

## IN THIS ISSUE

From the moment of its beginnings at the radical edges of the sixteenth-century Reformation, Anabaptism was a diasporic movement. Its early leaders provoked government officials by their disregard for political boundaries, traversing borders as zealous missionaries, persecuted refugees, and restless emigrants. Although many spiritual descendants of the Anabaptists would eventually become deeply rooted to the land, the more dominant motif of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition is one of movement—and, as an inevitable consequence, cross-cultural encounters.

In the opening essay of this issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, **Anicka Fast**, a PhD student at the Boston University Center for Global Christianity and Mission, describes a complex story of border crossing and intercultural engagement that unfolded in the 1920s and 1930s in the Congo. In 1920 when Aaron and Ernestina Janzen left the Congo Inland Mission to start a mission initiative in Kafumba, they hoped that the Mennonite Brethren in North America would provide financial support. When this support failed to materialize, the Janzens developed an independent self-supporting mission in which young Congolese converts became fully integrated into the Kafumba mission, not only in terms of church and social life, but also in various economic initiatives focused on vegetable, coffee, and palm oil production. Although M.B. mission administrators rejected the model the Janzens developed—regarding it as a colonialist, “station-centered” ministry—Fast’s careful archival and oral research suggests that the story looked quite different from the perspective of many Congolese. To be sure, the Janzens were indeed often blind to elements of paternalism and racism in their work. Yet Congolese participants recall the attempt to create an economically self-sufficient church community very positively. The church that emerged was racially integrated; local converts quickly took ownership of the missionary outreach; and the mission provided Congolese young people with an economic alternative to the highly exploitative palm oil industry controlled by outside companies. Though far from perfect, the effort at Kafumba to integrate church life, mission outreach, and economic self-sufficiency offers a fresh perspective on the larger story of Mennonite missions in the Congo.

**Ad van de Staaij**, a Dutch historian specializing in Russian history, narrates the story of a similarly fascinating, and equally complex, intercultural encounter that was unfolding at roughly the same time in a very different part of the world. In the early 1920s, in aftermath of the Russian Revolution, Mennonites and other residents of the Ukraine faced extreme economic hardship, including famine. Like their American

Mennonite counterparts, Dutch Mennonites responded to the crisis by creating a General Committee for Foreign Needs and raising money for relief supplies. At the center of these efforts, was Rein Willink, a colorful and energetic Dutchman who served as a crucial intermediary in transporting emergency relief supplies to victims of the 1922 famine, particularly to Mennonites in Molochna. Willink's role in the venture, however, became increasingly complicated as his entrepreneurial interests began to overshadow the work of humanitarian relief. Willink's story enriches—and complicates—the larger account of Dutch Mennonite relief efforts in south Russia.

The story of Mennonite immigration from south Russia to North America in the 1870s is relatively well-known. Faced with the loss of military exemptions, new pressures to integrate into Russian culture, and the reality of growing landlessness and poverty, some 18,000 Mennonites chose to leave the Ukraine in search of a new homeland in North America. Historians **Ernest Braun** and **James Urry** return to this familiar story with a fresh set of questions regarding the precise details of travel logistics, especially related to cost. In contrast to current policies, in the 1870s the Canadian government clearly regarded most immigrants as a net gain to the country's economic well-being. Thus, in addition to personal and congregational contributions, private loans, and discounts from train and steamer lines, subsidies from the Canadian government played a crucial role in the economic calculus of immigration. Braun and Urry break down the figures, and the many steps entailed in the daunting journey.

Finally, we close this issue with several contributions addressing a different kind of cross-cultural encounter—that of history memory. As Anabaptist-Mennonites prepare to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the movement's beginnings, **Kathrine Hill**, a historian of the Reformation, offers a critical reflection on the complications of collective memory regarding the anniversary. Her essay is followed by the translation of a newly-published pamphlet, *Gewagt!*, issued by German-speaking Mennonite and Baptist historical societies in Europe, that outlines their five-year plan for commemorating Anabaptist beginnings. Rounding out this conversation is a declaration issued recently by an international gathering of Anabaptist-Mennonite historians on the significance of preserving sources, enabling archival access, and cultivating historical memory as an expression of Christian identity.

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– John D. Roth, editor