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The American Mennonite Encounter with National Socialism

Introduction

National Socialist Germany has been called a "racial state."¹ National Socialism was of significance not just for the German state but for all people of "German blood" around the world. The Nazis maintained that Germans owed their primary allegiance to the German nation, embodied in Adolf Hitler, no matter what their citizenship. Blood was stronger than citizenship, birthplace, or place of residence.

In practice, efforts to propagandize and organize the ethnic Germans outside of Germany (*Auslandsdeutsche*) were never of more than minor importance to the Nazis, with the exception of Germans in nearby eastern European states such as Austria and Poland. However, the *Auslandsdeutschen* always remained of ideological significance to Nazism. Though the work of National Socialism among *Auslandsdeutsche* was never unified or well organized, a multitude of governmental, Nazi party, and private agencies reached out to ethnic German communities around the world. In addition, some *Auslandsdeutsche* reached out for contact with revitalized Nazi Germany.

What follows will be a brief examination of the encounter of one particular group of ethnic Germans in the United States, the Mennonites, with the National Socialist movement.² The Mennonites outside of Germany offer a particularly interesting case study in the appeal, or lack of it, of Nazism to *Auslandsdeutsche*. On the one hand, Mennonites remained mostly ethnic German in the 1930s. On the other, the Mennonite religious system had the potential to provide an intellectual basis for resisting Nazism that was unavailable to other *Auslandsdeutsche*. Although not all Mennonites retained traditional beliefs in the mid-twentieth century, they inherited from their sixteenth-century origins the politically significant practices of rejection of war and military service,

rejection of swearing oaths, baptism of adults rather than infants, and rejection of state control and financing of church affairs.

The Mennonites were and are a fairly small group. In 1936, there were 114,337 Mennonite church members in the United States. (Since Mennonites join the church as adults, or at least as adolescents, this figure does not include children.) The vast majority of these were of German-speaking ethnic background. Three denominational groups made up two thirds of Mennonites in the United States: the Mennonite Church (MC) with 46,301 members, the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) with 26,535 members, and the Mennonite Brethren (MB) with 7,595.³ The remaining 33,906 were divided into at least fourteen denominational groups, including the more well-known Amish and Old Orders.⁴

All of the Mennonite denominations, including the three major groups, were theologically conservative compared to mainstream American Protestantism. In addition, the Mennonite Church was culturally conservative. It consisted mostly of persons whose ancestors had arrived in America from Switzerland and western Germany beginning in 1683 and ending in the mid-nineteenth century. Many subgroups within this denomination had been Amish originally and still enforced dress regulations. The General Conference Mennonites did not practice the cultural isolationism of their Amish cousins but retained distinctive Mennonite theological beliefs. The GCs were made up of a Swiss and German component similar to the MCs, concentrated in the eastern and midwestern states, plus large groups of German-speaking immigrants from Russia who arrived in the 1870s and settled mostly in the plains states. This essay will be primarily concerned with the MC and GC denominations.

General Conference

None of the North American Mennonite denominational groups made an official statement directly speaking to the subject of National Socialism, although many statements were made about war and about what types of national service were appropriate for Mennonites in time of war. Editorials in the official church periodicals are the closest thing available to an official statement by the church leadership. At the same time, the church periodicals were very open to the written contributions of church members and thus reflect to some extent the general opinion of denominational members.

Reflecting its division into a group of Russian Germans of more recent immigrant background and a more Americanized group of Swiss and German background, the General Conference had two official periodicals, the English-language *Mennonite* and the German-language *Christlicher Bundesbote*. The editors of both commented on important

current events and both published a reaction to the appointment of Hitler to the chancellorship in 1933.

The editor of *The Mennonite* since 1914 had been Silas Manasses Grubb, pastor of a General Conference church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and a leader among GC Mennonites in the eastern states. He was born in 1874 in Pennsylvania, son of a prominent GC clergyman, and graduated from Temple College (today Temple University) and the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Episcopal Church.⁵ In April 1933 Grubb published perhaps the most outspoken anti-Nazi statement from an American Mennonite prior to America's entry into the war.

Germany is now in the midst of a "racket" under the leadership of the hairbrained Hitler. The movement threatens to upset the general order of things in every direction. A dictator is in power with untried schemes that he would introduce that promise to add disorder to disorders. We cannot guess how far the thing will go, but, we predict that the extreme measures will finally lead to either the ousting of the whole program and its leaders or the toning down to a great degree of the proposals. Before this is accomplished, however, the German people will have added to their troubles considerably more than they have gone through before. The step backward to the medieval Jew-baiting now in progress is a blot that the present leaders of Germany have needlessly imposed upon their nation. Persecutions, and there have been many of them, have never obliterated or suppressed the Jewish people and it is not likely that they will do so now. The intolerance and cruelty of the effort is sure to reflect back upon Germany and already the sentiment of the whole world condemns the Hitler movement as diabolical. Whether we like the Jews or not, their contributions to science, literature, statesmanship, and the good of the world in general has [sic] been outstanding and beneficial. A sudden spurt of madness may make it inconvenient for the Jew for a time, but, in the end, his influence will remain long after Hitler and his kind have passed from the picture.⁶

Grubb, in his colloquial manner, expressed common American opinion on Hitler and Nazism, not particularly informed by Mennonite religious doctrine but by American political habits of democracy and civil rights.

The editor of the *Bundesbote*, Christian E. Krehbiel, took quite a different approach to the "German Revolution" of 1933. Krehbiel's paper was read more frequently by the Russian German segment of the General Conference but Krehbiel himself was American-born and of Bavarian background. He was born in 1869 in Illinois into a family where a

number of the men were active Mennonite leaders. Krehbiel's family moved to Halstead, Kansas, while he was a child, and he studied at a number of schools, including a Mennonite Seminary at Halstead, the Emporia (Kansas) Normal School, the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Bloomfield, New Jersey, and the University of Berlin. After his return from Berlin, he went into the book retailing and newspaper publishing business with one of his brothers. In 1922 Krehbiel was asked by his denomination to go to the Soviet Union to help distribute humanitarian aid to victims of the Civil War there, among them many Mennonites. This apparently was a major turning point for him, since he was ordained as a minister near the end of 1923 and remained active in denominational affairs until his death in 1948. Making use of his publishing experience for the church, he had become editor of the *Bundesbote* in 1930.⁷

Krehbiel's initial comment on National Socialism was defensive. In April 1933 in a regular column of short news items and brief editorial comments entitled "Daheim und Draußen" ("At Home and Abroad") he reported that several German church leaders had cabled messages to American religious periodicals denying Nazi persecution of the Jews.⁸ Two weeks later he published a longer statement entitled "Die deutsche Revolution." This article was mostly made up of quotations from an article of the same title in the *Allianzblatt*, a religious paper from Germany. The author of the original article, a Bernhard Peters of Worms, presumably not a Mennonite, addressed first the Jewish question. Rather ambiguously, Peters stated that Christians cannot execute judgment on the Jews because God has not, but that governments can take politically necessary measures against the Jews for political reasons, specifically for getting rid of "Bolshevist influence." In doing so, the state must only avoid injustice (*Ungerechtigkeit*). In addition, the persecution of the Jews is a sign of the "end times" and the imminent approach of the Last Judgment. On the Hitler movement in general, Peters praised the new German spirit but warned that nationalism could too easily lead to a decrease in religious fervor and piety. He stated that the new German revolution must remain filled with the spirit of Luther and must take care to open the German soul to Jesus. Concluding the quotation of several paragraphs from Peters, Krehbiel reminded his readers that "positive Christianity" was the basis of the new Hitler government.⁹

The article in the *Bundesbote* of mid-1933 contains all the themes used later by those Mennonites who defended National Socialism: the connection of Jews with communism, the tying of current events to "end times" prophecy, the "positive Christianity" of the Nazi Party program, the new government's alleged improvement of social morals, and the call for religious conversion and piety.

Hitler and National Socialism faded from view in the English-language paper for a few years after 1933, but the *Bundesbote* continued

to discuss the issues. The "Jewish question" remained the continuing theme. Krehbiel complained about a lack of balance in reporting about religious and racial persecution in Russia and Germany, and stated that the "fact" that Jews were the persecutors in Russia was not mentioned in the media because the United States press was too much controlled by Jews. In defense of Germany, he implied that individual Jews, not the race, were exploiting their fellow human beings and this was the reason for their persecution.¹⁰

Later in 1933, Krehbiel reported on the efforts of the American Jewish Committee to protest Nazi persecution, but said that the Germans blamed "Jewish chicanery and cunning" for the oppression. Furthermore, German churchmen denied that there was any official persecution. Another reprinted article by Bernhard Peters entitled "Der Deutsche, das Ausland und der Antichrist" reported that the Christians of Germany saw Hitler as a savior from Bolshevism. In discussing prophecy, Peters stated that the Antichrist would come from the Jews and that the persecution of the Jews indicated that the day was coming when they would return to Palestine.¹¹

All through the 1930s, Krehbiel published in the *Bundesbote's* "Daheim und Draußen" column short news notes from German-speaking communities around the world. Some of these were attributed to the DAI, the Deutsches Ausland-Institut, a private organization located in Stuttgart dedicated to researching and supporting ethnic Germans throughout the world. The DAI, although private, had been required to follow the Nazi political line, as were most similar organizations, and to promote the Nazi racial ideology. Most of the *Bundesbote's* short news items were unattributed but probably came from German sources such as the DAI and sometimes reflected a Nazi ideological slant.

Other than such news items, Krehbiel's attention to the Nazis also waned somewhat in the next few years. The only major article before late 1936 was one entitled "Zur Judenfrage" by Carl Stiefel, which Krehbiel reprinted in October 1934 from the German Methodist periodical *Apologete*. Stiefel used the Nazi rhetorical device of speaking of "the Jew" as an abstract entity and claimed that the nature of the Jew was to want to lord it over others, to be better than others. In contrast, Jesus preached equality of peoples and was killed by the Jews. Stiefel stated that the political and commercial internationalism of the Jews was partially responsible for their current persecution. To temper the foregoing, Stiefel called the Nazi attacks on the Jews an anachronism and said it was unjust to blame the Jews for all of Germany's troubles. He spoke of Jesus as a Jew and concluded by calling for conversion to Christianity as the solution to the world's Jewish problem.¹²

Occasional articles continued to appear in General Conference papers concerning Germany and National Socialism. In September 1936 the

Bundesbote published an article by David Toews, the foremost leader of Canadian General Conference Mennonites, describing his trip to Europe that summer to attend the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam. Toews devoted a significant part of his article to describing his visit to Germany and gave a cautiously critical appraisal of Nazism. He stated that he had met no one in Germany who was against Hitler although many were critical of other Nazi leaders or of the system in general. Youth were especially favorable towards Hitler. The main thing that was credited to the movement was saving Germany from communism. Toews said no one in Germany wanted war and he believed that the government also did not want war. He asked how one could doubt the judgment of 67 million people, many of them Christians (and, it should be added, including some of Toews's close relatives). This was the extent of his favorable comment on Germany. He followed by disapproving of the large amount of time required of youth in state-sponsored activities and complaining that the youth did not spend enough time on church activities. Toews stated that he was "confused" about the government's true attitude towards Christianity, citing Rosenberg's neo-paganism and the "German Christian" movement as unhealthy signs. He gave strong approval to the Confessing Church movement, but also said he had not seen or heard of any direct religious persecution against the Christian churches. He described in detail the measures that had been taken against the Jews but only indirectly implied that he disapproved. Toews also repeated the standard complaint that the world paid attention to the persecution of the Jews but not to the persecution of Christians, including large numbers of Mennonites, in Russia. He concluded by saying that although people seemed satisfied and the economy was good, the lack of press and speech freedom and the abolition of political parties were troubling aspects of German life. Overall, the article gives the impression of one who was trying unsuccessfully to see the good in Nazism and did not understand the enthusiasm with which it was being received by many of his acquaintances.¹³ This was the most critical article that Krehbiel had so far published in the *Bundesbote*.

In 1936 a new stimulant for discussion of current events entered the local scene in Newton, Kansas, a major center of General Conference leadership and the location where *The Mennonite*, the *Christlicher Bundesbote*, and other Mennonite periodicals were published. In June of that year, the first session of the Kansas Institute of International Relations (KIIR) was held on the campus of Bethel College, a school related to the General Conference. The institute was to be an annual ten-day public education effort aimed at teachers, ministers, and other community leaders. It was one of eight similar institutes around the country sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The institutes were explicitly intended by the AFSC and the local sponsors as

antimilitaristic but non-denominational, and educational rather than overtly religious. The institutes were locally controlled and financed, with the AFSC providing the speakers and coordinating the dates of the eight institutes so that speakers could make a circuit of the various locations. The KIIR began with a great deal of local and regional support. Kansas politicians, educators, and public figures such as William Allen White lent their names to the promotional effort. Emporia State Teachers College and Bethel College engaged in a struggle over locating the institute at their respective institutions. Locally, the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club endorsed the effort. The program of the institute was intense, with morning, afternoon, and evening lectures plus small group discussions with some of the speakers. A small tuition was charged to participants. One hundred twenty-five persons attended the 1936 institute, 68 percent of them Mennonites.¹⁴

The man who inspired and organized the Kansas institute was Emmett Leroy Harshbarger, professor of history at Bethel College since 1933. Harshbarger was a Mennonite of Amish background and was one of a number of college professors who had been forced to leave the Mennonite Church denomination under accusations of theological liberalism. He had earned his Ph.D. in American history from Ohio State University and was strongly influenced by the revisionist school of American historians such as Charles Beard and Harry Elmer Barnes. Harshbarger himself was very interested in the "search for a usable past" and in the political and social relevance of historical studies.¹⁵

In 1935 Harshbarger had attended an AFSC institute at Grinnell, Iowa, and immediately decided to try to bring this kind of public education program to his own institution. In doing so, Harshbarger stepped outside the mainstream of Mennonite pacifist thinking. He was one of a minority of Mennonites calling for the application of Christian pacifist principles to social and political policy. The majority of Mennonites saw this simply as a matter of religious doctrine requiring refusal of military service and saw the church's mission as purely religious rather than as social and political.¹⁶ This controversy became more and more vigorous during the late 1930s as it appeared likely that a new world war might occur and require a response of some kind from American Mennonites. Among Mennonites, much of the discussion of current events, such as National Socialism, took place in the context of this argument over what Mennonite responsibilities were to society in general, especially in time of war.

The 1936 institute passed with hardly a comment in the Mennonite periodicals, but in mid-1937 the second Kansas Institute of International Relations became the focus of criticism. An article by John J. Kroeker entitled "International Relations and Our Denomination" appeared in the *Mennonite Weekly Review*, an independent newspaper published in

Newton. Kroeker was a somewhat different figure than persons discussed so far. He was not a leader in the denomination in any way, but a layman, a prolific but rather unsuccessful writer. Although born in Germany, he had grown up in Russia, fled the Bolshevik Revolution in 1919, came to the United States in 1926 and to Newton in 1936. His father was a prominent Mennonite Brethren leader in Germany.¹⁷

Kroeker complained that "peace" had become a euphemism used by "all dissatisfied elements" and denounced the KIIR as a presentation of pro-Soviet propaganda rather than a genuine discussion of how to get peace between the nations. He complained that one KIIR speaker, Dr. Otto Nathan, had said the churches were oppressed in Germany while, according to Kroeker, even Jewish synagogues operated freely. Kroeker cited his father as an example of the freedom of the churches in Germany and accused Nathan and other speakers of being communists. He called for the Mennonites to stick to religious activities (proselytizing for the conversion of individuals to Christianity) and to stay away from social and political reform.¹⁸ Kroeker here exemplified a combination of the conservative Mennonite critique of political pacifism and a defense of the contemporary state of affairs in Germany.

Behind the scenes, Kroeker had already begun agitating against the institute in March. In letters to a member of the Bethel College board of directors, he denounced two speakers scheduled for the upcoming meeting, Harold Rugg and Samuel Guy Inman, as communists, citing Elizabeth Dilling's hysterically anti-communist directory *The Red Network*.¹⁹ Even one conservative college board member, Michael M. Horsch, wrote to a fellow board conservative, P. H. Richert, worrying about an institute speaker. Horsch was the minister of a General Conference congregation in Beatrice, Nebraska. He was born in Württemberg in 1872 and came to the United States in the late 1880s. For several decades, he had been a General Conference clergyman and leader, and had served on the Board of Missions since 1917 and on the Bethel College board of directors since 1920.²⁰ Richert was one of the leading clergymen of the General Conference Mennonites. He was senior minister of an important Russian-immigrant congregation north of Newton, and had served several terms on the board of directors at Bethel College, including some as president of the board. In addition, he had been secretary of the General Conference Board of Missions since 1910. Richert was a theological conservative and a subscriber to Gerald B. Winrod's *Defender* magazine.²¹ About Otto Nathan, Horsch asked,

Is he a Jew? I have no antipathy against a faithful Jew but we know the curse renegade Jews are to the nations today. If he is not a Jew, but a Christian, well and good. But if he is a Jew driven out of Germany because of communism, he certainly is

not qualified to speak at a Christian Peace Conference, endeavoring to clear international relations for the sake of peace.

We must keep this K.I.I.R. upon a truly Christian basis or else it will not be the best for Bethel and all of us to have it with us.

Please Bro. R. keep this to yourself and say nothing about this letter to anyone.²²

Krehbiel also criticized the KIIR, whose Mennonite attendance in 1937 was down to 48 percent of 130 participants. He complained of too much anti-German propaganda and told of an unnamed German-born preacher attending the institute (possibly John Horsch, see section on Mennonite Church below) who had received letters from a nephew in Germany praising Hitler and the Nazi regime. The nephew claimed that Hitler had saved all of Europe from communism and that conditions in Germany were much better than before 1933 when his uncle had last visited there. Contrary to reports, they had complete religious freedom.²³

Two weeks later Krehbiel's reportage took a critical turn, apparently because of the struggle of the Confessing Church. In his "Daheim und Draußen" column he published an open letter by the American Protestant leader Dr. Charles MacFarland severely condemning the Nazis on all counts for their treatment of the Jews and the churches. In an article entitled "Propaganda" a short time later, Krehbiel again mentioned the KIIR's poor treatment of Germany but reported more extensively on the arrest of Martin Niemoeller and other Protestant pastors. "Is that only propaganda?" he asked. The fact that Christians were persecuted worse in Spain or Russia, Krehbiel said, was no excuse for the events in Germany. He claimed to be attempting to present various sides of the argument over Germany in the pages of the *Bundesbote* so that readers could judge for themselves, but clearly his coverage had taken a new turn critical towards National Socialism.²⁴

The employment of a new editor for *The Mennonite* in mid-1937 (Grubb was replaced because of ill health and died in early 1938) was an event that probably did the most to stimulate debate on National Socialism among General Conference Mennonites in the next four years before the United States entered the war. The Mennonite historian James C. Juhnke has called the new editor, John R. Thierstein, the "foremost Nazi sympathizer among Kansas Mennonites"²⁵ and this may not be far from the truth. Thierstein was born in 1867 in the canton of Bern in Switzerland and immigrated to Kansas in 1883, settling east of Newton in 1885. His higher education included courses at the University of Kansas and a Ph.D. in German literature from the University of Bern in 1910. From 1915 to 1921 Thierstein was professor of German at Bluffton College, a General Conference institution in Ohio, and then held the same position

at Bethel College until 1938, in addition to various denominational committee posts.²⁶

In his first editorial on the subject in August 1937, Thierstein complained of "relentless . . . widespread" criticism and hatred of Germany. America had problems, too, he claimed: a dictatorial leader (FDR) and crime. It is "honey-combed with communistic organizations" and "steeped in silence" when called to aid Jewish and other refugees from Europe. Germany's attacks on the Jews were "mostly against Jews who were reds." Thierstein only faulted Germany for its treatment of the churches, saying it should go back to the "status quo before the revolution."²⁷ All in all, this is one of the most striking defenses of Nazi Germany appearing in an American Mennonite publication. On the other hand, it exhibits two caveats that are characteristic of Thierstein's discussion of Germany: first, a concern for refugees from Germany and the world's refusal to aid them; and, second, an expression of worry and doubt about the status of the churches in the National Socialist new order, aroused by the struggle of the Confessing Church.²⁸

Thierstein's expression of conservative theology, anti-communism, and opposition to Roosevelt and the New Deal represent a cluster of opinions that were probably shared by the majority of his mostly rural readers and also parallel the public pronouncements of a non-Mennonite religious figure of regional importance at the time, the Wichita, Kansas, evangelist Gerald B. Winrod. Winrod was the founder and head of the Defenders of the Christian Faith, a Wichita-based publishing and evangelizing organization whose name aptly and succinctly described its activities. The organization was founded in 1925, when Winrod had already gained local success as an evangelist, and grew rapidly over the next decade. With the coming of Roosevelt and the New Deal in 1933, Winrod turned from purely religious concerns to politics. At this time (1934) his magazine, *The Defender*, had a circulation of sixty thousand. Coinciding with his turn to preaching against the New Deal, Winrod began publicizing the anti-Semitic forgery "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Through the latter half of the 1930s he zealously agitated against the alleged conspiratorial communist and Jewish influences abroad in American life.²⁹

Mennonites around the country, but particularly in central Kansas, had numerous friendly contacts with Winrod. According to Juhnke, "most Mennonite homes [in Kansas] subscribed to *The Defender*."³⁰ The magazine itself was printed from 1931 to 1942 by the Herald Publishing Company in Newton, the company founded by Christian E. Krehbiel's brother and the office where the *Mennonite Weekly Review* was edited and printed. (Prior to this, *The Defender* had been printed at the Mennonite Brethren Publishing House in Hillsboro, Kansas.) During the Depression era, the Herald Publishing Company was financially dependent on the

contract which, in 1937, called for a press run of 100,000 copies per month. Many Mennonites contributed to the Defenders; Winrod spoke occasionally in Mennonite churches; and Mennonite papers advertised his meetings.³¹

In 1938 Winrod reached the peak of his political ambitions and entered the Republican primary for U.S. Senator from Kansas. He was opposed by the state and national Republican establishment in his campaign for a "Christian America" and the campaigns of his opponents featured widely publicized characterizations of Winrod as the "Jayhawk Nazi." Such charges seem to have been effective. Despite his high level of name recognition and seeming popularity as a religious speaker in a state where theological conservatism flourished, Winrod came in a weak third in the primary with 21.4 percent of the vote. Mennonite voters in Kansas were almost entirely Republican and gave an estimated 60 percent of their vote to Winrod. In West Branch township of Marion County (home of P. H. Richert) where the population was almost exclusively made up of Mennonites of Russian immigrant background, 90.2 percent of the vote went to Winrod. In general, Winrod did well in precincts where either the Mennonites or the Ku Klux Klan were influential.³²

In September 1938, Thierstein came forth with another strong defense of Germany during the Czech crisis. He denounced Eduard Beneš, the president of Czechoslovakia, as "one of the slickest politicians that the world has had," saying "it was largely through Beneš's scheming that the new nation was carved out of the old Austro-Hungarian empire."

Motivated by a desire for revenge against their vanquished foes rather than by reason and the sense of future good for the peoples thus ruthlessly thrown together, the allied statesmen didn't realize that the old "arch-fiend," trouble-maker through the ages [Satan], was gleefully concocting the Versailles treaty, of which this nation-making deal [Czechoslovakia] was a part. They didn't remember that there is a God in heaven who can unmake nations, at his pleasure, and who can and does make right injustices done, whenever he sees fit to do so. And does it not look as though God is using the much-hated Adolf Hitler to undo this and other injustices perpetrated by the Versailles treaty? And does it not seem providential that the man who schemed Czechoslovakia is now compelled to witness its dismemberment, for at this writing it looks as if not only the Sudeten Germans, but also the Poles, Hungarians, etc. in the crazy-quilt-like state may be given the right to return to the lands of their kinsmen.³³

Thierstein here repeated exactly Hitler's accusations against the Czechs.

In another article on the same page, entitled "Is There No Difference?" Thierstein blamed American hatred of Germany on "Communist-Jews" and "their sinister organization." American Christians, he said, class Nazism and communism together, but there is a difference: Germany does not persecute the churches and Russia does. He went on to say that Hitler had rescued Germany from communism and the "shameful position forced upon them by the abominable treaty of Versailles." In the course of his editorial, Thierstein quoted a letter from local Mennonite leader P. H. Richert complaining that the public outcry against the German persecution of the Jews was not matched by one against Russian persecution of Christians. "Besides, for the persecution of Jews there is at least some reason (not as a race)," Richert was quoted as writing.³⁴

This apparently unauthorized use of Richert's name to support Thierstein's position caused an uproar in the local Mennonite circles. Richert's statement as it appeared in Thierstein's editorial was attacked in the next issue of Bethel College's student newspaper, *The Collegian*, by Robert Kreider, one of Harshbarger's more prominent history majors. Privately, Richert attacked Harshbarger for how the matter was handled, although it is not clear why Harshbarger was singled out since he was not the faculty supervisor of the newspaper. Publicly, Thierstein had to publish a clarification from Richert in the next issue of *The Mennonite*, "What is the Scriptural Attitude toward the Jews?" Stating that "Christ was a Jew," Richert proclaimed,

It is therefore absolutely unscriptural and unchristian to hate the Jews as a race, as Hitler does. That he should want to purge his country from bolshevistic Jews, is a different matter. Who would not give him credit for that, even if one cannot approve of the method he uses. But to persecute them as a class or race is unbiblical, and God's judgement must come for this. He who sows wind will reap storm.

Richert again complained that the persecution of Christians in Russia was ignored by the media.³⁵

In seeming counterbalance to Richert's statement, Thierstein printed an article called "A Meditation" starting on the same page as the Richert response. The author was Michael M. Horsch, whom we have already met as a critic of the Kansas Institute of International Relations. Horsch claimed that America was threatened by communism, although he did not use the word. The country was becoming unstable and Christians must pray for it. Then he turned his attention to Europe.

The German people were trembling, they know they were on the brink of an awful abyss, helpless in the hands of this evil power [communism]. God in heaven had prepared men to be instrumental in building a wall against, and staying this fearful power. This wall will hold as long as it is in line with God's dispensational plan and purpose. At present there is an equalizing justice at work in Europe. Conditions unnatural, untenable and unjust are rectified.

When it came to Germany, Horsch claimed, most Americans were victims of media propaganda.

There are, however, those more thoughtful than the rest, who stop and think and feel there must be another side to those happenings in Europe. To these more thoughtful ones we are most grateful, for there is another side. Our hearts are heavy, sometimes, when we read the exaggerations of that which happens in the old home. Then we receive letters from relatives and note how they feel about conditions today. These put us at ease again and the burden is lightened.

Horsch cited reports from the Mennonites of southern Germany, his native area, and from German Methodists, to show that there was an active church life in National Socialist Germany.

Yes, there are things in National Socialism which are not good and we do not want in America. But it is time to call attention to that which is right and good, perhaps it will cause some of us to read our papers with caution.³⁶

The background to the above exchanges was the Czech crisis and the signing of the Munich agreement on 30 September 1938. Some Mennonite editorialists responded to these events in print. Menno Schrag, for example, of the independent *Mennonite Weekly Review*, expressed what was probably common American public opinion, accepting Hitler's claim to the Sudeten Germans as legitimate but condemning the idea of war over the question. Schrag praised Chamberlain for the Munich agreement and called it a victory over the forces that wanted a war: "nazism, fascism, or communism."³⁷ Thierstein also praised the agreement, saying God had heard the prayers of the world and averted war. He went on to analyze the crisis just passed, saying that Germany rearmed because other nations refused to disarm. He called for "spiritual rearmament" in order for the world to stop lurching from crisis to crisis. Leaders and people

"must accept into their lives Jesus Christ" in order to bring the world real peace.³⁸

A month after the Munich accord, Thierstein gave E. L. Harshbarger space for what in hindsight is a remarkably insightful analysis of the Czech crisis. Harshbarger stated that European events of 1938 pointed to the end of collective security, the decline of France and the rise of Britain and Germany, the isolation of the Soviets, and the postponement (not prevention) of war. America would be drawn into any European war. He concluded by attacking his Mennonite opponents on the questions of peace and politics.

This crisis also showed that, whatever they may say to the contrary, Mennonites are very much interested in political and social affairs. Furthermore, they have very definite convictions on such matters. Apparently we are not so sure that brotherly love can settle all disputes. At least some of our people found it agreeable to approve Hitler's display of force to gain his ends. As one friend recently put it, there wasn't anything else Hitler could do. If that is true there are many crises in which non-resistance will not work. This leads inevitably to the approval of the "new Caesarism" of force which our [Mennonite] brethren in Germany have accepted. Then non-resistance, as in Germany, shall be no more. And again, in spite of our professed religious nature and our supposed aloofness from national affairs, this crisis found Mennonites forming premature judgements on the basis of cultural prejudices just the same as unbelievers have done. It is difficult to see how a non-resistant people can consistently approve the actions of a German government which is avowedly hostile to both pacifism and democracy, even though those actions were caused by admitted injustices of the World War treaties. Two wrongs cannot make a right.

Harshbarger called for a renewed emphasis among Mennonites on peace teachings. "Peace work should become one of the major missionary activities of the church if we are to live true to our heritage."³⁹

The same day that Harshbarger's article was published brought another milestone in the development of National Socialism in Germany, *Kristallnacht*. Krehbiel in the *Bundesbote* had begun to be critical of Germany in the previous year. Now, he simply reported the facts of *Kristallnacht*, saying it was hard to believe the reports but accepting them as true. The end result, Krehbiel said, would be more militarism and hatred in the world.⁴⁰

Thierstein was apparently taken completely by surprise by the actions of the government he had been defending. He once again put forward the old charge that Americans were antagonistic towards Germany because the press was influenced by "Jewish propaganda" and by Moscow, but he was forced to admit some reluctant criticism of Germany.

At the same time we as Christians cannot help but deplore some of the things that Germany has done. As for her Nazi government, if that suits her, we should let her try it out. But it must pain any true Christian heart to know that the country of Luther, leader in bringing true religion back again, has done things that are directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity. And now when due to the assassination of assistant ambassador to France, von Rath [sic], by a Jew another outbreak against this race has been enacted with destruction of Jewish property, imprisonment of many Jews, and decrees for their deportation, we are pained more deeply. This is all very unfortunate. We Christians sorely deplore these happenings in the fatherland and naturally ask, where will this eventually end. At the same time, it is puzzling to some of us that the American mind, so critical in the things that Germany does, has calmly looked on while for years the persecution of Christians has gone on in Russia, where thousands of people of our own faith have been murdered and the lives of many more ruined.⁴¹

In the next few months Thierstein continued to give mixed signals about Nazi Germany. His 31 January 1939 editorial was titled "Suggestions and Words of Caution Coming to the Editor." In it he cited two letters he had received favoring Germany—one from Kansas and one from Canada—and one letter criticizing his coverage of Germany—from Oklahoma. He concluded by saying,

But there is such cleavage among the members of our churches in their attitude to what is going on in Germany and other parts of Europe, that it is almost impossible to say anything without treading on somebody's toes. The fact is, our American Mennonites pretty generally share the intolerant American attitude against Germany and Italy too, for that matter, because of their fascistic governments and persecution of the Jews, while brethren of our German-English churches cannot see it entirely that way. As a matter of fact our Mennonite kin in Canada are pretty much lined up on the side of Germany, because of the fact that the German government has so kindly advanced large

sums of money to help thousands of our brethren out of the Russian inferno to Paraguay and Brazil, South America, and has now canceled the largest part of these financial obligations.⁴²

In February Thierstein praised congressman Dies's Un-American Activities Committee for investigating communist influence in the Work Projects Administration and for attacking communism and fascism in general. A week later there was a confused editorial suggesting that the Jews would soon return to Palestine according to biblical prophecy and that Germany's persecution might be part of God's plan for this, but also concluding that God would punish Germany for this persecution.⁴³

In the same month, Thierstein began publishing a series of articles by E. L. Harshbarger which ran intermittently until May, "History Views the Jewish Persecutions." Harshbarger gave a simple factual review of the history of anti-Semitism and concluded in his final article on 2 May that "the charges that Jews . . . created and propagated Communism, are the source of all obscene literature, stage and movie productions—are all shown to be gross and malicious exaggerations of fact." Thierstein inserted his own editorial comment after this sentence, in the middle of the article: "The statement 'created . . . fact' is altogether too sweeping."⁴⁴

At the end of March *The Mennonite* contained an article by Adolf Friesen, a GC Mennonite pastor at Donnellson, Iowa. His article, titled "Our Choice Should Be Easy," complained of the favorable propaganda from Germany about the success of the Nazis. Friesen pointed to German militarism as the reverse side of the coin of Hitler's economic success. "In the first place Germany has met the unemployment problem, because under compulsory military and semi-military conscription more than one million men each year are withheld from the labor market." After this sentence, Thierstein inserted in parentheses, "Is this an actual fact?" Friesen called for Mennonites to reject and denounce both communism and fascism and choose American democracy.⁴⁵

Late in May Thierstein editorialized on "The Problem of the Persecuted Jews." He stated: "The American people and the civilized nations of the world in general have generally condemned Germany's treatment of its Jews and doubtlessly with good reason." But Thierstein condemned the fact that the nations of the world were doing nothing for the Jewish refugees from Europe. The United States could easily accept thousands, he felt. The Christians of the world must do something, although Thierstein was extremely vague in his recommendations. "Yes, it is a tragedy the way these people have had to suffer, oh so long. And he is a poor Christian whose heart does not go out to them in prayer and supplication that their tribulations may come to an end, and will not otherwise lend them such help as he can."⁴⁶

The first half of 1939 shows Thierstein apparently pressured to include more critical views of Germany in the official denominational organ, but still trying his best to see the Nazi government in the best possible light. At the same time, Krehbiel of the *Bundesbote* was almost completely silent.

The German sympathizers got a boost in mid-May 1939 with the visit of Dr. F. H. Otto Melle to Newton. Melle was bishop of the German Episcopal Methodist Church and executive secretary of the Association of German Free Churches. He had been attending "the recent Methodist uniting conference" in Kansas City⁴⁷ and was brought to Newton because of his acquaintance with John J. Kroeker. Melle was chairman of the board of the Blankenburger Allianzkonferenz, a German evangelistic organization with which Kroeker's father was also associated. Melle gave four public talks in Newton on 14 May at the First Mennonite Church and at the "Mennonite Bible Conference" (an annual event which Kroeker had founded) in the city auditorium. Among these presentations was a discussion of the current situation in Germany. Kroeker reported Melle's remarks in *The Mennonite*. Melle described National Socialism as one of the aftereffects of World War I and as not just a change of government but a "radical re-molding of a status quo ante." He admitted that Nazism had brought with it a church conflict. However, all of the church problems were the result of the ties between church and state. The government financed the church and therefore wanted to control it. Melle proclaimed that the free churches, such as the Methodists and the Mennonites, had no difficulties under the Nazi regime. The free churches were carrying on an active program of religious work.⁴⁸

Melle was already well known for his vigorous defense of Nazism at the World Conference on Church, Community, and State (a precursor of the World Council of Churches) held at Oxford, England, in June 1937. When the Conference approved a statement denouncing racial discrimination and implying criticism of Germany, Melle gave a speech defending the German government and criticizing the Confessing Church. Kroeker had also criticized the Oxford conference in an article in the *Mennonite Weekly Review*, making various allegations about the meeting: communist sympathies, modernist theology, church meddling in "unholy" politics, censorship of conference reports, and plans to create a church dictatorship to control world politics.⁴⁹

In June the fourth Institute of International Relations was held. Mennonite participation this time was only 31 percent of the 111 participants. In numbers, both the total attendance and Mennonite participation was the lowest so far, although the percentage of Mennonite participants was up slightly from 1938. The highlight of the 1939 institute was the appearance of Eduard Beneš, the erstwhile president of Czechoslovakia. Beneš arrived in Newton with armed bodyguards and

his public address was given in Lindley Hall (the gymnasium of the local high school) and broadcast on the radio. The speech received wide press coverage and drew a large crowd.⁵⁰

Menno Schrag of the *Mennonite Weekly Review* was apparently the only Mennonite editor to respond in detail to the 1939 KIIR. His report was fair and generally friendly, although he did complain that Beneš's talk was given in an antipeace spirit. He praised most those lecturers who emphasized the Bible and religious conversion as ways to peace.⁵¹

Charges of communism swirled around the 1939 institute, especially against Beneš. E. L. Harshbarger and John J. Kroeker exchanged a series of heated articles in March and April. Harshbarger began by asking rhetorically, "Are Peace Workers Communists?" and answering in the negative. Kroeker replied with "Peace Workers Cannot be Communists," accusing many institute speakers, including Beneš, of being communist sympathizers. Harshbarger responded with "Opponents of Peace Now Aid Communists," in which he refuted Kroeker point by point and belittled Kroeker's knowledge of politics and current events. Kroeker returned with the last word, "Emotionalism Cannot Exonerate Peace Movements," in which he again attacked Harshbarger, the institute, and Beneš.⁵² Menno Schrag claimed that Winrod privately denounced Beneš to the Herald Press personnel and wanted the *Mennonite Weekly Review* to run a photograph of Beneš purportedly meeting with communists while president of Czechoslovakia.⁵³ Another clue to the attacks on Beneš is found in a private letter written by John J. Kroeker. Kroeker was apparently in ongoing contact with the Deutsches Ausland-Institut in Stuttgart and in a 6 June 1939 letter to a Herr Hartung of the Press Section of the DAI he thanked them for an earlier shipment of literature concerning Czechoslovakia, saying that it would help greatly in his current fight against the influence of Beneš and his followers. Kroeker stated that the "fanatical efforts" to make Beneš's visit a success showed that his already-published articles on Beneš had been successful.⁵⁴

On 3 July 1939, Kroeker left Newton to return to Germany, a trip sponsored and paid for by the DAI. He remained there until some time after World War II.⁵⁵ A news item that appeared in Newton's newspaper on 22 September 1939 reported on a minor incident that may have had something to do with Kroeker. A resolution passed that week by the city commission claimed that "persistent rumors have been in circulation for some time to the effect that certain disloyal or un-American organizations, specifically the German-American Bund, have been active in or near Newton." The resolution called on the federal Department of Justice "to make a thorough and searching investigation of such rumors with a view to bringing any possible disloyalty or un-American activity to light, or forever establishing the falsity of such rumors." The newspaper article went on to explain that "some months ago, a press dispatch with a New

York date line stated that the German-American bund [sic] boasted of an organization in Newton, Kans." Also quoted as supporting the commission resolution were the mayor, the Chamber of Commerce, and several Mennonite businessmen and college professors.⁵⁶ It is unknown whether any such investigation ever took place.⁵⁷ Menno Schrag, the editor of the local *Mennonite Weekly Review*, maintained that Kroeker was "said to be the contact man for the [German-American] Bund in this area" although he apparently was never a member of the Bund. Schrag stated he had learned from the Newton postmaster "that all his [Kroeker's] mail was checked by the postal authorities in Newton."⁵⁸ At any rate, Kroeker's departure removed a defender of Germany or, more accurately, an antagonist of those who criticized Germany, from the ongoing Mennonite discussion.

The city commission action came to Kroeker's attention in Germany as well. Kroeker's brother in Chicago reported in a letter of 8 October that almost all the people in Newton of German background were being accused in rumor. To Kroeker he wrote,

They deny it there, but paper [sic] claims the post office had read some mail coming into that town [Newton], and had secured some information. Bunk, I think. I do think though, that she [Kroeker's wife, still in Newton] should destroy anything of a controversial nature which she might find in your newspapers and magazines. . . . if it ever appeared necessary [if the United States were to enter the war] I would get rid of that accumulated junk which I saw in your studio.

To Kroeker's wife he expressed an opinion he did not voice to his brother,

Hitler is certainly not a guy that can be trusted to keep his word, and you can't blame the Allies for wanting to get rid of him. Too bad that the whole German people are classed as part of the Nazi Regime. I doubt if the majority of Germans like that guy.⁵⁹

Once the war in Europe began on 1 September 1939, the attention of American Mennonites turned towards domestic politics and the possibility of legal provisions for conscientious objectors if, as seemed increasingly likely, America entered the war. Any favorable comment on Hitler and National Socialism obviously became much less acceptable. Thierstein's few comments were isolationist and critical of both sides in the European war.⁶⁰

Mennonite Church

By and large, the discussions of National Socialism that went on among members of the Mennonite Church were much more a private matter than in the General Conference. Little was said in the pages of the *Gospel Herald*, the church's official organ. Only one MC leader, Clayton F. Derstine, spoke out extensively on National Socialism. Born in 1891 in Souderton, Pennsylvania, Derstine was a widely-known pastor and traveling evangelist in the Mennonite Church and moved to Ontario in 1924 to lead a church in Kitchener.⁶¹ Derstine was also the "World News Editor" for the *Christian Monitor*, an MC family monthly put out by the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale, Pennsylvania. His column, "Comments on World News," had as its focus the impact of current events on the church and, as a dispensationalist in theology, Derstine displayed a particular interest in end-times prophecy and in finding portents of the imminent last judgement in the events of the day.

In May 1933 Derstine began with one of the continuing themes of his comments on Hitler and National Socialism in an article entitled "Hitler with his Hands on the Jew." Derstine prophesied that, although the Jews were suffering because of their refusal to accept Christ, God would punish those who persecuted them. "*Germany, beware!*" [Derstine's emphasis].⁶² In November, again denouncing Jewish persecution, he took up a second major theme, the church-state struggle in Germany, and bemoaned the rise of a fascist spirit in countries around the world, including the United States and Canada.⁶³

In 1934 Derstine several times protested the rise of anti-Semitism around the world and particularly in Germany, while saying that it fit in with prophecy. He also denounced Nazi attempts to control the state church in Germany, praised the Confessing Church for defending religious liberty and equated Nazism and its swastika symbol with paganism.⁶⁴ Derstine seems to have had a thoroughly American view of politics and political theory and saw clearly the dictatorial nature of Hitler's movement. His comment on Hitler's accession to the powers of the German presidency after Hindenburg's death: "Thus German democracy, which committed suicide when Hitler took the chancellorship, has now buried itself."⁶⁵

Derstine's published opinions received a private rejoinder in early 1935 from John Horsch, a well-known MC historian, writer, and defender of religious orthodoxy. Horsch was born in Bavaria in 1867 and came to the United States in 1887 to escape military service. He became a popularizer of Mennonite history and fundamentalist theology among North American Mennonites.⁶⁶

On 27 February 1935 Horsch wrote to Orie O. Miller, a prominent, American-born MC leader and secretary of the denomination's Peace

Problems Committee, to complain about recent Derstine articles which labelled the anti-Semitic "Protocols of Zion" forgeries and attacked Hitler's policy towards the church.⁶⁷ He was especially upset about the latter, "Hitler's Ten Commandments for the German Church." Horsch said such articles continued the anti-German propaganda of World War I and were offensive to the Mennonites of Germany. He complained of "wealthy Jews" whose propaganda had produced an American boycott against Germany. "The Christian believers of Germany are of the opinion that the old fatherland would today be Bolshevist but for Adolf Hitler. I believe they are right." Horsch sent Miller a copy of Winrod's political paper *The Revealer* and referred to articles in other periodicals giving favorable reports from American visitors to the New Germany.⁶⁸ Miller replied, "Personally, I agree with your viewpoint regarding the situation in Germany one hundred percent. I also agree that here in America we are under very strong anti-German propaganda at the present time." He promised to forward Horsch's complaints to the Peace Problems Committee.⁶⁹ Miller, born in 1892 in Indiana, was the owner of a shoe factory in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, and the executive secretary of the Mennonite Central Committee, an inter-Mennonite relief and service organization.⁷⁰

Horsch also sent a copy of his letter to Miller to his son-in-law Harold S. Bender, a professor of history at MC-affiliated Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana. Bender was born in Elkhart, Indiana, in 1897 and received graduate training at Princeton and Heidelberg, where he earned his doctorate. He was already one of the leading Mennonite intellectual figures and his later theological and historical writings became the major intellectual influence on Mennonite ideology in the twentieth century.⁷¹ Horsch and Bender represented two generations of Mennonite intellectuals with contrasting educational backgrounds (Horsch had no formal higher education) and two very different national traditions. They disagreed sharply. Bender forcefully replied to his father-in-law, agreeing that "any contribution our church papers, either wittingly or unwittingly might make to such propaganda, would be wrong," but suggesting that Horsch was also relying on propaganda, that of Gerald Winrod.

I think all thinking people, even in Germany, will agree that on these two points [anti-Semitism and attempts to control the church] Hitler has made serious blunders and that he is guilty of causing great harm and loss. Aside from some minor exaggerations, is that not just what the article in the Monitor for November condemns in Hitler's program. When thousands of German pastors have risked everything, including imprisonment and confiscation of property and loss of position, to bitterly fight to the finish the church program which Hitler has set up,

and when the great mass of the German church has proved itself to be absolutely opposed to Mueller [the Nazi church administrator appointed by Hitler], and literally millions of believing Christians have been willing to break away from the established church and set up an independent Church, is this not justification for such condemnation of Hitler's church policy as is published in the Monitor. I believe the Manifesto of the Confessional Synod against the National-Socialist philosophy and religious policy which was issued last Sunday and has led to many arrests of pastors is stronger than what appeared in the Monitor.⁷²

In 1936 Derstine returned again to the theme of anti-Semitism in an article called "Clearing the Atmosphere of Anti-Jewish Slander." "The main reason for this editorial is to defend the Jews against the unjust attack that they are the main cause for *Communism* in the world." The real reason for Hitler's attack on communism, Derstine stated, was as a smoke screen for taking away the rights of the German people.⁷³ Horsch again complained in letters to acquaintances about Derstine's defense of the Jews. He sent copies of some of Derstine's editorials, including "Clearing the Atmosphere," to a nephew, Paul Landes, living in Germany. Landes replied in defense of the Nazi treatment of the Jews, and said Judaism was the basis for communism. According to Landes, "If, though, there should be a few 'good German Jews'—according to the Talmud this is seemingly impossible—we must nevertheless see in the Jews the destructive [*zersetzende*] race and the 'good' must suffer with the bad." He also denied Derstine's reports about the treatment of the church, saying Hitler supported Christianity and that "The [Nazi] Party is a worldview [*Weltanschauung*] and not a religion." Landes closed his letter, "Dear Uncle, I greet you from a beautiful and free Germany with 'Heil Hitler!'"⁷⁴

Derstine continued his commentary on the war preparations of the "three aggressors," Germany, Italy, and Japan. He called both communism and fascism "the enemies of true liberty" and spoke of "three powerful evil systems of thought," religious modernism, Marxism, and fascism. "All three in their final analysis rule God, His Word, and authority out of lives and out of the universe. World order and the peace of the world are threatened by these three." Derstine described all of Europe as preparing for war, as exemplified by the civil war in Spain and the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, and even quoted Mark Twain's caustic "War Prayer."⁷⁵

Throughout 1938 Derstine regularly wrote about Germany in his column. He decried the "insidious poison" of nationalism, the "chief rival of Christianity" in the world; he described unfavorably the entry of "Dictator Adolph [sic] Hitler" into Austria; he called on Christians to

oppose anti-Semitism and help Jewish refugees; and praised the Confessing Church for its conflict with the "powers of darkness" in Germany. As did all of the other writers examined here, Derstine praised the Munich agreement as a victory of reason over passion and called for the churches to support peace and negotiation, not rearmament.⁷⁶

In early 1939, John Horsch demonstrated that despite his private defense of the New Germany, he still retained the capacity for critical thinking. In a series of articles in the *Mennonite Weekly Review* in January and February, Horsch vehemently defended traditional Mennonite pacifism against claims by German Mennonite writers that it was not essential to Mennonite theology and that sixteenth-century Anabaptists—the Mennonite founders—had not preached it. Horsch was particularly incensed by the article on Menno Simons in the latest installment of the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, an encyclopedia of Mennonite history and thought being published by the German Mennonites. The article written by Christian Neff, one of the leading German Mennonite pastors, claimed that Menno Simons had approved of military service. Horsch devoted his first article, "Menno Simons on the Principle of Nonresistance," to refuting Neff, a relatively easy task. Almost the entire article was made up of quotations from Menno's writings. Said Horsch in conclusion, "It is inconceivable that any one who has read Menno Simons's writings would assert that he approved of military service."⁷⁷

In April 1939 a new voice entered the public MC discussion. Melvin Gingerich had received his Ph.D. in history from Iowa State in 1938 and was on the faculty of Washington Junior College in Washington, Iowa. He was a Mennonite native of Iowa and later taught at Bethel College and Goshen College.⁷⁸ In the April 1939 issue of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* an article of Gingerich's appeared titled "The Menace of Propaganda and How to Meet It."⁷⁹ The paper came from a "Mennonite Conference on Applied Non-Resistance" held that month at Goshen College, sponsored by the MC Peace Problems Committee.

According to Gingerich, we live in a world of propaganda. All sides on all issues use it and not all propaganda is necessarily dishonest. However, the propagandist tries to get his audience to accept his viewpoint uncritically and this is the danger of propaganda. Gingerich went on to discuss the methods of propaganda and to make some recommendations on how to think critically about the issues of the day. Along the way he made several pointed and direct critiques of his fellow Mennonites. He particularly complained that many Mennonites had accepted current Winrod propaganda, such as the Jewish Protocols, uncritically, and objected to the use of the accusation of "communist" in Mennonite periodicals against perceived opponents. "America is in little danger from communism. If there is any immediate danger to America, it comes from the threat of fascism." Gingerich explicitly included

Winrod among the fascist threats. He specifically attacked the *Christian Monitor* news section, although not naming Derstine, for using the "communist" label against the New Deal and the Federal Council of Churches and for citing *The Red Network*.

Gingerich called for the teaching of "propaganda analysis" in Mennonite schools and colleges:

The writer has been surprised to find that among those in our different communities who have become Winrod disciples were people who have attended our church schools. But in no case have these individuals been history or social science majors.

He also called for greater efforts at fairness in church periodicals, making several specific recommendations, including, "When we quote we should use quotation marks and name our authorities." (Derstine was egregiously guilty of this failing.)

Gingerich's article drew private responses from Derstine, Horsch, and Winrod. Derstine protested to Harold S. Bender, the editor of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, and criticized him for publishing Gingerich's article. He complained that Gingerich had praised modernists and called the article propaganda itself.⁸⁰ Horsch also wrote to his son-in-law to complain. These kinds of attacks struck a sensitive nerve with Bender. The *Mennonite Quarterly Review* was his major vehicle for the theological renewal movement of which he was the leading figure and he did not take this criticism lightly. He offered his father-in-law the opportunity for rebuttal in the journal but sharply defended Gingerich, accusing Horsch of saying things "so patently an untruth that no thinking man credits it as anything but propaganda."⁸¹

Winrod contacted his Herald Press acquaintances asking about an article in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* he thought was "Jewish inspired." Reportedly, he threatened the journal with a lawsuit over Gingerich's article. Nothing seems to have come of this threat.⁸²

Derstine was unaffected by any of the private controversy. He continued with his defense of the Jews and criticism of Germany through the early years of the war. In 1939 as the war appeared more imminent, he mentioned end-times prophecy more and more frequently. Once the war actually began, Derstine blamed Hitler personally and Nazi Germany collectively for it.⁸³

Conclusions

The American Mennonite encounter with National Socialism shows considerable ambiguity. No American Mennonites seem to have spoken out forthrightly to advocate Hitler and Nazism. Those who sympathized

were always defending the New Germany in reaction to what they perceived as unfair criticism.

The most important theme in American Mennonite discussions of National Socialism was anti-communism. A few, such as Kroeker and Krehbiel, had personal experience with Bolshevism in the Soviet Union. It is also possible that John Horsch and Michael Horsch had heard from relatives about the brief soviet government in Bavaria, their native region, after World War I. In general, Mennonites were well aware of the severe persecution of Russian Mennonites by the new Soviet Union. Anti-Semitic statements grew out of this anti-communism, rather than from racial or religious grounds. Mennonites were willing to countenance persecution of "Jews who were reds." Some, such as Richert, could condemn racial anti-Semitism, but Derstine was unusual in explicitly denouncing the equation of Jews and communism.

The influence of American fundamentalism was also important. Most Mennonites seem to have accepted the social and political ideas that came along with conservative religion from the likes of Winrod. Common Mennonite opinion seems to have been that as long as the church was free to proselytize, nothing else mattered. This was the clear difference between Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia. American Mennonites received optimistic and cheerful letters from German Mennonites while Russian Mennonites were being sent off to concentration camps in Siberia. The treatment of the Confessing Church raised a warning flag for some, such as Krehbiel, but Mennonites had less sympathy for the state churches than for the free churches like themselves. The connection of current events with end-times prophecy also distanced Mennonites from social responsibility. The problems of the world were merely evidence of approaching judgment, not situations the Mennonites should work to remedy.

The German-American experience in World War I probably played an unspoken role in the Mennonite response to National Socialism. Mennonites were victims of persecution in 1917 and 1918 as both ethnic Germans and pacifists. This may have made some of them more defensive by the 1930s when Germany again became an object of criticism. The frequent *ad hominem* use of the term "propaganda" reflects this. For Thierstein especially, as a professor of German, the World War I years might have been difficult. The influence of this factor must remain speculative as yet; more evidence is needed.

Distinctive Mennonite principles seem to have played little role. Only a few tied pacifism to thinking about the New Germany (Harshbarger, Gingerich). John Horsch did not seem to extrapolate from Mennonite pacifism to a critique of Nazism. Again, the treatment of the Confessing Church touched on the traditional Mennonite objection to state interference in the church and led to some doubts (Krehbiel, Derstine).

American political ideals were probably as influential as Mennonite distinctives as a stimulus to critical understanding of National Socialism.

The entire American Mennonite discussion of Nazism was in some ways rather academic, since direct contacts with the New Germany itself were very meager. Only one probable party member of Mennonite background living in the United States has been found, a man living in California away from any large Mennonite communities.⁸⁴ John J. Kroeker was apparently the only person mentioned here who actively kept up a connection with the DAI. Editors such as C. E. Krehbiel probably received DAI material unsolicited, at least at first, since it was part of the DAI's task to follow the German-language press around the world.⁸⁵ Even the use of the DAI's material in the *Bundesbote* may not have had great significance, since it was probably difficult for the editor to find relevant articles to fill up a paper with such a limited readership. The DAI material may have been welcome filler.

This essay has given only a brief overview of an important encounter in German-American religious history. This account could be broadened in several ways: the response of the third large Mennonite denomination, the Mennonite Brethren, needs to be examined; other Mennonite periodicals could be surveyed for opinions on Nazism; the personal papers of various Mennonites mentioned in this paper could be more carefully examined; and comparisons with Mennonites in other countries and with other German-American groups could be made.

It is clear that the issue of National Socialism received a more thorough airing among the General Conference Mennonites than in the Mennonite Church. There was at least some tolerance for the public views of someone like Thierstein. His own statements imply, though, that he was on the defensive. There were limits to this tolerance and these limits narrowed as the decade of the 1930s progressed. It is likely that the majority of Mennonites' opinions paralleled Derstine's more than Thierstein's. The American Mennonite encounter with Nazism is an interesting example of the failure of National Socialism to appeal to a German ethnic group outside of Europe.

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Notes

¹ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

² Two previously published works deal with somewhat the same topic. William E. Nawyn, *American Protestantism's Response to Germany's Jews and Refugees, 1933-1941* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981) contains a chapter on Mennonites. A similar work is

Jack R. Fischel, "The North American Mennonites Response to Hitler's Persecution of the Jews," *Holocaust Studies Annual* (Greenwood, FL: Penkevill Publishing Co.), 2 (1984): 141-54. Each volume of *Holocaust Studies Annual* also has a distinctive title, in this case *The Churches' Response to the Holocaust*. Both Nawyn and Fischel are concerned specifically with Mennonite response to Nazi persecution of the Jews, rather than with the broader question of the Mennonite response to Nazism more generally.

³ In Mennonite literature these three groups are usually abbreviated MC, GC, and MB, respectively. I will use these abbreviations in the rest of this essay.

⁴ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1936*, vol. 2, part 2, *Denominations K to Z: Statistics, History, Doctrine, Organization, and Work* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1941), 1005.

⁵ A. Warkentin, ed., *Who's Who among the Mennonites* (n.p., 1937), 56.

⁶ S. M. Grubb, "Editorial," *The Mennonite*, 13 April 1933, 1-2.

⁷ Edmund G. Kaufman, compiler, *General Conference Mennonite Pioneers* (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1973), 365-70.

⁸ C. E. Krehbiel, "Daheim und Draußen," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 18 April 1933, 247.

⁹ C. E. Krehbiel, "Die deutsche Revolution," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 2 May 1933, 266-67.

¹⁰ In passing, Krehbiel reported with approval on the measures taken against Freemasonry by Hitler and Mussolini. C. E. Krehbiel, "Daheim und Draußen," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 9 May 1933, 295. The anti-Masonic theme was apparently never mentioned elsewhere in Mennonite discussion of Nazism, but should have been of some interest to Mennonites. Traditional Mennonite doctrine discouraged a church member's participation in any club or social organization other than the church. This doctrine was most strongly emphasized in connection with Freemasonry and other secret societies. During the 1930s, this doctrine was being questioned by some segments of the General Conference, particularly in the eastern states, and led to some sharply controversial discussions in official conference meetings. It is unknown why Krehbiel was the only one to notice the Nazi viewpoint on Freemasonry and why he gave it so little prominence.

¹¹ C. E. Krehbiel, "Daheim und Draußen," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 8 August 1933, 479; C. E. Krehbiel, "Der Deutsche, das Ausland und der Antichrist," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 17 October 1933, 627-28.

¹² Carl Stiefel, "Zur Judenfrage," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 9 October 1934, 613-15. The *Apologete* is identified as a German Methodist periodical in John R. Thierstein, "Suggestions and Words of Caution Coming to the Editor," *The Mennonite*, 31 January 1939, 1.

¹³ David Toews, "Einige Reiseindrücke," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 29 September 1936, 617-19; and 6 October 1936, 629-31.

¹⁴ Theodore W. Loewen, "Mennonite Pacifism: The Kansas Institute of International Relations" (Social Science Seminar paper, Bethel College, 1971), 1-14; James C. Juhnke, *A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1975), 130-31.

¹⁵ Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms*, 130; Mark Unruh, "E. L. Harshbarger: Mennonite Activist" (Social Science Seminar paper, Bethel College, 1982), 1-11.

¹⁶ Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms*, 132; Loewen, "Mennonite Pacifism," 5-6.

¹⁷ Obituary of John Jacob Kroeker, folder 228 "Obituaries," box 6, Arnold Epp papers, MLA-MS-172, Mennonite Library and Archives (hereafter MLA), North Newton, Kansas.

¹⁸ John J. Kroeker, "International Relations and Our Denomination," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 16 June 1937, 6.

¹⁹ John J. Kroeker to H. E. Suderman, 15, 20, and 21 March 1937, folder 351 "Kansas Institute of International Relations 1935-1937," box 22, E. G. Kaufman presidential papers, Bethel College record group, MLA.III.1.A.1.g. Elizabeth Dilling, *The Red Network: A Who's Who and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* (Kenilworth, IL: author, 1935). Dilling was the author of several other widely circulated far-right and anti-Semitic books.

²⁰ Warkentin, *Who's Who*, 72.

- ²¹ Kaufman, *Pioneers*, 391-98. For Richert's Winrod contacts see, for example, form letters from Winrod to supporters in folder 58 "General correspondence 1934, January-April" and folder 59 "General correspondence 1934, May-August," box 9, and folder 64 "General correspondence 1937," box 10, P. H. Richert papers, MLA.MS.16.
- ²² Michael M. Horsch to P. H. Richert, 17 May 1937, folder 64, Richert papers.
- ²³ C. E. Krehbiel, "Daheim und Draußen," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 29 June 1937, 415-16.
- ²⁴ C. E. Krehbiel, "Daheim und Draußen," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 13 July 1937, 432; C. E. Krehbiel, "Propaganda," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 3 August 1937, 467.
- ²⁵ Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms*, 142.
- ²⁶ Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms*, 142; Kaufman, *Pioneers*, 284-291.
- ²⁷ John R. Thierstein, "Americans Adept Faultfinders," *The Mennonite*, 23 August 1937, 2.
- ²⁸ Later in the year, for example, he recommended to readers a letter from J. R. Mott of the Federal Council of Churches appealing for money for relief to China, Spain, and "Christian German" refugees. J. R. Mott, "An Appeal to American Christians to Help the Distressed," *The Mennonite*, 14 December 1937, 5.
- ²⁹ The best biography of Winrod is contained in several sections of Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).
- ³⁰ Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms*, 139.
- ³¹ Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms*, 138-40; Melvin Gingerich, *The Christian and Revolution* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1968), 133-35; James Schrag, "Gerald Burton Winrod: The Defender" (Social Science Seminar paper, Bethel College, 1966), 11, 38-40. In October 1937, for example, the *Mennonite Weekly Review* announced a series of meetings in Newton led by Winrod on the topic of "Communism and the Prophetic Destiny of the United States." "Arrange Bible Conference Here," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 27 October 1937, 2.
- ³² Ribuffo, *Christian Right*, 119-24; Juhnke, *Two Kingdoms*, 140; James Schrag, "Winrod," 23-32.
- ³³ John R. Thierstein, "God Still Directs Human Affairs," *The Mennonite*, 27 September 1938, 2.
- ³⁴ John R. Thierstein, "Is There No Difference?" *The Mennonite*, 27 September 1938, 1-2.
- ³⁵ P. H. Richert, "What is the Scriptural Attitude toward the Jews?" *The Mennonite*, 4 October 1938, 4-5; Robert Kreider and Robert Regier, "There Is No Difference," *Bethel Collegian*, 29 September 1939, 4.
- ³⁶ Michael Horsch, "A Meditation," *The Mennonite*, 4 October 1938, 5-6.
- ³⁷ Menno Schrag, "War Symptoms," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 14 September 1938, 5; "The World Will Remember Chamberlain," *Mennonite Weekly Review* 21 September 1938, 5; "The World Crisis and the Kansas Press," *Mennonite Weekly Review* 21 September 1938, 5; "Days of Anxious Waiting," *Mennonite Weekly Review* 28 September 1938, 5; "A War Which Was Won," *Mennonite Weekly Review* 12 October 1938, 5.
- ³⁸ John R. Thierstein, "Fear-Prayer," *The Mennonite*, 11 October 1938, 1; "A New Kind of Rearmament Needed," *The Mennonite*, 18 October 1938, 1.
- ³⁹ E. L. Harshbarger, "Out of the Czech Crisis," *The Mennonite*, 8 November 1938, 2.
- ⁴⁰ C. E. Krehbiel, "Daheim und Draußen," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 22 November 1938, 718-20.
- ⁴¹ John R. Thierstein, "An Unfortunate Situation," *The Mennonite*, 29 November 1938, 1.
- ⁴² John R. Thierstein, "Suggestions and Words of Caution Coming to the Editor," *The Mennonite*, 31 January 1939, 1.
- ⁴³ John R. Thierstein, "Dies, A Real Patriot," *The Mennonite*, 14 February 1939, 1; "No Room in the Inn," *The Mennonite*, 21 February 1939, 1.
- ⁴⁴ E. L. Harshbarger, "History Views the Jewish Persecutions," *The Mennonite*, 14 February 1939, 2; 21 February 1939, 3-4; 28 February 1939, 3-4; 7 March 1939, 4-5; 14 March 1939, 8-9; 25 April 1939, 5-6; 2 May 1939, 1-2.

⁴⁵ Adolf Friesen, "Our Choice Should Be Easy," *The Mennonite*, 28 March 1939, 3-4. Friesen is unidentified in the article, but is listed as the Donnellson, Iowa, pastor in *Year Book of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America 1939*, 47.

⁴⁶ John R. Thierstein, "The Problem of the Persecuted Jews," *The Mennonite*, 30 May 1939, 2.

⁴⁷ This conference brought the unification of the Northern and Southern Methodists and the smaller Protestant Methodist Church. See Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 921.

⁴⁸ John R. Thierstein, "A German Bishop Speaks to Mennonites," *The Mennonite*, 23 May 1939, 3-4; John J. Kroeker, "An Internationally Renowned Christian of Germany," *The Mennonite*, 23 May 1939, 4-5.

⁴⁹ Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The German Churches under Hitler: Background, Struggle, and Epilogue* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 224-27; John J. Kroeker, "Modernism Building a World Council of Churches," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 13 October 1937, 4; 27 October 1937, 2.

⁵⁰ Loewen, "Mennonite Pacifism," 18-21; Menno Schrag, "The Kansas Institute of International Relations," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 21 June 1939, 6.

⁵¹ Menno Schrag, "Institute," 6.

⁵² E. L. Harshbarger, "Are Peace Workers Communists?" *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 29 March 1939, 3; John J. Kroeker, "Peace Workers Cannot be Communists," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 5 April 1939, 5; Harshbarger, "Opponents of Peace Now Aid Communists," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 12 April 1939, 2; Kroeker, "Emotionalism Cannot Exonerate Peace Movements," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 19 April 1939, 6. The editor's notes at the beginning of each of these articles indicate that Menno Schrag was clearly uncomfortable with the heated controversy.

⁵³ Loewen, "Mennonite Pacifism," 17.

⁵⁴ John J. Kroeker to Hartung, 6 June 1939. Some of Kroeker's personal papers are in my possession. The vast majority of his surviving documents, however, are in the hands of his family and were unavailable for this paper.

⁵⁵ Interview with Menno Schrag, 1 March 1982, Newton, Kansas.

⁵⁶ "Seek Federal Investigation," *Evening Kansan-Republican*, 22 September 1939. I have been unable to locate the "New York date line" item mentioned in the article. This incident seems to have played a part in ending the KIIR. The KIIR was held at Bethel College again in 1940 with continuing support from the town Chamber of Commerce. The 1940 session had the highest overall attendance ever, 149, but the lowest Mennonite attendance of any of the sessions, 30 (20% of the total). After 1940, however, the institute was moved to Friends University in Wichita. The college administration apparently feared alienating the conservative part of its Mennonite constituency, represented by the criticisms of Kroeker, Krehbiel, Schrag, and others. They also feared that the pro-German overtones generated by critics of the institute would put Mennonites in general in a bad light with the non-Mennonite public. The article in the *Kansan* seems to exemplify this. Loewen, "Mennonite Pacifism," 22, 24-29; Mark Unruh, "E. G. Kaufman and the Kansas Institute of International Relations" (student paper, Wichita State University, 1990), 25-30. A copy of Unruh's paper can be found at the MLA.

⁵⁷ A Freedom of Information Act request to the FBI produced no records related to any such investigation.

⁵⁸ James Schrag, "Winrod," 28-29. Menno Schrag also related Kroeker's connections with Winrod. Schrag was in a position to know both men through his editorial work on the Mennonite newspaper and his company's printing contract with Winrod. Kroeker was acquainted with Winrod and was an occasional writer for Winrod's publications, often under pseudonyms. According to Schrag, Kroeker also knew some American far-right and anti-Semitic figures such as George E. Deatherage and Elizabeth Dilling and may have served as an occasional contact person between Winrod and such figures. [Deatherage and Dilling

were both accused along with Winrod in a mass sedition trial in 1944. See John D. Waltner, "Gerald B. Winrod and the Washington, D.C., Mass Sedition Trial of 1944" (student paper, Bethel College, 1968), 134.] Schrag reported that Winrod once gave Kroeker \$100 through Schrag to attend a meeting in Kansas City of "far rightist sympathizers," people with whom Winrod did not want to have open contact. Apparently this meeting produced no results for Winrod because Kroeker's alcoholism caused him to be an ineffective representative. One other fragment offered by Schrag is a story that a shortwave radio was offered to Bethel College so that students could listen to Hitler's speeches. Kroeker was accused of being behind this and the FBI was called in. They opened Kroeker's mail and looked through his trash.

⁵⁹ Nick Kroeker to family, 8 October 1939, John J. Kroeker papers.

⁶⁰ In October he proclaimed that, since the downfall of Poland, no war was really being fought and there would probably be an armistice. Europe "has sinned terribly with its continual warfare, murder and injustice" and Christians should pray that God will hold off his punishment of Europe in war. He also published an article by William H. Stauffer, the GC pastor in Sugarcreek, Ohio, that was sharply critical of Americans who favored aid to the Allies. "This is a European war; and it is none of our business except to stay out. I saw something of Hitler's abominable party machine. And certainly no one in his right mind can defend that. But I also know something of English Politics and History." England was acting in its own interests, not to defend Poland. America's "great moral responsibility" is to stay out of the war. In November Thierstein again stated his skepticism about the veracity and sincerity of Hitler, Chamberlain, and Daladier and claimed that anti-war sentiment was growing in all three countries. John R. Thierstein, "The War That Nobody Wants," *The Mennonite*, 17 October 1939, 13; William H. Stauffer, "Neutral Also in Thought," *The Mennonite*, 24 October 1939, 4-5; John R. Thierstein, "A Hide-and-Seek Game," *The Mennonite*, 7 November 1939, 13. Stauffer is listed as the Sugarcreek, Ohio, pastor in *Year Book of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America 1939*, 47.

⁶¹ Lorna L. Bergey, "Derstine, Clayton Freed," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990), 5:226-27.

⁶² C. F. Derstine, "Hitler with his Hands on the Jew," *Christian Monitor*, May 1933, 159.

⁶³ C. F. Derstine, "Fascism—Friend or Foe—Which?" *Christian Monitor*, October 1933, 318.

⁶⁴ C. F. Derstine, "Impressions of the Nazi Regime and Its Effect on the Churches," *Christian Monitor*, January 1934, 31; "A Glimpse at the World-Wide Growth of Anti-Semitism," *Christian Monitor*, July 1934, 222-23; "Hitler's Ten Commandments for the German Church," *Christian Monitor*, November 1934, 351.

⁶⁵ C. F. Derstine, "Hitler Starts Life Job as German Caesar," *Christian Monitor*, October 1934, 318.

⁶⁶ Harold S. Bender, "Horsch, John," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1956), 2:814-15.

⁶⁷ Derstine, "Hitler's Ten Commandments;" and "World Jewry Today—and the Protocols," *Christian Monitor*, February 1935, 62-63, reprinted in *Gospel Herald*, 28 February 1935, 1014-15.

⁶⁸ John Horsch to Orie O. Miller, 27 February 1935, folder "Correspondence 1930-1937," box 51, Peace Problems Committee papers, AMC-I-3-5.10, Archives of the Mennonite Church (hereafter AMC), Goshen, Indiana.

⁶⁹ Orie O. Miller to John Horsch, 2 March 1935, folder "Correspondence 1935 H-Z," box 6, John Horsch papers, AMC-Hist. Mss. 1-8.

⁷⁰ John M. Bender, "Miller, Orie O.," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 5:588-589.

⁷¹ Leonard Gross, "Bender, Harold Stauffer," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 5:66-67.

⁷² Harold S. Bender to John Horsch, 9 March 1935, folder "Correspondence 1935 A-G," box 6, John Horsch papers, AMC.

⁷³ C. F. Derstine, "Clearing the Atmosphere of Anti-Jewish Slander," *Christian Monitor*, April 1936, 126.

⁷⁴ Paul Landes to John Horsch, 21 July 1936, John Horsch papers, AMC.

⁷⁵ C. F. Derstine, "Is Europe Marching Back to 1914?" *Christian Monitor*, June 1936, 191; "Our Testimony and a Wartorn World," *Christian Monitor*, August 1936, 254-55; "The Threatening European Cataclysm," *Christian Monitor*, September 1936, 287-88; "The Showdown Between Marxism and Fascism," *Christian Monitor*, October 1936, 318.

⁷⁶ C. F. Derstine, "Nationalism the Supreme Rival of Christianity," *Christian Monitor*, February 1938, 61-62; "Hitler's Triumphant Entry into His Native Austria," *Christian Monitor*, April 1938, 126; "European Jewry in Distress," *Christian Monitor*, July 1938, 226-27; "The Imprisonment of Pastor Niemuller [sic]," *Christian Monitor*, July 1938, 227; "The Four Grim, Deadly Horsemen Halted in Europe," *Christian Monitor*, November 1938, 353-54.

⁷⁷ John Horsch, "Menno Simons on the Principle of Nonresistance," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 18 January 1939, 6; "The Position of the Early Mennonites as Regards the Principle of Nonresistance," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 25 January 1939, 5, and 1 February 1939, 4; "The Christian Conscience against War," *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 22 February 1939, 4, and 1 March 1939, 4; Christian Neff, "Menno Simons," *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1958), 3:77-90. Although volume 3 of the *Lexikon* is dated 1958, it actually came out in smaller installments (*Lieferungen*); the one containing the Menno Simons article appeared in 1938.

⁷⁸ A. Warkentin and Melvin Gingerich, *Who's Who among the Mennonites* (North Newton, KS: Bethel College Press, 1943), 82.

⁷⁹ Melvin Gingerich, "The Menace of Propaganda and How to Meet It," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 13 (April 1939): 123-34.

⁸⁰ C. F. Derstine to Harold S. Bender, 24 July 1939, file 1 "Derstine, C. F.," box 16, Harold S. Bender Papers, AMC-Hist.Mss. 1-278.

⁸¹ Harold S. Bender to John Horsch, 22 July 1939, file 6 "Horsch, John," box 18, Harold S. Bender papers, AMC.

⁸² James Schrag, "Winrod," 40; Gingerich, *Christian and Revolution*, 134.

⁸³ C. F. Derstine, "Jehovah's Judgments on Jew Jingo Nations," *Christian Monitor*, January 1939, 30; "The Climb of Stalin and Hitler to European Power," *Christian Monitor*, April 1939, 126-27; "The Lull in the European Storm," *Christian Monitor*, July 1939, 222-23; "The Christian Attitude in the Rising Tide of Anti-Semitism," *Christian Monitor*, September 1939, 286-87; "The Royal Words of Hope for Our War-Torn World," *Christian Monitor*, October 1939, 319; "War—Its Aim: To Stop One Man's March to Power," *Christian Monitor*, October 1939, 315, 319-20; "World War No. II Proves the Bible to Be True," *Christian Monitor*, May 1942, 158-59; "The Great Controversy between Christ and Antichrist," *Christian Monitor*, October 1942, 318-20.

⁸⁴ In 1946 the Subcommittee on War Mobilization of the Committee on Military Affairs of the U.S. Senate printed a set of Nazi party membership records recovered from a paper mill in Munich in 1945 by the U.S. Army, listing party members outside of Germany and Austria. It is, of course, impossible to tell with certainty who on the list might be a Mennonite or former Mennonite, but some clues can be found by surname and birthplace. The only name listed for the United States that looks like a probable Mennonite is Johann J. Janzen of Glendale, California. Janzen is listed as having been born at "Landgut Tamak" on 24 February 1881. Tokmak (for which Tamak is probably a misspelling) was a Ukrainian village on the edge of one the largest Mennonite settlements in southern Russia in the nineteenth century. Janzen is listed as being a farmer, residing at 431 West Doran Street, having joined the party on 1 March 1935, with a membership number of 3,603,956. There were a number of Mennonite churches in Los Angeles but nothing further is known about Janzen. *Nazi Party Membership Records, Submitted by the War Department to the Subcommittee on War Mobilization of the Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate, March, 1946, Part I. Senate, 79th Cong., 2d sess., Subcommittee Print.* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), pp. v, 7. See also *Part II*, August 1946, p. vii.

Nazi party membership was officially restricted to German citizens, so this makes it somewhat unlikely that any of the other Mennonites named in this paper were party members. None of the American Mennonites mentioned, even the ones born in Germany, was a German citizen as far as is known. Nazi party membership records are not necessarily complete or accurate.

⁸⁵ One interesting case concerning the DAI's attention to German-related publications deserves some corrective analysis. It is reported in a rather poorly written study by Arthur H. Smith, *The Deutschtum of Nazi Germany and the United States*. Smith's main concern is with the activities of the Deutsches Ausland-Institut in the United States and he reports one concrete incident seemingly connected with Mennonites. The German Embassy in Washington informed the DAI in early 1937 about "a young Pennsylvania German Mennonite," John Joseph Stoudt, who had written a book about how "the early German sects in Pennsylvania actually sought a 'Third Reich' in their new homeland." The embassy apparently urged the DAI to get in touch with Stoudt to help promote his book and invite him to visit Germany. [Arthur L. Smith, Jr. *The Deutschtum of Nazi Germany and the United States* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 39.]

Smith did not investigate this matter, but merely reported it as above. On further investigation, it seems to be an example of laughable ignorance and incompetence on the part of the German Embassy or the DAI. Stoudt's work was a publication of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society and was concerned with flower symbolism in Pennsylvania German folk art. The book apparently came to the Embassy's attention on account of Stoudt's unfortunate use of a number of Nazi buzzwords. Stoudt, however, seems to have been unaware of their Nazi meanings and used them with a non-political content. For example, he used the expression "Drittes Reich" not to refer to the New Germany but to the idea of the third age of the world in the thought of medieval mystic Joachim of Fiore, to whom Stoudt credited some of the themes in Pennsylvania German folk art. A number of times he used the German word "Führer" but always with the simple meaning of "leader" and never in a way that could be construed to refer to Hitler. At one place Stoudt used the expression "S-S" when describing the shape of the handles in a drawing of an urn. Of course, in discussing folk art, he frequently used the words "folk," "folklore," and even occasionally "folk soul." Although evidencing pride in his German cultural heritage, Stoudt never expressed opinions in his book that could be construed as sympathetic to Nazism. [John Joseph Stoudt, *Consider the Lilies, How They Grow: An Interpretation of the Symbolism of Pennsylvania German Art* (N.p., Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 1937). "Drittes Reich" on 68, "S-S handles" on 74, "Führer" on 95, 104, 123, 146.] Presumably someone associated with the Embassy—someone with only a limited knowledge of English—read the book and was misled by the apparent use of these Nazi catch-phrases.

In addition to this, Stoudt was not a Mennonite, although he probably had Mennonite ancestry. He was in fact ordained in 1936 in the Evangelical and Reformed Church. His 1937 book did not mention the Mennonites. Stoudt was an army chaplain during World War II and later became a professor of religious history in various Pennsylvania colleges and universities. He specialized in Pennsylvania German studies and was a prolific writer on Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania Dutch folklore into the 1970s. [*Contemporary Authors* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1975), 49-52:527-28.] This seems to be basically a case of the DAI grasping at straws to find American Nazi sympathizers.