
Foreword

We begin the 1991 issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* with a tribute to our colleague and co-editor Al Reimer on his early retirement from the University of Winnipeg. As an editorial committee we have planned this tribute behind Al's back — which was difficult for obvious reasons — and we have made certain that our colleague will not see Roy Vogt's *laudatio* until it appears in print in this issue. We wish Al well as he continues, now on a full-time basis, to write and publish both scholarly and creative literature.

In 1947 over 1,000 Russian Mennonite refugees managed to escape from Berlin to South America in a daring and dramatic venture. The story has been well and repeatedly told by MCC workers Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, who were intimately involved with the rescue operation. Now a historian — Ted Regehr of the University of Saskatchewan — has for the first time analyzed the event on the basis of important documents in "Anatomy of a Mennonite Miracle: The Berlin Rescue of 30–31 January 1947."

Were the Russian Mennonites merely overtaken by events when they organized self-defense units (*Selbstschutz*) for their protection during the chaotic period following World War I, or were they historically prepared for their violation of an important principle of their faith? In their article "Protecting Mammon" James Urry and Helmut-Harry Loewen deal with "some dilemmas of Mennonite nonresistance in later Imperial Russia and the origins of the *Selbstschutz*."

Egil Grisliis, a Lutheran theologian and historian, is known to readers of this journal through his insightful articles on Menno Simons. In his "Menno Simons as a Devout Disciple of the Apostle Paul," Grisliis seems to challenge the view, at least by implication, that Anabaptists were more drawn to the synoptic gospels and New Testament writers like Peter and James than to the writings of Paul.

Our literary section begins with "Prophet and kings: a long poem" by Sarah Klassen, published here for the first time. Sarah had her first collection of poems *Journey to Yalta* published in 1988 by Turnstone Press. Like the prophets of old, poets often have the uncanny ability to see, even foresee, the real nature of historical and political events. Here, in her last poem of the series, written long before the Persian Gulf crisis, the poet writes: "All things begin and end/with words. The ones you now hear/jangle like chains. They are foreign/and yet distorted in the desert's/blinding sand-storms." How familiar have we become with the distorted, even lying, words that have bombarded our ears and eyes during the recent "Operation Desert-Storm"!

The next two articles were originally delivered as papers on May 10–12, 1990, at a Conrad Grebel College sponsored conference on Canadian-

Mennonite literature. Al Reimer deals with the "Role of Arnold Dyck in Canadian Mennonite Writing," and Harry Loewen publishes the first academic study on "Gerhard Loewen (1863-1946): Early Mennonite Poet and Teacher in Russia and Canada." These papers will also appear as proceedings of the Waterloo conference in *The New Quarterly: new directions in Canadian writing*, whose permission to print them is gratefully acknowledged.

Gerhard Friesen's literary articles, particularly his work on Fritz Senn, have appeared in this journal before. In this issue Friesen deals with two poems by Senn in which the poet commemorates the life and death of the famous Russian painter Ilya Repin (1844-1930). Friesen's probing analysis reveals Senn's wide-ranging interests and the varied sources, including art, from which the poet drew his inspiration.

The question of who Mennonites are will not go away, it seems. Rodney Sawatsky in "Mennonite Ethnicity: Medium, Message and Mission," uses John Redekop's controversial *A People Apart* (1987) as a springboard to dive into the turbulent waters of Mennonite ethnicity and identity! While affirming some of Redekop's concerns about the difference between culture and faith, Sawatsky argues that peoplehood and Christian belief cannot be separated without doing harm to both. The paper was originally presented at the Mennonite Secondary School Educators Convention, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, September 30, 1989.

In an extensive review article Carol Penner surveys Mennonite women's history. It becomes apparent from her studies that while a beginning has been made to write Mennonite biography and history from a feminist perspective, more can and ought to be done in this area. As editors we wish to encourage both women and men to submit scholarly articles dealing with women in Mennonite history and life for consideration in *JMS*.

We conclude this issue with several book reviews. Our thanks to the many reviewers who are always willing to read the books we send them and share their critical insights with our readers. If someone wishes to send us a review of a book without having been asked for it, we are happy to consider it for inclusion in this journal.

We might add that financial donations to the *Journal* are always most welcome. For donations of \$5.00 and up income tax receipts will be issued by the University of Winnipeg. Also, we would appreciate it if readers of *JMS* would promote the journal among those who benefit from the articles and reviews and are interested in Mennonite history, literature, and culture.

Harry Loewen