

# Russian Mennonites and *Allianz*

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Russian Mennonites, like other Anabaptist descendants, experienced their share of dissent and division. At different times such polarization involved the rigorous ethics of the *Kleine Gemeinde* (1812), the rationalistic Templers and pietistic Brethren of the 1860s, the legalistic Peters Brethren and the chiliastic followers of Claass Epp during the 1880s. At the dawn of the twentieth century another type of dissent, less obviously sectarian in character yet theologically important, emerged among the Mennonite settlements in Ukraine. The formative influences shaping the new movement came from Germany, but were gradual and accumulative in nature. In various overlapping stages Russian Mennonites imported religious literature, went abroad to attend conferences or directly invited German speakers to visit Mennonite settlements. All this activity was focused upon a loose affiliation of German evangelicals known as the *Blankenburger Konferenz*, which because of its trans-denominational emphasis was often referred to as the *Allianzbewegung*. Once it permeated the Mennonite churches in Ukraine it was simply referred to as *Allianz*.

The genesis of the *Blankenburger Konferenz* began in 1845 when several Scottish church leaders invited representatives from all churches in England,

Wales, Scotland and Ireland to an ecumenical conference in Liverpool. A year later the so-called Evangelical Alliance was founded in London, with delegates present from all over Europe as well as Canada and the United States. A nine-point statement of faith, conservative in its theology, was adopted.<sup>1</sup> German interest in the movement was strong from the very onset. When the organization met in Berlin in 1857 some 1300 delegates including King Frederick William IV of Prussia were present.<sup>2</sup> In Germany evangelical segments within the free churches as well as state churches formed into various regional branches of the international movement.

By the 1880s there were obvious tensions within some of these organizations. Free church minorities like the Baptists were not only suspicious of the theological liberalism within the state church but also lamented its ongoing intolerance of free church groups. These problems surfaced in several regional organizations in Germany but appeared more specifically in the agendas eventually associated with the maturation of the Blankenburg Conference. Its emergence was associated with the activities of Anna von Weling (born 1837) whose Scottish mother raised her in a strongly Calvinistic environment, which was later modified by Anna's personal conversion experience. Eventually her interest in Sunday School and homeless children brought her to the forests of Thuringia where she purchased an old house. In 1886 she courageously invited a small ecumenical group of Christians, twenty-eight to be exact, for a conference. Two significant names graced the first guest list: F.W. Baedeker, later famous for his prison ministry in Russia and Ernst Gebhardt, minister and hymnwriter.<sup>3</sup>

The Blankenburg Conference expanded rapidly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with annual attendance often exceeding one thousand. It had one theme from the very onset: the unity of the body of Christ. Within this framework the Conference affirmed the multiplicity of gifts within the body as well as individual denominational identities. This belief in the "communion of the saints" meant avoidance of any discussion about church polity, theological and dogmatic matters or denominational differences. In practice such laudable ecumenical tolerance nevertheless demanded a common theology of Christian essentials. Conference themes therefore addressed broad issues like the meaning of the cross, the working of the Holy Spirit, the meaning of sanctification and the importance of evangelism.<sup>4</sup> Blankenburg leaders were concerned with spiritual experience, the power of the Word and the moving of the Spirit in the context of a living church which cut across denominational lines. Conference speakers were not selected for theological conformity but for faith experience. The yearly gathering stressed personal growth, everyday spirituality and fellowship. The conferences were faith-encouraging and devotional not academic and theological in character.

In his critique of the Blankenburg Conference, its long-time member and former Russian Mennonite, Jakob Kroeker observed that it was never strong in its theology but powerful in its witness.<sup>5</sup> Virtually no established German

theologian ever attended or preached at Blankenburg. Its leaders and speakers provided exemplary modelling of a broad spectrum of Christian activity, involving missions, prison ministries, social service and evangelism. Many of its key supporters and participants were entrepreneurial in character and not only brought the strength of their presence to the Conference but also their particular theological views.<sup>6</sup> At the dawn of the twentieth century the Blankenburg *Allianz* encountered a sequence of crises relating to pentecostalism, universal atonement, perfectionism, higher criticism and premillennialism, all of which were not unrelated to its ecumenical mix. The annual conferences featured evangelistic and edificatory preaching, prayer meetings and personal contacts between participants, and it was this emphasis on personal faith, renewal and personal pilgrimage which frequently provided corrective impulses for participants. However wholistic and healing in its intent and practice, Blankenburg placed some of its adherents, including Russian Mennonites, at risk.

Russian Mennonites were no strangers to foreign contacts, especially from German-speaking lands. Their relative isolation during the first part of the nineteenth century gave way to a broad-based interaction during its last three decades. During the 1860s a young man by the name of David Goerz wrote a series of letters to his parents about his experiences and aspirations as a young teacher. In the letters he lamented the local indifference towards elementary education and the sterility of the prevailing pedagogy.<sup>7</sup> By 1867 his discontent had become disillusionment. He commented: "I am still young and have no desire to spend all [my] life within four walls, wherein one sacrifices one's health, experiences affliction and anxiety, and does not get ahead."<sup>8</sup> In the setting of 1867 young Goerz was right—the Mennonite world was still very circumscribed. Yet by 1870 three young men, Peter M. Friesen, Cornelius B. Unruh and Jacob J. Brauel, left for study in Switzerland. Later they continued their studies at Russian universities. When they and others returned to teach in the existing high schools they brought with them not only new books and ideas, but also some knowledge of the intellectual ferment of the German-speaking countries of western Europe. They literally leaped from village to university in one generation. Upon their return the young teachers found an acceptable outlet for their energies and ideals in the existing educational institutions and so, in what was even an honorable role, were protected from the misunderstandings of an agrarian village society.

In the end it was their students that mattered, for among them the foreign-trained teachers could reproduce their own kind, or at least near variations of their own kind. Religiously they brought several kinds of gifts to their constituency: the pursuit of personal spirituality, a new sense of Christian social accountability and, in small part, a new sense of the Anabaptist heritage. As their young students matured to positions of community leadership they contributed to the gradual transformation of the constituency. In the end it was the piety of the teachers and the reading they encouraged which substantially

enriched the prevailing spirituality. The knowledge and example of social advocates like George Mueller in England and Bodelschwing in Germany contributed to the growing Mennonite interest in welfare and benevolence, while a new abundance of devotional and theological literature satisfied the needs of the soul. Books and pamphlets from evangelical publishers in Germany regularly found their way into Russian Mennonite homes early in the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Some of this material had an influence on personal spirituality and generated an acute sense of moral accountability. It awakened a somewhat dormant social conscience and gradually undergirded a broad-ranging commitment to schools, orphanages, mental institutions and hospitals.

The new flirtation with *Allianz*, while representing an extension of the "German connection," had a more immediate impact upon the Russian Mennonite constituency. Rather suddenly *Allianz* demanded the broadening of existing borders and provided new definitions of what it meant to be church. It rode roughshod over time-sanctioned concepts of ecclesiastical polity and even challenged the traditional practice and meaning of sacred liturgies like communion. It inspired dissidents who refused to be contained in the old structures.

The Old Church and especially the Brethren were the main participants in the *Allianz* drama. At the turn of the century both groups co-existed peacefully in the same village with their lives intersecting six days of the week. They shared in the annual rhythm of agricultural life and the use of the Low German and High German languages. Both bore the financial burden associated with the forestry service and participated together in the meetings of the village assembly. On Sundays, however, those with religious aspirations entered into their separate traditions.

These two solitudes were both intuitively and formally structured. By and large the Old Church remained more traditional in its liturgy, rather diffuse in its definition of conversion and generally predictable in its use of catechistic instruction and rite of baptism. There was a tacit resistance to the personal, pietistic language of faith common among the Mennonite Brethren. Burdened by a long-standing ecclesiastical practice the Old Church still sought to embrace all of Mennonitism and to respond to a membership whose participation in public worship did not always presuppose personal faith. In this constituency *Allianz* adherents often withdrew from what they considered to be a nominal Christianity, which failed to distinguish between converted and unconverted.

As the decades passed the Mennonite Brethren continued to emphasize the personal, experiential component of their piety. The simple, informal and participatory liturgies associated with worship, Bible study and congregational life became set and inflexible. The dissenters of the 1860s practised communion with all the truly converted and fellowshiped with Baptists and Molokans, yet by 1900 restricted communion to those baptized by immersion. The conversion process, once broadly defined and experienced, became

increasingly subject to a prescribed pattern and sequence.<sup>10</sup> While affirming the freedom of the individual congregation and the importance of group consensus, the Mennonite Brethren became more subject to conference governance and ministerial control. *Allianz* again chimed the ancient bells of liberation long suppressed by institutionalism. Ironically, *Allianz*, which should have been a Brethren ally, was often regarded as an enemy.

Russian Mennonites, lay or ecclesiastical, were influenced by the Blankenburg movement in one of three ways. There were those who personally travelled to Germany and attended the week-long conference, though distance and cost made this something of a rarity. Wealthy estate owners such as David Dyck of Apanlee and Peter Schmidt of Steinbach not only attended themselves but even sponsored Mennonite ministers interested in visiting Blankenburg. Jakob Reimer of Rueckenau and Jakob Kroeker from the Crimea were both conference guests and occasional speakers. A more intensive type of exposure involved Russian Mennonite students attending the *Allianz* Bible School (founded in 1906) in Berlin, one of whose objectives was to train ministers for Russia.<sup>11</sup> A Peter Schellenberg, for example, attended the school, became acquainted with E.H. Broadbent, then travelled with him in Siberia and Turkestan.<sup>12</sup> This exposure to Blankenburg via conference and school not only broadened the boundaries of Christian awareness but set the stage for other scenarios.

German *Allianz* advocates were invited to Ukraine by former students or more likely by the wealthy landed gentry upon whose estates special conferences were held. Mennonite teachers and ministers at times enjoyed an all-expense week-long stay at their estates and listened to the likes of Dr. F.W. Baedecker,<sup>13</sup> professor Ernst F. Stroeter, and George von Viehbahn. Born in Germany in 1823, Baedecker went to England in 1854 where he taught in a boys school in Weston-super-Mare on the western coast. Converted in 1866, he began to work in tract distribution, then gradually emerged as a free-lance evangelist. He not only criss-crossed the European continent but visited prisons and penal colonies in Russia, going as far as Vladivostok and Sachalin Island. Many Mennonites in the Ukraine were converted through his preaching.<sup>14</sup> Ernst F. Stroeter was not only an occasional visitor to special conferences in the Ukraine, but the editor of the dispensationally-inclined publication, *Das Prophetische Wort*.<sup>15</sup> George von Viehbahn was an unlikely ally for pacifist Mennonites in Russia. A scion of a Prussian family, first elevated to nobility by the soldier-king Friedrich Wilhelm I in 1728, George advanced through the official ranks during the German wars of unification (1864, 1866, 1870/71). After reaching the rank of major-general he retired from the military in 1896 and devoted himself to preaching and tract-writing.<sup>16</sup> Sophisticated and articulate, these and other spokespersons exercised a formative influence upon the theologically underexposed Russian Mennonites.

There was a third avenue of contact. In 1890 Anna von Weling founded the *Evangelische Allianzblatt*.<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to establish how widely it was known

among the Russian Mennonites but there is strong evidence for the availability and circulation of this and other types of *Allianz* literature. When the Brethren publisher Abraham Kroeker analyzed the implications of *Allianz* for the larger Mennonite constituency in 1907, he mentioned some publications he was familiar with. These included the *Elberfelder* Bible translation, the periodical *Botschafter des Heils in Christo* and the devotional calendar *Botschafter des Friedens* - all products of the German Plymouth Brethren, many of whom in turn were directly associated with Blankenburg.<sup>18</sup>

Sources which document the initial inroads of *Allianz* into Brethren and Old Church congregations are few and far between, yet sufficient to reconstruct a partial understanding of the phenomenon. One of the earliest records involved the 1899 visit of the Mennonite Brethren itinerant minister Quiring to the Zagradovka settlement, a visit which obviously caused some theological discomfort. In the words of the *Zionsbote*, correspondent Quiring

spoke a great deal about *Allianz* meetings which are now the fashion and with which we can't agree. He read 1 Corinthians 12:13 but did not deal with the first part of the verse. We think the first part is as important to unity and fellowship as the second.... It is quite biblical to have a church which consists only of the children of God, but what if one is baptized as a child, another by effusion and the third by immersion... I don't find a single church in the Scriptures structured in this fashion.... Today it seems we have a new Gospel for we hear that people are being admitted to communion who have not been baptized. I fear that before long we will not understand one another.<sup>19</sup>

A few years later a Davlekanovo (Ufa) correspondent reported that the local congregation had baptized Jacob Martens, a minister and teacher at the local school for the poor, its founder Franz Klassen and a Kornelius Siemens. All were advocates of open communion, yet the congregation, fully appraised of this, granted them membership in the Mennonite Brethren church.<sup>20</sup>

Both episodes reflect a concern with the *Allianz* practice of open communion and by implication influenced the polity of the local congregation. Communion celebration with all the saints and a minimizing of denominational boundaries, at times minimizing the need for baptism, was characteristic of Blankenburg. One of the best connecting threads between Mennonite Brethren and *Allianz* involved the career of Jakob Reimer, evangelist, itinerant minister and prominent member of the Rueckenau Mennonite Brethren church. It is difficult to establish when or how Reimer established his initial liaison with the Blankenburg *Allianz*, but once committed he became one of the foremost Mennonite Brethren advocates of the open communion practice as well as some aspects of its theology. In 1906 and again in 1909 he was invited as one of the guest speakers at the conference.<sup>21</sup> An 1899 incident may have served to forcibly catapult the views of Reimer and his associates into the Mennonite Brethren constituency.<sup>22</sup> He and some friends stopped at Steinbach, Molotschna, on his way to Alexandertal. In the course of the conversation Reimer learned that his travelling companion, a Mr. Penner, desired to be

baptized. The impulsive Reimer invited Penner to share his Christian experience with a small group at Steinbach and baptized him the same afternoon. In the communion which followed Reimer announced that all true disciples of Christ were free to join in the celebration. Only two of those present did not belong to the Mennonite Brethren church, yet Reimer's Rueckenau congregation discussed his possible excommunication at the next congregational meeting. In one sense the subsequent crisis was of Reimer's own making. While still affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren he participated openly and actively in the dissident movement which spawned the Lichtenau Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church in 1906 and functioned as its co-leader.

The extensive journals of the Mennonite Brethren minister and later elder, Herman A. Neufeld, provide additional insight into the evolving *Allianz* saga. Converted in 1884 Neufeld joined the Mennonite Brethren and was already appointed as an itinerant minister in 1888, then formally ordained in 1889.<sup>23</sup> Most of his theological training consisted of short-term Bible courses periodically offered in various villages. Jakob Reimer figured prominently at these training sessions during the 1890s.<sup>24</sup> Thanks to the sponsorship of Steinbach estate owner Peter Schmidt, Neufeld travelled to the Blankenburg Conference in 1897. He penned a terse description of his four-day stay at the conference. He was impressed by the ministers from England and Germany and felt they preached in the power of the Spirit. "They were days of blessing and the Lord gave much grace."<sup>25</sup>

Upon his return Neufeld reported back to his constituency, including his travel patron Peter Schmidt. His refusal to participate in the Blankenburg communion celebration evoked both affirmation and criticism among his fellow Mennonite Brethren and left him confused.<sup>26</sup> "Maybe," he concluded, "it would have been better if I had not gone to Germany."<sup>27</sup>

The communion question reflected a growing tension which erupted at the annual Mennonite Brethren conference held in Naumovka in 1900. The issue revolved about the question of celebrating communion with believers who were not baptized. Blankenburg's advocacy of open communion now became a Mennonite Brethren agenda. Neufeld tersely commented: "Some of our Brethren began to advocate open communion, especially brother Jacob Reimer and others."<sup>28</sup> By 1901 there was more to report:

... Some people celebrated communion at Apanlee including some of our folks as well as believers from the Old Church.... People began to think of founding a believers church in the Molotschna in which all believers could participate in communion, including those who did not wish to be baptized.... Later when I travelled with brother Reimer I asked him what would really be gained by founding such a church and whether it was right to do so, but he did not accept my humble counsel.... Later they founded a congregation called the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, which had no elders, only a council of elders to which all ministers and deacons belonged. The only condition of membership was conversion, baptism was optional.<sup>29</sup>

In 1903 the annual conference meeting in Waldheim, Molotschna, was once more caught up in the open communion debate. The official minutes somewhat minimized the prevailing tensions.

The majority of the delegates opposed having communion with those who have not received biblical baptism (immersion). Motivated by a discernable sense of Christ's presence the assembly unanimously agreed to tolerate those who practised open communion....<sup>30</sup>

The matter was nevertheless brought to a vote. Some fifty-nine delegates were opposed to open communion, thirteen were in support, and ten abstained. Herman Neufeld who attended the sessions provides a less cosmetic portrait.

... Some brothers, especially those from the Molotschna, generated disunity at the conference — especially those who felt they possessed more profound insights than the others and considered them to be narrow and parochial. They felt the Brethren Church did not fully understand the Gospel and so celebrated communion with all believers whether they were baptised or not. There were even occasions when they gathered at special places and celebrated communion whether ordained ministers were present or not. They also baptised without subjecting [the candidate] to congregational scrutiny or using the congregational baptismal rite.<sup>31</sup>

The open communion question re-emerged at the 1904 Mennonite Brethren conference held in Reinfeld. The goodwill of the conservative majority was apparently stretched to the breaking point. Among other things the deliberations focused on the activities of Jakob Reimer, Jakob Kroeker and Abraham Wall, all staunch advocates of open communion. The delegates expressed their lack of confidence in Kroeker and Reimer by not reappointing them to the itinerant ministry.<sup>32</sup> In some ways the conference action was a remarkable display of tolerance. A person like Jakob Reimer had actively and repeatedly violated established polity and practice by baptising and celebrating private communion. He also advocated the formation of a dissident congregation, then actively participated in its organization in 1906, all the while remaining a minister in the Mennonite Brethren church.

The loss of official conference minutes for the subsequent years make it difficult to reconstruct the progress of the *Allianz* issue in the Mennonite Brethren constituency. According to recollections of the Rueckenau minister Jakob Thiessen a later Brethren conference advised the local congregation to urge Reimer to transfer his membership. When the proposal was presented to the Rueckenau congregation it was rejected since some members felt the conference was only a consulting body, not a law-giving one.<sup>33</sup> Thinking back the Einlage elder and long-time conference participant, G.P. Regehr, could not recall a specific conference resolution and felt that Reimer was simply urged to join the Lichtfelde congregation where he was already active.<sup>34</sup> The Rueckenau affinity for *Allianz* ideas was apparently debated at the annual conference meeting in Kotlarevka, Memrik, in 1908, but no specific action was taken, though several ministers were not reappointed to the itinerant ministry.<sup>35</sup>

Rueckenau subsequently allowed its affiliate churches — Tiede, Waldheim, Tiegenhagen, Sparrau and Alexandertal — to become independent congregations. All eventually practised open communion. None of the Mennonite Brethren churches in the Chortitza settlement or elsewhere ever followed suit unless specific local *Allianz* congregations were organized, as in the case of the Altonau congregation in Zagradovka.

Once again Herman Neufeld elaborates somewhat the ongoing *Allianz* story among the Brethren. He documents a special meeting (*Bruderberatung*) held during the Easter holidays in 1910. The deliberations generated a rather dramatic resolution. “We decided among other things that we, like the Einlage congregation, do not desire conference contact with the Rueckenau congregation and [several] others, if they do not wish to practice communion and baptism according to the Brethren confession of faith.”<sup>36</sup> The *Allianz* question, however, was not mentioned in the official minutes of the 1910 General Conference held in Tiede, Zagradovka,<sup>37</sup> nor in the 1912 assembly meeting in Rueckenau.<sup>38</sup> Were the minutes officially “sanitized” or could the matter not be raised because government observers were present? With characteristic brevity Neufeld comments on the Zagradovka proceedings:

Things did not go well. The *Allianz* question could not be openly discussed. We talked about it in council and came to sharp disagreements. The Einlage congregation did not want to proceed without settling the matter but we could not do so in any case, since we did not have official authorization.<sup>39</sup>

Neufeld makes one additional reference to the behind the scene tensions associated with the *Allianz* in the Mennonite Brethren constituency. Early in 1913 he travelled to Neu-Samara with another itinerant minister, the *Allianz* advocate Peter Koehn of Waldheim. The Rueckenau conference which reappointed Koehn in 1912 did so by a vote of thirty in favour and twenty against. Neufeld was not happy with his co-worker and their work in Neu-Samara was marked by considerable tension “since we do not agree in our theology. He [Koehn] advocates open communion and actually practised it in Alt-Samara.”<sup>40</sup>

In one instance *Allianz* generated a long term casualty, at least where the Mennonite Brethren were concerned. Trained as an elementary school teacher, Jakob Kroeker left the Ukraine and spent four years at the Baptist seminary in Hamburg.<sup>41</sup> Upon his return he became active as a Brethren itinerant minister and joined with several others in founding the Raduga printing press in Halbstadt.<sup>42</sup> Kroeker, like Reimer, became involved with the special conferences sponsored by such estate owners as David Dyck of Apanlee and Peter Schmidt of Steinbach. Here he came in contact with such Blankenburg “regulars” as Fritz Detzbach, Professor Ernst Stroeker and F.W. Baedecker. Kroeker was deeply impressed with Baedecker’s emphasis on the “unity of the Spirit” and his view of the church as the “communion of saints” and not a confessional group.<sup>43</sup> Many of Kroeker’s life-time associates were Blankenburg adherents, like his co-worker Pastor Jack in the mission endeavour *Licht im*

*Osten*, and his other associates in Wernigerode, Achenbach and Melle.<sup>44</sup> Kroeker's Blankenburg affinities soon caused him to separate from his Mennonite Brethren roots in Russia. Of this experience he wrote:

I had to leave my positions in my church even though its spirituality was very close to that of Blankenburg. Our annual Mennonite Conferences in Russia could not understand why I as their called and ordained minister could share communion fellowship with others who were not part of our Mennonite brotherhood.... It was among the most difficult experiences of my spiritual ministry when at one conference three venerated elders, mature in the service of the Lord and deep in their love for me, tried to persuade me amid tears that my newly acquired convictions were wrong.<sup>45</sup>

The Blankenburg *Allianz* argued that only two ordinances united the true followers of Jesus: the Lord's Supper and baptism. It focused upon the vitality of the inner spiritual journey and minimized the importance of conventional ecclesiastical structures. Ironically, it was not long before *Allianz* dissidence spawned its own churches and organizations, not only in Germany but among Mennonites in the Molotschna.

Here the first *Allianz* church was officially organized in 1906 under the name "Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood" (*Evangelisch-Mennonitische Bruderschaft*). Later it was often referred to as the *Lichtenau Allianz* since many of its early members came from the Old Church in that village. Peter Riediger, a founding member of the new congregation, chronicles its birth.

In 1900 the Lord instigated a revival in the village of Lindenau and many were converted and dedicated themselves to the Lord. These gathered two evenings a week and had prayer fellowship. And the Lord steadily added to the group . . . In due time there was also a revival in the village of Lichtenau and a number were converted. We came into contact with these as well as believers in other villages. In 1905 we organized a communion fellowship. At that time we were some 28 members from the Mennonite Church in Lichtenau. From time to time we celebrated communion in the homes and occasionally footwashing according to the Lord's command. We nevertheless remained members of the Mennonite Church in Lichtenau. Yet we refrained from participation in three practices: communion in the [established] church; the examination of baptismal candidates; the excommunication and readmission of those who lapsed. The only ordained minister among us was brother Jakob Loewen, at that time a teacher in Lichtenau. Soon we made contact with believers from other Mennonite Churches.<sup>46</sup>

Riediger's account implies that house churches emerged in several villages in the wake of religious revival and matured into a sizeable communion fellowship which met apart from the Old Church. A Mennonite Brethren observer provides additional perspective:

Believers in the various Old Church congregations who could no longer participate in communion fellowship repeatedly came to us [the Brethren] requesting participation in the Lord's Supper. We always refused because they were not baptised in the river [immersion]. Finally they decided to join together and form their own community.<sup>47</sup>

Two distinctives characterized the fellowship. Baptised persons individually decided whether or not they should be rebaptised by immersion. Secondly, one might even request rebaptism after joining the congregation. This concern must be understood in the light of the Brethren insistence upon immersion as the only correct biblical form, a position which demanded that even genuine believers baptised by effusion be rebaptised. Similarly their desire for communion fellowship with all true children of God stood in opposition to the Mennonite Brethren practice which limited participation to persons of known church membership who were baptised "in the river."<sup>48</sup>

It is difficult to detect any active involvement of *Allianz* representatives or their theology amid the spontaneity and informality which spawned the young movement.<sup>49</sup> Their "liberalism" seemed to stem from their opposition to perceived inadequacies in the faith practices of the Old Church. Apparently the Brethren did not figure as a catalyst in the dissident's early spiritual pilgrimage. They came to them already orphaned and needing parenting, only to encounter further barriers. This context probably allowed them to readily respond to a 1906 invitation to the Apanlee Estate of the David Dicks, where the formal organizational meeting of a new church was held in a large granary. At this point, according to Riediger's recollections, known *Allianz* advocates participated actively in the proceedings.

I do not know how many came, who they all were, or from where they came. I did not know a great many of them. Those whom I knew from the Mennonite Brethren were Jakob Reimer from Rueckenau, Jacob Kroeker from Halbstadt and Peter Unruh from Ohrloff. In the morning there was a prayer meeting and a preaching service. Afternoon there was first a sermon, then the installation. Brother Isaak Ediger from Altenau was a member and a minister in the Ohrloff Mennonite Church and was installed as co-elder and minister. Brother Heinrich Guenther from Ohrloff and a member of the same church was installed as co-elder and deacon. Brother Peter Schmidt from Steinbach was [installed as] co-elder and deacon. While these three knelt the brethren Jakob Reimer, Jakob Kroeker and Peter Unruh carried out the installation with the laying on of hands and prayer. Following this those who wished to join the church signed their names in a book. Many signed but not all who were present.<sup>50</sup>

These recollections clearly delineate some of the dynamics associated with the birth of the Lichtenau movement: its revivalistic origins; its strong linkage to the Old Church; its apparent breadth of appeal. The leaders of the new church were installed into office by prominent Mennonite Brethren few of whom officially joined the group, yet remained very active in the new congregation. The "Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood" had formally installed elders and deacons and compiled an official membership list. *Allianz*, which began as an attempt to transcend confessional boundaries, now succumbed to denominationalism and became divisive. The Lichtfelde drama was simply a mini-portrait of a broader phenomenon encompassing the international *Allianz* movement. The original mandate only called for broad-based

fellowship and periodic conferences — now there were specific *Allianz* congregations and specific *Allianz* projects.<sup>51</sup>

Another illustration of the dynamic of *Allianz* is found in the diary of the Borosenko settler and minister Martin Hamm (1869-1919).<sup>52</sup> The surviving portion of Hamm's diary begins rather suddenly in 1908 when believers in the settlement split from the Old Church and re-organized as the Altonau Mennonite Church. Converted as a mature adult, Hamm and others sought rebaptism convinced that their earlier act was devoid of active and personal faith. Hamm initially felt rebuffed by the local Mennonite Brethren Church which insisted on immersion baptism and church membership, but was finally rebaptised by the Nikolaital Brethren minister Jakob Martins without being required to become a church member. "I did not join any denomination and want to carry no other name except the name of Christ."<sup>53</sup>

Hamm now became caught up in the concerns of the Mennonite *Allianz* world: a Halbstadt conference in mid-June led by Jakob Kroecker and Jakob Reimer; special meetings at Steinau with Reimer and Koehler, a teacher at the *Allianz* Bible School in Berlin; a September Bible conference with Blankenburg speakers held at the Dick estate in Apanlee. By November 1908 the *Allianz* dissidents wanted to organize their own church. Bible studies with the Brethren did not meet Hamm's expectations. "They call us sisters and brothers but deny this in deed. They will not celebrate communion with us...."<sup>54</sup> When group leaders met to discuss the actual organization of the new church the practice of the Lord's Supper was a prominent agenda item. "Whoever wants to take communion with us must have decided for the Lord... they should let us know ahead of time and have a certificate from their local church that they are in good standing."<sup>55</sup> Other items were discussed but possibly not resolved. "We do not want to organize a church according to current practices for they are not biblical ... Our confession of faith is the Word of God."<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile Hamm's *Allianz* orientation matured in the context of further home Bible studies, Bible conferences,<sup>57</sup> communion celebrations and contacts with like-minded Mennonites elsewhere, especially in Zgradovka.<sup>58</sup>

Martin Hamm moved to Schoenau, Zgradovka, in the fall of 1910. Here his *Allianz* inclinations found nurture and encouragement in the person of Franz W. Martens, the Old Church elder in Nikolaifeld. Martens initial interest in the new movement probably began in 1905 and 1906 when he attended two *Allianz* Bible conferences held on the Apanlee estate.<sup>59</sup> In February, 1907, he resigned as elder and several months later participated in the founding of the "Altonau Evangelical Mennonite Church," the Zgradovka equivalent of the Lichtenau *Allianz*.<sup>60</sup> During the next few years Martens interacted with his new theological world and the friends that belonged to it. Circuit preachers from western Europe like Karl Mascher from Steglitz near Berlin, Grubb from London and Fritz Widmer from Switzerland now graced the pulpit of the growing congregation.<sup>61</sup> In 1910 he accompanied another European visitor on a tour of the southern Ukraine including such *Allianz* strongholds as the

Mennonite estates of Steinbach, Apanlee, Taschchenak and Brodsky.<sup>62</sup> There was a surprising entry for 1911: "On September 11 we were baptised by brother Martin Hamm in Altonau."<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately Marten's memoirs provide no further information on the nature of his theological differences with the Old Church nor the further evolution of the Altonau congregation.

Martin Hamm's diary addresses the *Allianz* question more directly. For all its transdenominationalism *Allianz* still had a need for a local identity. In the context of village life there were only Old Church or Brethren Mennonites, each with their time-hallowed patterns of piety. In January, 1910, Hamm made a preaching tour of the Baratov and Zagradovka settlements. It was a somewhat frustrating experience for Hamm complained that "the *Allianz* movement progresses very slowly, people are reluctant to discard old forms and customs. The church (*Gemeinde*) still rules and believers seek refuge in the church rather than the Lord."<sup>64</sup> His 1908 attempt to organize an *Allianz* fellowship in Borosenko already revealed that "communion of all the saints" needed institutionalism and appropriate parameters. Open communion still required participatory regulations. The tsarist demand that individual members of each religious group in Russia be appropriately registered in a church book proved even more frustrating. "The government does not ask whether a Mennonite is born again or not... living faith has nothing to do with Menno or Luther... faith claims Christ and not Menno or Luther."<sup>65</sup> In the end Hamm's *Allianz* persuasion was further frustrated by the requirements of tsarist law and, though active in the new movement, he decided to leave his name in the registry of the Old Church.<sup>66</sup>

Another documented attempt to organize an *Allianz* congregation occurred in Donskaya, Neu-Samara. Here dissidents purchased a property, built a church and installed two ministers. The small congregation failed to experience rapid growth and soon petitioned the local Mennonite Brethren church for admittance. "By 1911 both churches were so amalgamated and unified that it seemed things had always been this way."<sup>67</sup> Obviously the established church became more liberal, the dissidents more conservative. In some ways the Donskaya episode foreshadowed the experience of the scattered *Allianz* churches in Canada following the 1920s emigration.

A tragic episode in the story of the Rueckenau congregation possibly reflected the *Allianz* politics of the period. On May 28, 1906, the congregation honoured the twenty-five year service of its elder, David Schellenberg (1825-1919), with an elaborate celebration.<sup>68</sup> Some years later (June 20, 1909), Schellenberg was deposed as elder, apparently because of economic mismanagement and domestic disharmony. There was probably a more complicated scenario. Observers involved with the episode suggest several constellations. The most prominent involved the *Allianz* advocates within the congregation led by Jakob Reimer and at least two others. Reimer was opposed to the Brethren understanding of the church both in terms of its structural definition (baptised members only) as well as its functional expression (communion with

only members baptised by immersion). The tension had existed for more than a decade.

The eldership represented a mode of leadership adopted by the Mennonite Brethren during their early beginnings and was not challenged until the dawn of the twentieth century. Blankenburg instinctively reacted against the stratified and institutionalized church of late nineteenth century Germany and in the process rejected existing polity. When Jakob Reimer argued that "all ministers are elders" or that "the congregational leader is the man who has the gift of leadership"<sup>69</sup> he was reiterating *Allianz* iconoclasm. David Schellenberg obviously personified the old way. Little wonder that in Rueckenau the *Allianz* mentality questioned the eldership.<sup>70</sup> Rumours relating to Schellenberg's fiscal mismanagement of mission funds, which later proved false, as well as domestic tensions associated with his second marriage, were exploited in his successful deposition.<sup>71</sup> Contemporaries pointed to Jakob Reimer and two of his supporters, Jakob Friesen and Jakob Thiessen, as being chiefly responsible for the deposition. They identified the *Allianz* sentiment with its agenda of eliminating traditional borders and old ecclesiastical patterns as the active motive in the regrettable process.<sup>72</sup> Schellenberg remained a member of the Rueckenau church until his death in 1919, but withdrew from active ministry. Ironically he was still a welcome speaker in other Mennonite Brethren churches in Russia and even America but not in the Molotschna *Allianz* "territory."

### Some Reflections

The few and fragmentary sources which constitute our current documentation provide only passing glimpses of *Allianz's* impact upon the religious fabric of early twentieth century Russian Mennonitism. The story is often obscured in para-messages and passing references as contemporaries of the period reflect upon the issue or discuss current happenings to which they are privy, but the contemporary reader is not. Furthermore the duration of Blankenburg's significant influence was restricted to just over a decade as the outbreak of World War I curtailed all further access of German men and materials. Within the context of the Russian Mennonite world it was very much a minority movement, destabilizing several identifiable churches and on occasion threatening the tranquility of the larger Mennonite Brethren constituency, especially in the Molotschna.

Several patterns characterized the pathway of the Blankenburg *Allianz* among the Mennonites in Russia. In some cases leaders or persons of influence in a given locality actively sought to impose their new religious vision upon their constituency. Martin Hamm of Borosenko and later Zagradovka and elder Franz W. Martens of the Nikolaifeld Church in Zagradovka obviously fit this category. At another level, local revival sometimes resulted in the search for

new models of religious expression and, in the absence of suitable alternatives, a radical version like *Allianz* was selected. In this instance the Mennonite Brethren, as the one-time dissenters of the 1860s and 1870s, found themselves in the awkward position of being too inflexible and circumscribed. Neither Hamm's demand for broader borders nor the request of the Lichtenau dissidents for participation in the Lord's Supper could be accommodated by the Brethren. A third pattern involved a deliberate fraternization with *Allianz* on the part of the economic and religious elite. The obvious wealth associated with the Steinbach and Apanlee estates not only allowed a privileged class the luxury of travel abroad but the Blankenburg sponsorship of deserving ministers like Herman Neufeld and Jacob Reimer. Apanlee's generosity provided another avenue for the transmission of *Allianz* theology. Bible conferences, some lasting a few days or even a week were designed to appeal to Mennonite church leaders as well as a youthful intelligentsia comprised mainly of public and secondary school teachers. Week-long, all expense-paid sojourns at Apanlee must have impressed these underpaid servants of the Mennonite village.

Was there an accumulative indoctrination which *Allianz* brought to the Ukrainian steppes? There was possibly indoctrination but little impact on basic theology. If anything, Blankenburg reiterated a conservative interpretation of conversion and sanctification already indigenous to Mennonite believers. On the surface, however, its sophisticated spokespersons appeared to transcend the parochialism of the Russian Mennonite world. Yet the records of dissident leaders influenced by *Allianz*, reveal no conscious effort to define or clearly articulate what such slogans as "unity of the Spirit" or "communion of the saints" really meant, or why baptism was or was not optional for believers. In a sense this vision from afar appealed to the young and dissatisfied who saw the current Old Church or Brethren practices more as a historic legacy than a vital force in the community. Eventually such dissidence demanded self definition and separation, but the actual theological basis for such action by self-appointed radicals seem inadequate to the later observer. In the first decade of the twentieth century the conflict revolved more around polity than theology. In Mennonite practice communion was only for baptised members who belonged to a clearly identifiable church group. The *Allianz* demand for open communion challenged the very definition of what it meant to be the church.

The *Allianz* issue was not unrelated to hermeneutics. Both the Mennonite Brethren and the Old Church lived by a traditional hermeneutic in which the community read the Gospels together. It could take the form of a small group Bible study or of ministers meeting at a Bible conference. Such a community exegesis facilitated common understandings and, in the case of the Brethren, an ease of co-operation between a variety of differently endowed itinerant ministers. The *Allianz* hermeneutic was imposed from above by eloquent spokespersons and at times made conventional Mennonite spirituality appear inadequate or even obsolete.

One approach to Bible interpretation at the Blankenburg conferences was shaped by German Plymouth Brethren active in the movement who espoused John Darby's dispensational method. This type of exegesis found expression in the preaching and writings of professor Ernst Stroeter, especially his decidedly dispensational publication, *Das Prophetische Wort*. A frequent visitor to the southern Ukraine, Stroeter may well have forged the eschatology for influential Brethren ministers like Jakob Kroeker, Jakob Reimer and Jakob Thiessen, all of whom accepted the Darbyite scheme as their own.

Still other Mennonite Brethren attended the Plymouth Brethren Bible School in Wiedenest, Germany, or read *Allianz* literature or were influenced by theologians like Erich Sauer. Mennonite Brethren in Canada and the United States, devoid of an exacting eschatology in their early history, were soon learning the mysteries of God's interaction with humankind through large dispensational charts suspended across their church stages.

Blankenburg *Allianz* exuded another subtle and ultimately damaging influence upon the Mennonites in Russia. Prior to the rise of National Socialism in Germany, the conference was strongly nationalistic in character. In some respects the *Allianz* influx coincided with an intense search for a Mennonite identity amid a slavic world generally regarded as inferior. Since the 1890s that process had been increasingly shaped by the influx of pedagogical and theological materials from Germany. A passionate Baedeker given to prison ministries, an articulate professor Stroeter and the persuasive evangelist Viehbahn personified all that was good about Germany. Such men could never be suspect.

These nationalistic Germans had no understanding of the historic pacifism of their Mennonite audiences nor did many listeners suspect the new Bible readings they were hearing on the peace question. It was not by chance that the first debates in Mennonite periodicals about the validity of nonresistance began during the first decade of the twentieth century. The peace issue was not resolved before the outbreak of World War I. With the advent of anarchy and civil war Mennonite ministers could not address nonresistance with a unified voice. The organization of a Mennonite militia for self-protection (*Selbstschutz*) in 1918-19 resulted from a curious mix of pro-Germanism, panic reaction and theological justification based on Constantinian arguments. *Allianz* had left its mark.

Did *Allianz* play a role in the renewal and revitalization of the Mennonite church in Russia? There is considerable evidence for a sustained revival among the various villages and settlements from the 1890s until the early 1920s. On occasion the process was facilitated by *Allianz* sympathizers like Martin Hamm and Jakob Reimer, but *Allianz* appears to have been largely incidental to the process. The heyday of *Allianz*-influence among the Russian Mennonites in the first decade of the twentieth century also coincided with the establishment of a series of welfare institutions—hospitals, an orphanage, a school for the poor, a deaconess home and homes for the aged. Such initiatives,

however, were largely the result of individual or group social visions with no obvious connections to *Allianz*. The same was not true of the renewal interest in missions and evangelism. A David Dyck of Apanlee became the founder of the Molotschna Tract Association in 1905. Following the revolution he was the driving force behind the so-called “Tent Mission” before he was tragically killed by Makhno bandits in 1919. Likewise Adolf Reimer, a missionary to the Russians, held *Allianz* views. It is nevertheless difficult to establish whether the evangelistic efforts of these and others were directly inspired by *Allianz* or simply products of the ongoing indigenous revival.

In 1907 the Mennonite Brethren publisher Abraham Kroeker mused about the implications of *Allianz* for the larger Mennonite constituency. Was there a danger? Kroeker thought not. *Allianz* had its peculiarities “but so do we, therefore lets be temperate in our judgement... At present there is little danger that our congregations will dissolve into Darbyite groups.”<sup>73</sup> Kroeker was only partially right: *Allianz* congregations were organized and theological tensions did emerge. Indeed the movement was strong enough to reorganize in North America. In Alberta, Canada, place names like Crowfoot, Munson, Namaka, Sedalia—all testified to *Allianz* continuity. Jakob Reimer continued the Rueckenau tradition in Steinbach, Manitoba. In the early history of the Ontario conference, *Allianz* types called themselves Mennonite Brethren, but did not join the North American Conference of that persuasion until much later.

The story of *Allianz* in Canada lies outside of the scope of this study yet serves to somewhat illustrate the process of its dissent. The theological issues associated with open and closed communion were more defined in the Russia of the early 1900s than in the Canadian frontier settings of the 1930s. In some areas geographic distance and few adherents made it difficult to organize a viable conference.<sup>74</sup> As Russian Mennonite congregations were scattered throughout a vast Canada, poverty often dictated that several groups used one church. In the process they learned that the commonality of their faith often superseded their differences.<sup>75</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Erich Beyreuther, *Der Weg der Evangelischen Allianz in Deutschland* (Wuppertal, R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1969), pp. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-29.

<sup>3</sup> F.H. Otto Melle, “Die Bedeutung der Blankenburger Konferenz für das kirchliche Leben Deutschlands,” in F.H. Otto Melle, *Fünzig Jahre Blankenburger Konferenz* (Bad Blankenburg, Verlag Harfe, 1936), pp. 38-43.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Neuschaefer, “Die vertretenen Grundwahrheiten der Schrift,” in F.H. Otto Melle, *Fünzig Jahre Blankenburger Konferenz* (Bad Blankenburg, Verlag Harfe, 1936), pp. 107-116.

<sup>5</sup> Jakob Kroeker, “Ein kitischer Querschnitt durch Blankenburgs Werden und Wollen in Krisen und Segenzeiten,” in F.H. Otto Melle, *Fünzig Jahre Blankenburg Konferenz* (Bad Blankenburg, Verlag Harfe, 1936), p. 67.

<sup>6</sup> See Beyreuther, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> David Goerz Collection (Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas). See for example his letters of March 14, 1864; July 10, 1864; June 16, 1866.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, July 16, 1867.

<sup>9</sup> See for example the advertisements in *Christlicher Familienkalender* (1905), pp. 124-125, 132-133, 148; *Christlicher Familienkalender* (1909), pp. 183, 188, 191.

<sup>10</sup> On these issues see my articles, "Patterns of Piety Among the Early Brethren (1860-1900)," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Volume 12 (1994), pp. 135-155; "The Early Mennonite Brethren and Conversion," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Volume 11 (1993), pp. 76-97.

<sup>11</sup> C. Koehler, "Mitteilung von der Allianz-Bibelschule in Berlin," *Friedensstimme*, Vol. VII (1909), no. 43, p.3.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Schellenberg, "Mein Lebenslauf," *Friedensstimme*, Vol. X (1912), no. 16, pp. 2-3. Mennonite students continued to find their way to the Bible School after it was moved from Berlin to Wiedenest.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Kroeker, *Ein Reiches Leben* (Wuestenrot, Kurt Reith Verlag, 1949), p. 49. Also, "Baedeker in Russland," *Zionsbote*, Vol. 11 (1896), no. 22, p. 4; Vol. 14/15 (1899), no. 12, pp. 2-3; Vol. 12 (1897), no. 16, p.2.

<sup>14</sup> "Dr. F.W. Baedeker, Ein Leben in Kraft," *Friedensstimme*, Vol. V (1907), no. 1, pp. 304; no. 2, pp. 14-16; no. 3, pp. 27-28. For a book length biographical study see Robert S. Latimer, *Dr. Baedeker and his Apostolic Work in Russia* (London, Morgen and Scott, 1907).

<sup>15</sup> A representative run of this periodical (Vols. II-VIII) can be found in the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, California. It began publication in 1907.

<sup>16</sup> Gerhard Jordy, *Die Bruederbewegung in Deutschland* (Wuppertal, Brockhaus Verlag, 1981), II, pp. 21-25, 74-77.

<sup>17</sup> Beyreuther, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Abraham Kroeker, "Die darbystische Gefahr," *Friedensstimme*, Vol. V (1907), no. 25, pp. 314-315.

<sup>19</sup> J.R., "Aus Russland," *Zionsbote*, Vol. 14/15 (1899), no. 45, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> G. Claassen, "Russland," *Zionsbote*, Vol. 20 (1904), no. 20, p.7.

<sup>21</sup> A.H. Unruh, *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Bruedergemeinde 1860-1954* (Winnipeg, Christian Press, 1954), pp. 229ff.

<sup>22</sup> F.H. Otto Melle, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> For a condensed English translation see Abram H. Neufeld, *Herman and Katharina: Their Story* (Winnipeg, Man., Christian Press, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> See Herman Neufeld, *Tagebuch* (Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Man.), p. 328ff. Hermann Neufeld recopied his journals several times and in the case of numbers one and two in the archival listing there is some overlap. Both tell the same story, the first is more detailed (528 pp.) and covers Neufeld's experiences through 1903. Number two in the listing is condensed and takes the story through 1911. In the footnotes number one in the archival listing is referred to as *Tagebuch*, while number two as *Lebensgeschichte I*, number three as *Lebensgeschichte II*, number four as *Lebensgeschichte III*.

<sup>25</sup> Neufeld, *Tagebuch*, p. 328.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 408.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 428-430.

<sup>30</sup> "Bericht ueber die Jahressitzung in Waldheim vom 17. bis zum 20. Mai, 1903," *Zionsbote*, Vol. 20 (1904), no. 1, p. 2. Herman Neufeld, op. cit., p. 500ff.

<sup>31</sup> Neufeld, op. cit., pp. 502-503.

<sup>32</sup> Neufeld, *Lebensgeschichte*, I, pp. 346-347. The conference chairperson, Elder David Duerksen from the Crimea, sent a lengthy report on the proceedings to the *Zionsbote*, but does not mention the incident. "Arbeits und Segenstag," *Zionsbote*, Vol. 20 (1904), no. 27, p. 7; no. 28, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Unruh, op. cit., pp. 230-231.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>36</sup> H. Neufeld, *Lebensgeschichte* II.

<sup>37</sup> "Jahressitzung der Vereinigten Christlichen Taufgesinnten Mennonitenbruedergemeinden in Russland am 14. und 15. Mai 1910 zu Tiege, Sagradovka," *Friedensstimme*, Vol. VIII (1910), no. 40, pp. 3-5; no. 42, pp. 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> "Protokoll der Jahressitzung der Vereinigten Christlichen Taufgesinnten Mennoniten = Bruedergemeinde in Russland, die am 25., 26. und 27. Mai 1912 im Bethause der Molotschnaer Mennoniten = Bruedergemeinde zu Rueckenau, Gouv. Taurien, stattgefunden." (Printed by Raduga Press, Halbstadt. Copy in possession of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Canada).

<sup>39</sup> Neufeld, *Lebensgeschichte*, II.

<sup>40</sup> Neufeld, *Lebensgeschichte*, III.

<sup>41</sup> Maria Kroeker, op. cit., pp. 28-31.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-53. Baedeker was a regular speaker at Blankenburg between 1886-1905. Melle, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>44</sup> Maria Kroeker, op. cit., pp. 134, 143.

<sup>45</sup> Jakob Kroeker, op. cit., p. 83. Kroeker was an annual speaker at the Conference from 1910-1935. Melle, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Riediger, "Entstehung der Evangelisch-Mennonitischen Bruderschaft in Sued-Russland an der Molotschna im Jahre 1906, damals meistens Allianz-Gemeinde genannt," (B.B. Janz Papers, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba).

<sup>47</sup> M. Hiebert, "Die Allianzbeuegung in Russland," *Zionsbote*, Vol. 24 (1908), no. 15, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Riediger notes that initially the group only had one ordained minister, the local Lichtenau teacher Jakob Loewen. Mennonite contacts were gradually expanded yet "our fellowship had no boundaries. Some were not committed and came and went." Riediger, op. cit.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> See the critique of inspector Theodore Haarbeck in the *Evangelische Allianzblatt* (Dec. 15, 1904).

<sup>52</sup> The settlement was a Chortitza daughter colony established in 1865. Located between the Busuluk and Dnieper rivers it consisted of six villages: Ebenfeld, Schoendorf, Nickolaital, Blumenhof, Felsenbach, Steinbach.

<sup>53</sup> Diary of Martin Hamm 1869-1919 (Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba) June 5, 1908. I am indebted to the late Peter Hamm of Clearbrook, B.C., for bringing his grandfather's diary to my attention.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., November 17, 1908.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., November 21, 1908.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> He especially notes a large conference held in Halbstadt August 20-23, 1909, with speakers from England, Switzerland and the Baltic States. Ibid., September 7, 1909. See also November 16, 17, 1909.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., May 16, 1909; August 12, 1909; January 29, 1909.

<sup>59</sup> Franz W. Martens, "Chronologishe Aufzeichnungen aus meinem Leben," (Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba). See entries for 1905 and 1906.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Entry for 1907. Some 28 "brothers" joined the new church. See also Gerhard Lohrenz, *Sagradowka* (Echo-Verlag, Rosthern, Sask., 1947), pp. 74-76.

<sup>61</sup> Martens, entries for 1907, 1909.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., entry for 1910.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., entry for 1911. See also Martin Hamm Diary, September 24, 1911.

<sup>64</sup> Martin Hamm Diary, January 24, 1910.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., November 20, 1909.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., May 16, 21, 1910.

<sup>67</sup> Peter Riediger, "Entstehung der Evangelisch-Mennonitischen-Bruderschaft auf Neu Samara," (B.B. Janz Papers, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba).

<sup>68</sup> "25 jaehriges Jubilaeum des Aeltesten David Schellenberg in Rueckenau," *Zionsbote*, Vol. 22, no. 28 (July 11, 1906), p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> A.H. Unruh, op. cit., p. 235.

<sup>70</sup> A.H. Unruh to B.B. Janz, August 25, 1955 (B.B. Janz Papers, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Group V, H.).

<sup>71</sup> H.H. Goossen to B.B. Janz, n.d.; H.H. Goossen to B.B. Janz, August 20, 1955 (B.B. Janz Papers, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Group V, H.).

<sup>72</sup> G.P. Regehr to B.B. Janz n.d.; G.P. Regehr to B.B. Janz, September 4, 1955; B.B. Janz to J.G. Thiessen, September 28, 1955; A.H. Unruh to B.B. Janz, September 20, 1955 (B.B. Janz Papers, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Group V, H.).

<sup>73</sup> Abraham Kroeker, "Die darbystische Gefahr," *Friedensstimme*, Vol. V (1907), no. 25, pp. 314-315. The *Zionsbote* in North America reported the prevailing tensions, while *Friedensstimme* did not. Kroeker, always sympathetic to *Allianz*, possibly exercised some editorial discretion.

<sup>74</sup> Protokoll der 6. Jahressitzung der M.B.G. der Provinz Alberta, abgehalten im Befause der M.B.G. zu Gem, Alberta am 13. 14. 15. und 16. Juli 1933, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> At times the old tensions were not easily dissipated. As late as 1934 the Alberta Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference decided to join the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. They were determined "not to be encumbered by external rules and regulations, but want to build a community based upon the Holy Scriptures and the unity of all the children of God." Aron A. Toews to "die Provinziale Konferenz der Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde von Alberta, Canada," Namaka, December 14, 1934. (Abram A. Toews Papers, Archives of the B.C. Mennonite Historical Society, Abbotsford, B.C.).