# THE BACKGROUND AND CAUSES OF THE FLIGHT OF THE MENNONITES FROM RUSSIA IN 1929

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The question of the emigration of the Mennonites out of Russia was already an important question in the minds of a number of men before the outbreak of the World War. W. P. Neufeld of Halbstadt, Russia, later of Reedley, Calif., suddenly left Russia a few years before the beginning of the War and justified his step in a detailed discussion in his farewell sermon. One of my friends whose vision and intuition I have always valued had already arrived at the conviction some time before the Japanese war that the Mennonites would have to leave Russia. Apparently the revolution which shook the Russian Empire in 1905-1907 made him sense further, more powerful crises in the offing. I remember also that on one Sunday morning before 1914 a simple farmer visited me and spoke to me in a somewhat disturbed state of mind as though oppressed by inner visions, saying that it was high time to leave Russia.

But the emigration first became a question of vital importance in the time of the World War and after.

The great physical and moral distress in which the German colonists in general and the Mennonites in particular found themselves during this time was the chief reason for this. The prohibition of the German language, of German preaching, the closing of the German press, of German clubs, the closing or russification of German schools and other centers of German culture, the evacuations, deportations and arrests, and the confusion and terror of the civil war, the famine and the plagues, the tribulations of all sorts, and many-sided death and ruin—that has been since 1914 the fate of the German colonist in Russia. It is easy to understand that this tragic situation compelled the colonists to re-examine their own situation and that it above everything fed the desire to emigrate.

As far as it is possible at the present time to judge the motives for the emigration at all, for we are really too near to the events to have a satisfactory understanding of their course, I wish to at-

tempt in the brief space at my disposal to give first a brief survey of the remoter causes for the desire to emigrate, since the flight of masses of the Mennonites out of the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1929 can be understood only in the light of this background. The more immediate causes of this flight however, political as well as religious, will form the major part of my discussion.

## I

### *The Remote Political and Economic Background*

The movement for emigration is the result of a bitter disappointment which the German colonists in Russia are experiencing as the result of the chasm between "once and now." Again and again one reads discussions and comments on this theme in letters and articles, by the colonists themselves, comments by colonists with quite different historical points of view. In addition to this disappointment, there was the feeling of resignation which however, especially in the more sturdy Mennonite circles, was displaced by a double movement, first in the direction of the organization of new colonies in Russia and second in the direction of emigration over-seas. The Mennonite "soul", as well as the "soul" of the German colonist in Russia, in general, is still much too young to fall prey to complete resignation. Today, it is true, the depression among these people is quite complete. Today our churches are learning to live in blind faith. Today they constitute a church "under the cross", which does not "gird itself", but "is being girded."

The distress in which the colonists found themselves faced them with the question, "to be, or not to be". It was a triple question of existence,— economical, national, and religio-ethical.

The economic decline began with the outbreak of the war and has continued into decay and ruin. The large estates in the colonies were hit first by the confiscation law of the year 1915. At that time the owners were deported and Russian managers placed on the estates, who for the most part understood little or nothing of agriculture, who squandered the invested capital, and under whose managership the livestock on the estates rapidly decreased as the result of unwise measures, and whose management of the land was so bad that the production of grain suffered exceedingly. The former owners moved as poor people into the villages, where they struggled for their existence in the most difficult work. In Russia for such persons there was naturally no possibility of further existence. For them the sole avenue of escape lay in emigra-

tion. Even today, although they have been driven from their property for years, and robbed of all that they had, they are despised and helpless in the midst of the land, without legal rights, the prey of the caprice of the local officials. As for the peasant, especially in those times when the emigration movement began, he was completely hamstrung. The question of the division of the land remained unsettled. What was called revolutionary legislation has remained uncertain, partial, and often only a dead letter. Normally the peasant had the right to the usufruct of the land which remained in his possession, and therefore the right to operate independently the small farm which he called his own. However during the civil war the stock was so destroyed by ruthless requisitions that plowing, sowing, and threshing were almost an impossibility during the first years of the Revolution. For instance, often not a single team of really usable draft animals was left on a farm. Earlier, every Mennonite farmer had from eight to ten strong work horses; and six to ten cattle, but now the stables were empty. No wonder that the farmer became apathetic. The machinery on the farm soon wore out because of the lack of repair shops which made repairs impossible. Often the machinery had to be sold at beggarly prices in order to raise money to pay taxes. New purchases were not to be thought of. And just as there was a lack in live stock and machinery, so there was a lack of seed grain. The drought even destroyed what had been with great difficulty sowed in the spring. Bread was lacking, clothing was lacking, fuel was lacking,—in other words, there was a catastrophic economic decline, a decay in all phases of the economic life of the colonies. Only the breeding of sheep improved, a symbol of a decline in agriculture to the pastoral state.

The local officials systematically furthered the destruction of the economic life, particularly by means of foolishly high taxes in the form of payments in kind, which were collected with unexampled severity. The last kernel had to be swept together on the floor and handed over; the last hog, the last cow, and the last chicken were confiscated. The soldiers hunted through the houses, arrests were made, and executions were the normal accompaniment of all those anarchistic economic measures, especially in the fall of 1921. In almost every village more taxes were demanded than the entire harvest, so that the sale of the equipment on the farm in order to pay taxes was unavoidable. With bleeding hearts, the farmers followed this course so long that resignation and apathy mastered them.

In the villages the so-called "committees of the landless," that is, organizations of the so-called "beggar-proletariat", were set up which were composed almost exclusively of foreign and non-resident elements in the village. The endless chicanery of these committees contributed greatly to making the peasant-farmer feel that he was being torn loose from his own home. All labor seemed to be in vain, because the fruits of it were seized by covetous hands. With the peasant-farmer especially the sense of possession is very strongly marked and in a state where the forms of ownership had taken on such a chaotic character, he was naturally made to feel as though he was living in a vacuum. All desire for action disappeared.

The uncertain economic situation made the farmers however look for a new home. Not only the families who had been already robbed of their property, that is the owners of large estates as well as the refugees from the daughter colonies, and also not only those who had lost their spiritual and moral hold on things, were among those who thought of emigration. Even the modest farmer, with his small farm still in his own actual possession, was almost ready to leave. The situation of the refugees who had streamed back into the mother colony from the daughter colonies during the times of anarchy and famine was beyond description. Deprived of all the means of earning a living, homeless, without the privilege of working, they were compelled to live from direct charity relief, which however no one could give them, neither the churches nor the communities, nor the government. If the generous hand of the American and Dutch Mennonite brethren had not been stretched out to them to bring bread to those who were starving, in the years 1921-1923, ten thousands of these poor people would have perished in their misery. That these farmer-peasants who had been ruined had to emigrate was not denied, even by the government. For this reason the government granted in April of 1922 permission to this group to emigrate. But this was only a drop of water on a hot stone. In a letter of that time someone wrote, "the whole Mennonite population of Russia is ready to travel." On the day before Christmas even in 1921 the chairman of the Ukrainian Mennonite Economic Union wrote, "Actually a chasm has opened up among us here so quickly and in part so unexpectedly, so endlessly deep and broad, that the great mass of the Russian people is sinking in it and our people are sinking likewise." B. B. Janz had described the situation in petitions which were handed to the Ukrainian government. Naturally what could be reported in official documents had to be expressed "wisely and moderately."

The reality however was much more bitter. "The situation is so sad, so hopeless, we are traveling into the deep night of death so rapidly that it has happened before we actually realized it. The last bit of bread is being eaten and everywhere there are those who have no bread."

No one need wonder that a Mennonite Bishop wrote to me already on July 4, 1921: "For some time, to use an expression out of the history of Israel, we have had to make bricks and build cities, and now they have taken away from us the straw and are compelling us to gather the stubble. . . .In this way we are being brought more and more to the decision to leave Egypt and seek another home, even though we may not be able to take anything with us."

In addition to the economic-cultural distress, there came the political and national distress. Since the middle of the previous century an increasingly significant tendency toward animosity against the German colonists was making itself felt in Russian government circles, and even in social circles. Long series of unjust, unprovable accusations were made against the colonists. They were told for instance that they had not fulfilled "their duty as citizens." But of such duties nothing had been said when they were invited to immigrate into Russia in 1783 and after, for the absolutistic Russian state knew nothing of duties of "citizenship." It knew only "subjects," not "citizens." The citizens were only objects of government and not subjects of government. Another charge was that the colonists had not improved the level of culture of the Russian peasants. But was not the lack of improvement in the culture of the Russian peasants due to the system of serfdom, that system of complete slavery which made impossible any cultural development? The colonists were told that they had not assimilated themselves to the Russian people, but the government itself and the orthodox church had not desired this. Again, the colonists had enjoyed unusual privileges, they were told. But without these privileges, Russia as a cultureless, backward country would never have received these foreign settlers within her borders. And what was promised them was really nothing less than the bare minimum of existence. And even the exemption from military service was fully made up for by the service in the state forests, which cost the state almost nothing and was of much value.

All these accusations, of course, came from an increasingly narrow chauvinism. Furthermore, the Russian government did not wish to permit the Russian Mennonites to leave in the 1870's when they wanted to emigrate to America with families and prop-

erty on account of the threatened compulsion for military service. The government knew what it was doing when it sent General Totleben into the South, who was very popular and was able to prevent a total emigration of the Mennonites.

The economic significance of the German, and particularly of the Mennonite colonization cannot be over-estimated. Through the colonization of the newly acquired territories on the edge of the Russian empire in the south, acquired from the Ottoman Empire by conquests, these new lands were converted into secure possessions of the state. Through this colonization alone the government succeeded in making the resource of the newly conquered territories quickly available in areas that would otherwise have remained undeveloped for a long time.

A particular cultural task had not been expected of the colonists, but what was laid upon them in this respect they accomplished in an unusual measure, as was recognized by governmental authorities.* Two things were expected of the colonists: They were to be of benefit in the newly settled territory and to the state in general by building up their own culture (civilization) and second through their example they were to stimulate cultural progress among their Russian neighbors. Both aims were actually realized. One need only compare a Russian village in the neighborhood of a German colony with a village which lies farther away. As the colonies spread, naturally their cultural influence was extended. The Russian farm laborers learned very much technically and as to methods from the German farms and took their newly acquired knowledge back into their villages. They also accustomed themselves to an orderly way of living and learned to appreciate industry and reliability. The introduction of the system of fallow land is one of the services of the German colonists. Among the colonists the production of seed, grain, and the breeding of cattle, as well as the smaller industries on the farm, contributed very much to raise the economic level of the Russian villages.

In addition to the indirect influences of the German colonists on their Russian neighbors, attempts were made to influence Russian conditions directly. Johann Cornies introduced practical agricultural courses for Russian and Nogaian boys and girls. The attendance was large. It is to be regretted that little more was done in this direction. Here there is, without doubt, a sin of omission,

* See the letter of Minister Kissilev to Johann Cornies in 1841.

which however can easily be understood in view of the fear of the colonists, that they would be accused of political, nationalistic, and religious propaganda. There are in Taurien two Russian villages which were organized by pupils of Johann Cornies according to the Mennonite pattern. Under the influence of the Mennonites, the remnants of the primitive Nogaians gave up their nomadic life. The colonists were also the best tax payers and created out of their own means a large number of charitable institutions which were also accessible to the Russian population. This is especially true of the hospitals with their excellent staffs of physicians.

For this reason the colonists were naturally bitterly disappointed to be suddenly accused of being undesirable intruders and even to be branded as traitors of the fatherland. A few years ago an intelligent colonist expressed this feeling in the following words: "Russia has proved herself to be an evil stepmother who desires to destroy her step-children in order to secure their inheritance for her legitimate children. We have no longer a fatherland . . ." These words show how deeply the insult burned in the souls of the colonists.

On the other hand in the time of the War and after the War the colonists experienced how bad conditions can become when a country has lost a stable social order and when the citizens are no longer governed by respect for the law. In post-Revolutionary Russia there was lacking the consciousness that the law was the expression of the common will of the entire nation, which all therefore ought to follow. The decrees of the authorities were contradictory and still are contradictory and often contradict the most elemental sense of justice. In addition, there was the unfaithfulness and corruption of the officials and the lack of a sense of duty among the officers of the state, a situation to which many colonists gradually adjusted themselves without noticing the change. As a consequence, some of them, although they did not take bribes, began to give "gifts" in order to attain their rights. They purchased their rights and this demoralized them. They lost thereby their sense of "right;" "right" often came to be "wrong" and vice versa.

In addition to the national antipathy between the Russians and the German colonists, there came the social antipathy. On the one side it was the Russian jealousy; on the other side the excessive self-evaluation of the colonists. The Russians looked upon the colonists as intruders, and the latter saw in the Russians often a dangerous criminal type, although this may be formulating the antithe-

sis in an extreme form. For a long time the antipathy remained dormant, but during the War it broke out with irresistible force.

In view of the above facts and causes a further national political-civil existence for the German colonists in Russia seemed very dubious. And as a result the demand arose for emigration, for a total emigration of the Mennonite group.

But the greatest danger of all appeared more and more to be the threat to the religious and social life of the group. Even the old czaristic government had begun to interfere in the school and church life of the colonists, though on the whole the churches enjoyed complete religious liberty. To-day in Soviet Russia this has become much worse. More about this later on.

The emigration movement (whose detailed history however is not to be related here) finally set in in 1923. About the same time however a certain easing of the situation became noticeable in the colonies, due to the new economic policy (NEP) which had been introduced by Lenin, whereby the farmers, the peasants, were granted more liberty of action. In this period the Mennonite economic organizations such as the All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union, achieved extraordinary success, especially in the task of producing seed-grain, and improving stock-breeding, achievements which were recognized to the full by the authorities. However, beginning with the year 1926, there came a turn in the policy and attitude of the government, a regression to the older terroristic policy, which has now reached its height. The flight of the colonists out of Russia in 1929 was nothing less than a symptom of this economic and religious situation.

## II

### *The Immediate Political Background of the Flight*

There are two basic tendencies in the policy of the Soviet government which are mutually exclusive and which are based upon two distinct objectives. The one tendency and task is the struggle to bring about the world revolution. The hope is to win throughout the entire world a victory for the communistic ideology, and that by means of force. To attain this goal, time, labor, and immense amounts of money are sacrificed. The second tendency and task is the reconstruction of Russia, which has been ruined by civil war and famine. However, in spite of all the heroic endeavors of the present rulers of Russia, it seems impossible to successfully complete this reconstruction. The struggle for the world revolution constantly hinders and obstructs this reconstruction. A delusion ob-

scures the reality and destroys the effect of the good elements which are without doubt contained in the great program. The conflict between the two tendencies and tasks goes through everything which the Soviet government attempts, speaks, and does. It is the contradiction between a Utopian ideal and a practical political and economic task of the present hour. The fanaticism of the communistic movement learns nothing, and for that reason the final outcome is certain to be a catastrophe. In the call for a halt which Stalin issued last spring we can hear the distant thunder of the approaching crash. Meanwhile the most intense activity is concentrated upon the prosecution of the double program.

All the conflict, contradiction, and dishonesty of the Soviet policy is the result of this basic double program. For instance, Stalin, so it is said, pays no attention at all to the judgment of foreign nations. But the same Stalin seeks to cover up with all the possible maneuvers of the clever politician what actually is taking place in Russia. In the long run, however, this attempt is bound to fail and it was just the flight of six thousand Mennonite and other farmers out of Russia which tore open the eyes of the outside world to what was actually going on behind the artificially erected scenes on the Soviet stage. That is the great political significance of this remarkable flight. Altogether unpolitical persons, that is, these simple farmers, suddenly acquired an extraordinary political significance without having desired or having known it. That is the reason for the rage of the authorities in Russia at these simple folk. That is the reason for the terrible sufferings of those who had to remain behind. They are bearing the consequences of the flight, which meant a great international discrediting for the Kremlin.

The Russian Revolution has passed through various phases and has now come into its decisive phase, if all signs do not fail us. This is also the opinion of the Bolsheviki themselves. Bolshevism is at the present time experiencing something of a "second youth." A short time ago it seemed to have already lost its original dynamic quality and many foreign observers were beginning to speak about an evolution, a gradual modification of Russian communism in the direction of capitalistic economics and democratic political principles. But they failed to realize that Bolshevism is a religion, an ecstatic religion, which is not ready to disavow itself. Like the great world religions it claims absolute validity. This demonic religion is experiencing to-day a revival. Reports, resolutions, decisions by congresses, appeals in the newspapers and in the meetings, court decisions, accusations, and last but not least, the deporta-

tions with a purpose of destroying an entire stratum of the peasants, all this breathes the hot breath of the springtime of revolution, a second springtime.

The chief goal of all Bolshevist struggle is the construction of the great socialistic society. Stalin's "five-year plan" is a program to create the communistic state. This program is Stalin's dogma, his *regula fidei,* his bishop's staff, his compass, according to which he is steering the ship of state to its distant harbor.

But the peasant is the last wall against which Bolshevism strikes in the struggle to attain its goal. If it can overthrow this wall, then it has won the victory. If it succeeds in socializing agriculture and industrializing it, if it succeeds in converting the peasant farmer into a factory worker, in transforming the endless agricultural territories of Russia into a gigantic grain factory, if it succeeds in dissolving the peasant family and therefore attacking religion in its most vulnerable point, then the whole communistic dream will become a reality. If this all succeeds, then the battle of communism is won forever.

It is a fact that the peasant population of Russia was what put Bolshevism in the saddle. The land-hungry peasants represented in 1917 a still unexpressed, unused revolutionary factor. For that reason Lenin could harness them to his revolutionary chariot. On the other hand, however, it is just the peasants who to-day represent the greatest hindrance to the realization of socialism in as much as the peasant spirit of independent endeavor and individual economics (even in Russia, which is the classic land of peasant village agriculture) resists the program of communism. It is false to hastily ascribe to the Russian peasant an agrarian-communistic fundamental character. The Russian peasant was anxious to have the land of the wealthy land-owner, but he wanted to have it as his own possession and use it himself. And even the Soviet peasant has his heart set on a legal title to his land.

The peasants are the real bug-bear of Bolshevism. The peasant class will determine the fate of Bolshevism in the end. The peasants will speak the last word in Russia. The history of the Russian revolutions is throughout one endless bitter struggle with the peasants.

The first period of Bolshevism is usually called, according to Lenin, the period of "war communism," because in that period everything was taken away from the peasants to feed the army and the cities. It was the period of expropriation, of forced labor, of rationing, of the destruction of all private economic activity, of the

militarization of labor and life. But this attempt of the city to subjugate the country ended in 1921 with the victory of the country, of the peasant. The city capitulated to the village. "War communism" had led to a stoppage of production, to secret trading, to inflation, and above all, to sabotage by the peasants, to the reduction of the area under cultivation and consequently to famine. The outcome was a complete fiasco which Lenin himself admitted in the spring of 1921 with perfect candor. The chief hindrance to the realization of communism had turned out to be the peasants. Lenin himself gave a temperamental funeral oration at the grave of "war communism." "War communism" had died a natural death, because where there is nothing to be had, there even the commissar loses his power. According to official figures in 1918-19 the demand for bread on the part of the population could be met only to the amount of forty per cent and the demand for potatoes in the city only to twenty to twenty-five per cent. Textile goods were confiscated by the army to one hundred per cent. The civil population had to go without; this produced a keen dissatisfaction, since no state dare reckon with a "disinterested love" on the part of its citizens.

As a result of this fiasco a complete change of front was necessary in the realm of the economic policy, and so the second period of Bolshevism was ushered in, the period of the "new economic policy," which Lenin however, in order to satisfy communistic orthodoxy, represented as a mere breathing space, simply a moratorium for capitalism. The fighting front was merely withdrawn a few kilometers in order to be pushed forward so much more energetically later on.

The new economic policy put an end to confiscations and substituted therefore a regular tax in money or naturalia. There was a constant shifting from tax in money to tax in naturalia, according to the business cycle, in order to obtain from the labor of the village the utmost possible for the national treasury. Under a new name, therefore, the old methods of confiscation after all were continued, although in somewhat more moderate form. Agriculture and small industry, as well as small trade, could live in the time of the NEP and even prospered to some extent. However the foreign visitors in Soviet Russia in the years 1923-27 who brought home favorable reports about the economic situation, overlooked the fact that this relative revival took place not on the basis of the original Bolshevist program, but on the basis of the deviations from this program

in the direction of a coöperative private business, with its play of free forces.

The death of Lenin, as even his sickness already, brought a tremendous problem to the Communist Party. With the passing of its leader, the party ceased to be an entity cast out of one mould. The tower was cracked. Above all, the NEP became the object of passionate debate for the communists saw in it the beginning of treason to communism.

As has been suggested, it is true that the NEP really was something which lay in the shadow of the communistic creed. What Lenin did was to take economic freedom out for a walk, but he compelled it constantly to show a police permit for itself and to return constantly behind the bars. The NEP-man remained a marked man, one constantly threatened by the authorities. Free trade was more and more restrained under the competition of the coöperatives toward the end of the NEP period. The animosity against the Russian village constantly increased, and raids on rebelling peasants became more frequent. The basic economic conflict between the communistic organization and the people became constantly more evident. Earlier or later it would have to lead to a new open struggle between the Kremlin and the Russian villages.

This open struggle or state of war has now come with the new radical agrarian policy of Stalin, which represents the basis for the materialistic cultural policy of the Soviet Union. To Stalin, the machine is God. The high point in the idolatry of Stalin is the worship of the tractor. The subject of this religion is the "Massenmensch", mass humanity. Just as the difference between city and country is to be wiped out, just as the farmer is to become an industrial laborer, just so all individual differences are to be suppressed in Russia. There are to be no personalities anymore, only atoms and groups of atoms, reactions of the elements, a great physical, chemical process, without soul, without God, without eternity, without conscience and responsibility.

The peasants must be "proletarianized" and since the upper stratum of the peasants, the "Kulaks", who represent the cream on the skim milk, stand in the way of this proletarianizing, therefore the destruction of the "Kulak" class must be undertaken, without hesitation, systematically, thoroughly. The liquidation of the upper peasants stratum and the communization of the poorer peasants are the stages which will lead to the communistic paradise. Marxistic theory is severest in its application to the peasant class. What can be converted of the peasants to Marxian theory is to be

made "proletariat." Everything else is reckoned as "Kulak" and must be annihilated.

Since 1927 business has come more and more under the power of politics. The breathing space was ended which Lenin had announced. The trench war in the economic policy was transformed again into a war movement. The NEP-men were deported by wagon loads to the north. A flood of communistic radicalism was poured out over the village. The third period of the revolution began, that of the consistent socialism. The "five-year plan" is nothing less than a program, a budget for five years, to accomplish this, a plan which includes all branches and functions of the entire economic organism of the Soviet Union. After the period of reconstruction of the old economic system, a period of construction of the new economic system is to set in. In five years the national wealth is to be doubled, which is to accompany an increase in production, a decline in prices, and a rise in the wage level to about double that of peace time. The most important requirement of the five-year plan however is the socialization of agriculture. This is to take place in stages, namely, first the "coöperative" or common cultivation of the soil, then the "artel", and finally the "commune." In the coöperative, the comrades only combine their land and divide the profit proportionally to what each one puts in and what each one contributes in the way of labor. The "artel" goes further and extends the communism to the entire business, and the year's profit is divided. The farmers still live and consume each for himself. In the commune, however, not only production, but also consumption is collectivized, as is also the life in general.

It is easy to understand that the peasant will not accept all this without opposition and it is understandable that the state must engage in a sharp struggle against the resisting peasants, especially against the superior farmer in whom it sees the carrier of a new capitalistic development and the nucleus of reactionary political action.

The membership of the party believes thoroughly in the possibility of carrying through this plan. The difficulties which are met are simply viewed as the crises of growth. In order to arouse the energy of the masses for the program of socialization, regular competitive contests in economic activities are carried on. One district challenges the other and strives to put it "in the shade". For instance, in the last year Siberia entered into a contract with north Caucasus for a contest in agricultural production.

## III.

### 1929

In July, 1929, a decree appeared which was directed against the upper stratum of peasant-farmers. The village councils were allowed to punish comrades in the village who resisted payment of the grain tax *with money fines,* the fine being permitted to range up to five times what was originally due in grain. The councils were also authorized, in case it was necessary, to sell the property of the guilty person at auction. In the Ukraine, auctions, confiscations, and deportations took place in large numbers as early as June and July. The same took place in Siberia. The government was returning apparently to communism, and that in much sharper form. Naturally of course impossible grain taxes were imposed on the "Kulaks" in order to furnish a legal pretext for action.

By these measures, the "poor" peasants in the village now were enabled to destroy the "Kulak" economically. They could decide that this or that "Kulak" was to be deported, and it took place. The letters of the colonists, which have been published chiefly in the Mennonite press in America, disclose a terrible picture of these deportations. The "party" leaders in Moscow thus shove the whole responsibility upon the local village authorities. With this policy, they kill two birds with one stone. In the first place the state secures in this "proper" manner the grain of the "Kulaks" and thus overcomes at least for a few months the grain crisis, and second it prepares the village for socialization.

We know how rapidly the socialization has been taking place. The reasons for this are quite clear. The "communists" in the village are furnished with good seed grain and receive high prices for their grain. In addition industries are set up in the communes, schools, hospitals, to which only "communists" have access. The peasant has to join the commune to avoid ruin. And still the close confinement in the communes is a heavy burden for most of the peasants. Here he loses in the end his independence, for here any sort of individual living becomes impossible.

And so one can understand why Stalin had to blow a bugle for retreat in the middle of March of 1929, when the undigested mass of "communized" peasants threatened to become dangerous. According to recent report, many of the communes soon went to pieces again.

But Stalin took his revenge on the "Kulaks." He deported them by the thousands to the north or to Siberia, where they must

perish in their misery, especially the children. But this policy on the part of Stalin apparently has aroused great dissatisfaction in the entire country and even in the party. One accordingly awaits the outcome of this tremendous struggle with great interest.

The political background of the flight of the peasants out of the Soviet Union is now quite clear. The flight was a despairing attempt to escape destruction. It is not accidental that most of the fleeing colonists came out of Siberia where the harvest in the preceding year had been quite small. Above everything else, however, especially for the Mennonites the most powerful factor in promoting the emigration was the fear of the "commune of the godless." Alongside of the political reasons, the religious reasons were decisive in bringing about the flight.

(*To be continued*)