, especially, 162–63 and Table 12

⁵⁰ John P. Dyck ed., *Troubles and triumphs 1914–1924: excerpts from the diary of P.J. Dyck, Ladekopp, Molotschna Colony, Ukraine*. Springstein, Man., 1981, 33,38.

⁵¹ See for instance the account of this period in *The Diary of Anna Baerg, 1916–1924* (translated and edited by Gerald Peters). Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1985, 8–15; cf. broader discussion in Klippenstein, *Mennonite pacifism and state service*, 218–19.

⁵² On the “Halbstadt Days” see John B. Toews, “The Halbstadt volost 1918–22: a case study of the Mennonite encounter with early Bolshevism,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 48, 1974, 491–92 and John B. Toews, *Czars, Soviets and Mennonites*. Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1982, 80.

⁵³ See contemporary reports on actions in the Schönfeld area and Gerhard P. Schroeder, *Miracles of grace and judgement: a brief account of the personal contacts and experiences with some of the leaders and followers of the notorious Makhnovshchina during the civil war in the Ukraine 1914–23*. Lodi, CA: The Author, 1974: 28–29; cf discussion in Klippenstein, *Mennonite pacifism and state service*, 223–24.

⁵⁴ See the warning of the German District Commander in June 1918 quoted in Toews, “The Halbstadt volost,” 493–94; *Czars, Soviets and Mennonites*, 82.

⁵⁵ See John B. Toews, “The origins and activities of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in the Ukraine (1918–1919),” *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 47 (1972), 5–40; Klippenstein, *Mennonite pacifism and state service*, 222–30; 235–58.

⁵⁶ The best recent account of the Civil War is Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, London: Allen & Unwin 1987.

⁵⁷ Toews, “The origins and activities,” 12–13; cf. Toews, *Czars, Soviets and Mennonites*, 57.

⁵⁸ Recently Klippenstein (*Mennonite pacifism and state service*, 135–57) has indicated some features of this wider prewar debate. For an indication of increased awareness of their historical position on nonresistance see the essay by Cornelius Bergmann, “Das Prinzip der Wehrlosigkeit in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung,” *Botschafter*, 50–52 (29 June/ 12 July 1910).