Doopsgezinden, Refugees, and Colonists: The Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau, 1924–1938

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> The name of our city has, for many, both in Russia and America, already a very special sound![1]

In 1924, the Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau (HDEB) emerged from a spontaneous relief effort by Doopsgezinden (Dutch Mennonites) in Rotterdam. Initially, they received Mennonite refugees who passed through Rotterdam on their way from the Soviet Union to the Americas. After Stalin's emigration ban in 1930, they provided extensive construction aid to refugees who settled in Brazil.

The HDEB archive is not yet public and is only described in broad outline but contains material that is useful to the history of the Russländer Mennonites. It provides information about the support of Doopsgezinden for emigrants and victims of famine, the experience of spiritual and national kinship between Doopsgezinden and Russländer, and the Russländers' susceptibility to Nazism. This article aims to provide an impression of what the archive can offer researchers in terms of further research opportunities[2] by providing a global history of the HDEB's main activities—namely,[3] supporting refugees in transit in Rotterdam (1924–1929), supporting the last groups of refugees from Siberia (1929–1931), and providing

assistance in building a colony in Brazil (1931–1938). Although its name implies that the HDEB focused exclusively on emigrants, this is not the case. From 1929, it also supported persecuted and starving Mennonites who had remained in the Soviet Union.[4]

Refugees in Transit in Rotterdam, 1924–1929

In the spring of 1920, three Mennonite scouts from southern Russia[5] travelled to Europe and America. Their aim was to obtain support from fellow believers in order to rebuild areas battered by war and revolution. The Doopsgezinden subsequently founded the General Committee for Foreign Needs (ACBN) to organize this aid. Although the Doopsgezinden knew that many Mennonites saw no future in Bolshevik Ukraine, they did not want to support emigration because there was no space for refugees in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, they did help Benjamin Unruh, the scout who became the central contact for western Europe for Mennonites seeking emigration opportunities to Canada, South Africa, and Suriname. In 1922, the Doopsgezinden sent an expedition to Ukraine to save the Mennonites from starvation.[6]

In May 1924, a group of Mennonite emigrants from the Soviet Union set sail for Mexico. They took advantage of the stopover in Rotterdam to thank the Doopsgezinden for the famine relief they had received in Ukraine two years earlier. While there, Gerhard Klassen and Jacob Wiens walked into the local Doopsgezinde church on Pentecost (June 1) and heard preacher Simon Gorter talk about the Good Samaritan. After the sermon, they went up and thanked him. "That was the beginning of a close relationship," Gorter later recalled. He joined them at an emigrant hotel nearby where, in two attic rooms, he saw two large families with "an infant in a cupboard-drawer from Russia that had been converted into a cradle." Two days later, the Doopsgezinden received these families in the church. They were deeply moved by the stories describing hardships in Russia shared by "these people full of seriousness, courage of faith, and confidence. People so strange to us in some respects, but in many others so close to us by descent and in spirit."[7]

During the month of June, three more groups with dozens of Mennonites followed. In addition to a warm temporary home, they also needed medical care and clothing. Dr. M. P. Schütte, a Doopsgezinde physician, arranged hospital visits for those in need of medical support. At the end of the month, Gorter founded an aid committee that could appeal to all Dutch Doopsgezinden, although he did not expect that financial support on a large scale would be

necessary. Gorter approached the board of the ACBN, which agreed to his plans.[8] On July 24, the HDEB ("in English called the Dutch Mennonite Board of Emigration, D.M.B.E.") was established as a department of the ACBN. Its task was to offer "information, advice, and assistance to Mennonite emigrants who seek a new homeland for reasons of faith and travel through the Netherlands. In particular, it provides this assistance in difficult passport matters where the agency's mediation in diplomatic or other negotiations can be considered useful." The ACBN provided a starting capital of 1,000 guilders. The board consisted of Gorter as chair and secretary, Johannes T. de Monchy as treasurer, Dr. Matthijs Pieter Schütte, and Jan N. de Jong. It was, emphatically, not their intention that the HDEB would promote emigration from Soviet Russia.[9]

In the following years, approximately one thousand Mennonite emigrants passed through Rotterdam, with the bulk arriving between June 1924 and September 1926. They often came in small groups and usually stayed in an emigrant hotel near the church building on St. Laurensstraat.[10] Their length of stay could vary from a few days to several weeks, months, or, in some cases, even three years (while awaiting approval from the health inspectorate for Canada).[11] The HDEB provided pastoral care, financial and medical support, and housing for those who were unable to leave due to illness.[12] For each such individual, the Rotterdam Doopsgezinden and the HDEB contributed approximately 2.50 guilders per day for costs. After the establishment of the HDEB, some Doopsgezinde communities from across the Netherlands sent a monthly contribution.[13] In the autumn of 1927, Gorter organized a national collection. In total, this yielded approximately 10,000 guilders between 1924 and 1928.[14]

The emigrants attended church on Sundays, where Gorter preached to them in German. Sometimes they came together with Doopsgezinden in a short religious gathering (*Andacht*) where Gorter or a Russian brother spoke a spiritual word. There was plenty of room for prayer and song. The Rotterdam attendants experienced Mennonite singing as an impressive expression of solidarity, trust in God, and a strange type of piety that deeply touched them. To provide entertainment, the church room was filled with edifying German-language literature and children's toys. The Rotterdam Doopsgezinden took adults to model farms or livestock markets. For the children, they organized excursions.[15]

Large-scale financial support (such as covering the cost of passage to America) was not necessary. Most emigrants had sold their possessions in Russia and had used the proceeds to pay for their transportation. However, many refugees had no money for

additional expenses because they had been stripped of all belongings by the Soviet emigration authorities or robbed along the way. In Rotterdam, when some emigrants decided to rethink their destination, the HDEB assisted. The chances of success in Mexico appeared slim, as Mennonite colonists there had written to Gorter about the need to arm themselves to keep local bandits at bay.[16] Hence, the HDEB worked to obtain entry permission from the Canadian authorities and funded the cost of any required documentation. In addition, the Rotterdam Doopsgezinden paid for the care of the sick and donated agricultural tools and household goods to many destitute migrants passing through the city. Many emigrants had difficulty accepting the money and regarded it as a loan they would later repay.[17]

Medical assistance was also imperative for incoming migrants facing the strict requirements of the Canadian immigration authorities: only persons who were in good mental and physical health were allowed entry.[18] However, many refugees were weakened because of war, revolution, famine, and bad hygienic conditions on trains and boats. In 1923, the Canadian immigration doctors who had been sent to Europe turned down a quarter of the Mennonite refugees. Many suffered from trachoma. The sick found temporary shelter in a German camp near Lechfeld before they went to Rotterdam.[19] HDEB board member Dr. Schütte provided or arranged medical assistance for the sick while other Doopsgezinden visited emigrants who were in hospital. Prior to gaining permission to travel, emigrants requiring an extended period of recovery were often hosted by parishioners. Finally, much clothing was collected and distributed against the cold winter of 1926, but also because many emigrants had only winter clothing in the form of fur coats too warm for the Rotterdam spring and autumn.[20] The clothing often came from Doopsgezinden but, before Christmas 1925, Utrecht students also collected a large quantity.[21]

A year and a half into this venture, Gorter reflected on his meetings with the emigrants. This provides an interesting illustration of the different ways Doopsgezinden and Mennonites tried to identify in Rotterdam. One perspective was that of common origins in the Netherlands: the Mennonites appeared as "men and women with almost old Dutch virtues rarely seen any more in the twentieth century and in the midst of them one feels calm and safe. . . . The names of most of them still point to their Dutch origin. Facial features and figures speak of Germanic rather than Slavic blood. . . . [They are] a very sympathetic group of people . . . By no means cultured people, they are often of a high civilization . . . in particular their high degree of modesty is always striking. Some customs are reminiscent

of the Dutch meadows. Their entire behaviour expresses something that can be properly called mennist. . . . They are something in themselves. . . . Which does not mean that we feel like completely kindred spirits with the Russian Mennonites."[22]

Another perspective was that of gender. Since 1911, Doopsgezinden had ordained women as preachers, and Gorter's female assistant Dina Groenvelt[23] made some refugees frown their brows: "among our guests there are rigid conservatives . . . who view our assistant pastor with narrowly concealed misgiving, because the Bible states that women must remain silent in the congregation."

Last but not least, of course, was the religious aspect: "But there were also liberals with an open eye and ear who did not feel compelled to avoid dogmatic conversations. Moderns, often young people, also felt at home in the Rotterdam church and recognized that much that was lofty and Christian could be found in the foundations of communism. But all were characterized by a self-evident practical piety."[24]

At the time of Gorter's reflections, transit passenger numbers were already rapidly decreasing. The board started considering closing the agency. However, in autumn 1929, surprised by a sudden increase of Mennonites wanting to get out of the Soviet Union, they concluded that "instead of closure, expansion was necessary!"[25]

Siberians in Moscow and the Last Wave of Emigration, 1929–1931

The expansion of the HDEB's mandate resulted from Stalin's first experiments with agricultural collectivization in Siberia in 1928. Many Mennonite farmers were subjected to exorbitant taxes, terror, and persecution. Stalin considered the experiment a success and decided to collectivize the whole country in October. In the summer of 1929, a significant number of Mennonites decided there was no future for them in the Soviet Union. Seventy families travelled to Moscow, obtained visas for Canada, and arrived in Germany in early September.[26] Subsequently, thousands of predominantly Siberian Mennonites also attempted the same strategy in Moscow. Meanwhile, in Canada, public opinion was turning against receiving even more Mennonites.[27] What were the options for those denied permission to enter Canada? The Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the emerging economic crisis rapidly reduced opportunities in the United States. The refugees were caught between the Canadian government, which did not want to take them in at the time, and the Soviet government, which only gave permission for emigrants to leave when there was a country that would receive them. German

reporters in Moscow presented the predominantly Mennonite refugees as fellow Germans persecuted by Stalin. The increasingly anti-Stalinist mood of the German public put pressure on both Stalin and the German government. In November, in cooperation with other religious groups, Unruh founded Brüder in Not (Brothers in Need) to accommodate the refugees. The organization received support from Paul von Hindenburg, president of the Weimar Republic. At the end of November, the German government agreed to receive the refugees temporarily, on the assumption that there would be countries that would receive the immigrants in the spring. On November 25, 4,000 Mennonites, 1,200 Lutherans, and almost 500 Catholics left the Soviet Union. They arrived in Germany completely destitute. Until the spring of 1930, the German government funded their shelter and advanced 945,000 Reichsmarks to afford the refugees "passage to their new homes."[28] The North American Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) agreed to arrange for repayment of this travel debt.[29]

In the Netherlands, the HDEB started a large collection on December 1, 1929. Gorter's motivation was not only to help the refugees but also to encourage the community life of Dutch Doopsgezinden. Assisting these Mennonites made them aware of being part of a larger community and of their ability to make a meaningful contribution to it.[30] Cornelis Sybrand Altmann became the organization's treasurer.[31]

By the end of 1929, the Dutch press took note of the Siberian Mennonites' journey. Initially, the Dutch newspapers followed the lead of German counterparts in describing the fate of those "German" farmers and "German-Russian emigrants." Reactions to these depictions soon followed. A journalist for *Het Vaderland* (The fatherland) argued on November 11 that the refugees were not Germans, but rather "a distant offshoot of the Dutch tribe" who had decorated their land with hedges and windmills so familiar to the Dutch landscape. A series of articles about these "Dutch and German Russian farmers" followed in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*. Its author pointed out the tribal relationship ("stamverwantschap") between Russian Mennonites and the Dutch. This was evident from their surnames and appearance, the windmills, and the layout of the farms they had been forced to leave behind.[32]

Conversations with the refugees showed that they had left not only because of collectivization, but also because they had witnessed their freedom of religion suppressed. Pastors began to draw attention to the refugees in a series of anti-communist publications in which they addressed Stalin's religious persecution.[33] Gradually, the Dutch press abandoned the tripartite Dutch-Russian-German

designation and began to describe the refugees as "Russian Doopsgezinden." In the summer of 1930, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* resumed its series, this time under the headline "Russia and Its Dutch-German Colonies." In addition to giving attention to the now well-known ancestral relations (the Mennonites *were* "one of the noblest, bravest branches of the Dietsch-Germanic primordial tribe"), its author expressed an ambiguous appreciation for Bolshevik communism, arguing that before 1917, Mennonites in the Russian empire had developed a "model state"[34] built on a Christian sense of community that shared some similarities with communism. The author was confused as to why this "model state" was demolished by Russian revolutionary violence.[35]

In January 1930, Gorter began visiting Doopsgezinde congregations to raise money. Under the heading "Exodus of the Russian Doopsgezinden," he kept the Doopsgezinden informed about the situation of the refugees with a series of articles in their biweekly magazine, the *Zondagsbode*.[36] He steered clear of politics by not criticizing Stalin's economic and religious policies, because he did not want to endanger support for those left behind in the Soviet Union. Neither did he refer to tribal ties based on origins in the Netherlands or to ties to Germany through the German language.[37] Nonetheless, he believed that historic ties to "Holland" had an enchanting effect on the Russian Mennonites because they had lived there in the distant past. Furthermore, two centuries of living in German areas had strongly shaped them, more than their time in Russia.[38] Gorter's actions were very successful. By January 19, 30,000 guilders had been raised.[39] What to do with this large amount of money? In mid-January 1930, Gorter and de Jong visited the refugee barracks in Mölln, Prenzlau, and Hammerstein. They met "the very modest [refugees], as if outcasts from the world, who had only been able to save their bodies and some meagre possessions." Gorter and de Jong noted that there were schoolrooms where Mennonite "teachers can again give their lessons freely."[40] They concluded that the German government and Brüder in Not had arranged the shelter well. They spoke to Unruh and promised him that the HDEB would provide more help if necessary.[41] This meant the HDEB provided additional assistance in the next months.

In Mölln, out of a total of eight hundred refugees, there was a portion (likely less than one hundred) that could not go to Canada because they had failed the medical examination (largely due to trachoma). Two hundred members of this group were also impoverished, as they had no support from relatives in North America. The HDEB gave 10,000 guilders to care for them for six months.[42] When the German government's support stopped on February 1, 1931,

there were still four hundred refugees in the barracks. Given a serious shortage of clothing, the Doopsgezinde Miss Ens started a large collection campaign for the HDEB in Deventer. At the beginning of May, she was able to send 76 crates of clothing to Germany filled with "1,160 dresses and blouses, 500 coats, 150 overcoats, 200 suits, 545 pairs of shoes, 500 hats and caps, more than 2,200 pieces of underwear, 480 pairs of stockings, etc. etc.," often supplemented with small gifts such as "a filled tobacco box[,] . . . a nice piece of soap[,] . . . a doll, a ball[,] . . . a purse with a few coins put in a shoe[,] . . . a whole box of self-made toys, and . . . a bottle of eau de cologne."[43]

In addition to the refugees in Germany, the HDEB also extended support to Russländers who fled across other Soviet land borders. In 1927, to avoid religious persecution, Mennonites formed four communities near Blagoveshchensk, not far from the Chinese border. When collectivization started the following year, they crossed the frozen Amur River to Harbin, China. Although the reception of refugees in this large city was well organized, foreign support was welcome. Another separate small group of emigrants had a perilous escape from the Soviet Union in fall 1928.[44] They crossed the border into Persia (Iran). The nine Mennonites and six Lutherans in this group were briefly imprisoned. They earned a meagre living by working in a spirits factory. In the spring of 1930 and in February of 1931, the HDEB contributed a total of more than 5,000 guilders for the refugees in Harbin and approximately 4,000 guilders for the journey of the emigrants in Persia to Mölln, via Baghdad, Beirut, and Triest.[45]

These examples indicate the breadth of HDEB activities in 1930–1931. When the collection of funds ended in May 1931, over 95,000 guilders had been raised.[46] The majority of these funds would ultimately be devoted to a new colonization initiative in Brazil.

The Rotterdam "Godson": Brazil, 1930–1938[47]

When Gorter and de Jong were in Mölln in January 1930, they met Heinrich Martins, the former chairman of the Krimer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein (Crimean Agricultural Society). He had been one of the informal leaders during the 1929 march on Moscow and had arrived in Kiel in November looking for a South American alternative to Canada.[48] He found support from leaders of the Mennonite diaspora Harold Bender and Benjamin Unruh. The German government encouraged migration to Brazil because there were already many German colonies in the country and the labour market

could incorporate new immigrants.[49] Unruh agreed with the choice of Brazil because he felt its ethnic enclaves would prevent Mennonites from ending up in Catholic, "romanische Länder."[50] Gorter discussed this possibility with Martins and the two decided to invest the major portion of the Dutch financial support in building colonies in Brazil. Gorter promised Martins reconstruction funds, gave him 1,000 guilders travel allowance, and personally waved goodbye when the first group of 179 Russian Mennonites left for Brazil on January 16, 1930. Gorter described the decision as an intervention of Providence; however, earlier bad experiences with Mexico may have played a role. Gorter had no choice but to rely on Providence, since he had no direct experience in Brazil nor any idea of the possibilities it offered. Back in the Netherlands, his best recourse was advice from Dr. Zeno Kamerling. Having been to Brazil in 1911 and 1913, Kamerling had written the two series of articles in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* and joined the board as secretary in September.[51] Gorter knew that in the seventeenth century Dutch soldiers had occupied northern Brazil. In contrast to this history, Russian Mennonites would bring their "Dutch spirit" to Brazil peacefully as a "penetration pacifique."[52] Gorter gained confidence in his decision and the Rotterdam Doopsgezinden began to regard the refugees in Brazil as their "godchildren."[53]

When the refugees arrived in Brazil they were initially supported by employees of the Hanseatische Kolonisationsgesellschaft (HKG). This German organization was responsible for the colonization of Brazil. The German government had made an agreement with the HKG that the latter would care for the colonists until their first harvest, after which they should be able to fend for themselves.[54] Although prospects in Brazil seemed promising (a temperate climate, well-organized German colonies, and favourable conditions from the German government), the reality was disappointing.[55] Because the Mennonites in Germany had hastily chosen Brazil as their destination and the HKG did not know how many would eventually come, the HKG employees advised the emigrants to settle on the Rio Krauel. The rather small valley was surrounded by mountains on three sides. Incoming settlers had previously been provided with an HKG manual that had been printed in Hamburg. It presented a realistic picture of how colonists had to prepare the jungle for cultivation by hand and stated that it would take at least a few years to earn some profit.[56] Although most immigrants remembered the recent colonization of the Siberian steppe, many felt discouraged when they arrived in the subtropical, dense, jungle-covered area of southern Brazil—a very different environment. They were used to having large areas of arable land and machines to cultivate them. Now they

were faced with small parcels of land that they first had to clear by hand, without the prospect of eventually establishing large estates characteristic of the wealthiest Mennonites in the "lost paradise" of southern Russia and Siberia.[57] Because the valley was relatively narrow, newcomers had to form their communities farther and farther upstream. The resulting distance and consequent isolation between the first community and the last was significant. By the summer of 1930, so many immigrants populated the valley that the last groups had to settle on the Stolz plateau, which was difficult to reach and not very fertile.

The refugees had intended to form a closed community according to Russian tradition. This turned out to be impractical, because Brazilian law did not allow for the election of a *Schulze* (village mayor) who could maintain order with a small Mennonite police force. However, the law did allow for the formation of a cooperative. This meant the director of the cooperative would be the only leader given legal status under Brazilian law. This made the colony difficult to govern.[58]

Shortly after his arrival in Brazil, Martins wrote to Gorter about the colony's needs: a small church building, a school, a small hospital, and a half-ton truck. The HDEB board devised a plan to provide the requested help. This included money for each of the hundred families to buy a dairy cow (assuming that a cow cost about 100 guilders) as well as funds for materials needed for a church, school, and barrack for medical care. Based on the information from the HKG, the board concluded that "everything is thoroughly organized in the German fashion," and was confident its money would be properly spent. In April 1930, treasurer Altmann sent 20,000 guilders to Brazil.[59] As long as there was no clear administration in the colony, the HDEB worked closely with Bruno Meckien, director of the HKG office in Hansa-Hammonia, and his advisor for the Mennonite settlements, Dr. Samuel Lange. The board transferred the money to Lange, who then used it for the colony.[60]

To give impetus to the ongoing collection of funds, Gorter suggested naming the first community Witmarsum, after the birthplace of Menno Simons. Martins did him this favour and, in July, Gorter immediately reported the happy fact in the *Zondagsbode*. The evocative name was quickly incorporated into active fundraising. According to Gorter, the colonists wanted to honour not only Menno but also the "Dutch Doopsgezinden of the past and present. . . . And if you would like to contribute a stone or a few planks to the construction of New Witmarsum, send the money to us!"[61] The other communities on the Krauel were christened Gnadental and Waldheim, and the community on the Stoltz plateau was named Auhagen.

In August 1930, Martins and Lange requested assistance from Gorter for additional schools, churches, hospitals, wages for teachers, a salary for Martins, and a loan for twenty years. Part of this loan was intended as starting capital for a cooperative. The HDEB board agreed. At the end of 1930, the colonists founded the producer and consumer cooperative Sociedade Cooperativa Witmarsum (SCW), with Heinrich Löwen as its director. In January 1931, the HDEB lent the SCW 17,000 guilders as starting capital and supplemented this with another 8,000 for the purchase of cows.[62] By this time the first harvest had finished and the support from the HKG had ended. Colonists were now on their own.

In January 1931, there were still about three hundred refugees in Mölln who wanted to go to Brazil. Due to the economic crisis, the German government was no longer able to pay for the crossing. Shipping companies no longer offered trips on credit.[63] Unruh, Gorter, the Red Cross, and the HKG negotiated with the German government. When the HDEB agreed to provide care for the last group to arrive in Brazil, the German government decided to pay for half of the cost of passage and assume the debt for the other half.[64]

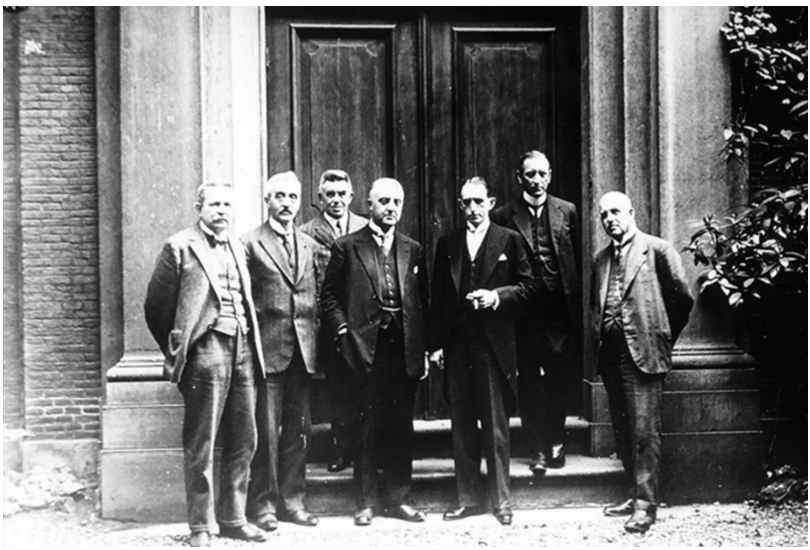

Figure 1. HDEB board with Dr. Lange, in front of the entrance to the Mennonite church, 1931.[65]

In spring, Lange visited the Netherlands. During a lecture in Rotterdam on May 8, he said that although the challenges were great, the colonists could meet them thanks to "the 'methodically' organized emigration . . . and the wonderful human material that was found in the Russian brothers." For him the emigrants excelled in

adaptability, perseverance, deep faith, and a strong sense of family and community. Martins and Löwen were leaders who persisted because they knew they were supported by the "spiritual and psychological support that connects a colony with the furthest circles [of the diaspora]."[66] Martins, newly re-elected as leader, confirmed this image: Brazilian dignitaries had visited Witmarsum and were deeply impressed. Nevertheless, the initial harvest was disappointing, and he expected that help from abroad would still be needed the next year.[67] On July 17, the eve of the departure of the last group, Gorter spoke on national radio about his satisfaction with the fundraising campaign which had ultimately yielded some 150,000 guilders. Most of this was spent on accommodating emigrants to Brazil in Mölln, their journey to Witmarsum, and building a new community in Brazil.[68]

Because its fund was nearly depleted, the board announced a new fall collection period. In the short term, 25,000 guilders were required to provide care for the last group of emigrants. The same amount was needed for the cooperative, medical aid, school, and church. Just as in 1930, the HDEB wanted to provide every newly arrived family with a cow. This *Holländerkuh* became the symbol of the collection campaign. The Kampen preacher Cornelis Vis designed a card to facilitate collection. It depicted a cow divided into sections suggesting donations of 10, 25, or 50 cents, and had the message "Support the Mennonites in Brazil. Foodstuffs, church and school construction, livestock." Each affirmative response to the card brought a donation of up to five guilders.[69]

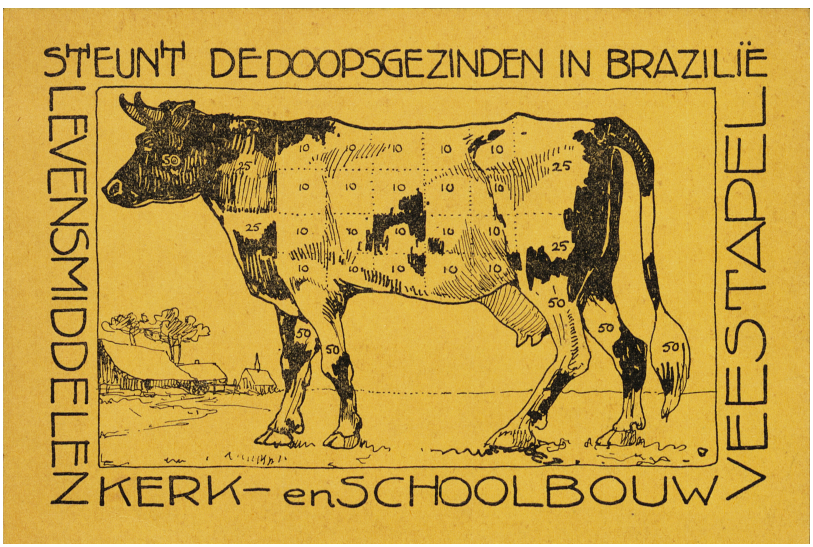

Figure 2. Cornelis Vis's *Holländerkuh* donation card.

Although it met the initial goal of providing for care of migrants by the beginning of October, the collection campaign subsequently stagnated.[70] While Gorter had provided extensive and optimistic reports on developments in Brazil in the *Zondagsbode* between the end of 1929 and mid-1931, no new information on the venture was published during the following two years.[71]

After the first harvest in early 1931, HKG care stopped. A few months later, the first leadership crisis occurred.[72] In August, settlers from Waldheim, predominantly Siberians from Omsk, protested against Martin's re-election. Like Unruh, he was from Crimea, and had relied on a mandate from his colleague when elected. The Waldheimers refused to concede the election, whereupon Unruh angrily reacted with an ultimatum: either they submit to Martins or support would stop.[73] Shortly afterwards it became apparent that Martins had not acted in the Mennonite tradition of collegial, rather than individual, leadership, and that Lange often behaved in an authoritarian manner. Unruh and the HDEB board decided that Lange would continue to manage the money, cautioned Martins to cooperate better with Lange, and called the Waldheimers to order. By October, peace seemed to have returned.[74] Lange returned to Germany at the beginning of 1932 and Martins was given management of the funds after all. However, the previous two years had taken too much of his energy. During the spring of 1932, he resigned from his administrative duties and restricted himself to a more modest contribution to the community from the beautiful house that he had been able to buy with Rotterdam allowances.[75]

To achieve the proper election of a new leader, Unruh approached Peter Klassen in Germany to request he serve as a mediator. Klassen arrived in spring 1932.[76] Due to the opposition of the Waldheimers, cooperative director Löwen had not received majority support to launch a new enterprise, a factory to produce starch from aipim roots. He asked the HDEB for a large loan to start the factory as a private company, but the HDEB board thought the money should benefit the cooperative, not private entrepreneurs.[77] In the meantime, Klassen asked for additional money for distressed settlers. The board had the impression that some SCW members had made investments in horses and chopping machines, which were considered extravagant at the time. In their response to the situation, the board's members expressed the opinion that the wealthier members of the colony should help the needy. They decided to allocate the money left in the treasury as follows: one Brazilian *conto* per month (about 250 guilders) for emergencies during the next nine months, salaries for four teachers, and the construction of another

school. It gave the remaining 2,400 guilders as credit for the aipim factory and decided not to start a new collection.[78]

At the same time, the number of Mennonite refugees in Harbin grew. They could not go to Canada. Kamerling suggested New Guinea, but North American aid organizations chose Paraguay.[79] However, there was no money to support their passage to Paraguay, and the Chinese government threatened to send the refugees back to the Soviet Union. The Nansen International Office for Refugees, established by the League of Nations in 1930, was willing to give an advance and the MCC took on a debt of a quarter of a million dollars. This enabled almost eight hundred refugees to leave for Paraguay via Le Havre in the spring. The HDEB contributed twenty-three boxes of clothing. One hundred and eighty refugees still remained in Harbin. Unruh managed to raise the required $25,000 with pledges from various organizations.[80] Among them, the HDEB guaranteed $4,000 and started a new collection in the summer of 1933. Pastor Vis made another postcard, this time not with a cow but a map depicting the route from Harbin to South America. The HDEB also distributed a photo of a refugee with a child in Le Havre (the "Mennonite Madonna") and advised buyers to hang this picture in their living rooms to encourage visitors to make gifts.[81] Nevertheless, collecting for the Harbin refugees was difficult because the Doopsgezinden were, at the same time, collecting for victims of the famine in Ukraine, which was at its worst in early 1933. In August 1933, Unruh sent his confidant Jakob Quiring to South America to explore options for the refugees.[82]

In the spring of 1933, Adolf Hitler established his power in Germany. Currents of National Socialist thought were reflected in *Die Brücke*, the bimonthly magazine Klassen had been publishing in Witmarsum since the summer of 1932. The Nazi sympathizer Dr. Julius Schaake, a distant relative of Unruh, had travelled throughout South America in 1933. At the end of that year, he published a brochure in which he discussed the national identity of the Mennonites who had fled from Russia. According to him, they were not Germans but formed an "International" which was "Dutch in spirit and blood." Apparently, they created obstacles in their schools for non-Mennonite German children. Löwen responded by saying that the Dutch were "Germans more racially pure than those who had absorbed all kinds of Slavic and other elements," adding that the requirement of extra school fees for German children was a fabrication. Gorter joked in the *Zondagsbode* that he took the characterization of the Dutch "International" as a compliment and pointed out that the HDEB paid most teachers' salaries.[83] In the spring of 1934, Quiring joined the discussion. Schaake, he said, was not a real Nazi

because he had advocated having pure-bred Mennonites serve in an army with other population groups. In addition, Schaake, in contrast to Nazi family policy, had criticized the Mennonites' propensity to have large families instead of lauding the "wealth of children produced by these healthy German people." Finally, he alleged that Schaake had been convicted of homosexuality and falsely claimed his title as doctor.[84] In May, Unruh sent Gorter the not very reassuring message that Quiring was involved in the selection of books for the schools in Paraguay and Brazil. Quiring, he wrote, took great care to ensure that there was no obscene literature (*Schund*) but indeed sufficient copies of Nazi magazines such as the *Völkische Beobachter* and *Der Angriff*.[85]

Around the same time, the remaining 180 refugees in Harbin chose to go to Brazil. They left in June 1934 and received clothing from the Netherlands during their stopover in France. After their arrival in Witmarsum, Klassen asked for 2,500 guilders to care for the newcomers. Gorter was able to send him 1,500. At the end of 1934, the HDEB started a collection for the construction of the hospital, which ultimately raised 1,700 guilders.[86]

During 1935 and 1936, the colony developed slowly. The leadership problem was still not solved because Klassen and Löwen prevented the free election of a new leader. While Klassen managed the *Hollandkasse* (Dutch fund), Löwen acted as de facto leader by virtue of his position as cooperative director. Once Klassen had deposited funds for the hospital with the cooperative, Löwen had delayed hiring an accountant, which meant that the SCW's finances left much to be desired. As a result, the construction of both the starch factory and the hospital proceeded slowly. Young people, having lost faith in a future in Witmarsum, found work in larger towns as labourers or domestic servants. Resistance to Klassen and Löwen grew to the extent that, in December 1936, the majority of the community chose a new direction and a new leader, David Nikkel. Löwen was convinced that the colony's economy would collapse with his departure and wrote a very critical article against the new course in *Die Brücke*. The crisis in the organization's leadership became apparent.[87]

These events took the HDEB board by surprise. The great distance had prevented the organization from correctly interpreting information from Brazil. It had relied too much on the advice of Unruh, who knew important players such as Klassen well but who now turned out to have erred in his judgments.[88] The board's trust in Unruh had been damaged by his unconditional support for Quiring (who had since changed his Jewish-sounding first name to Walter). Gorter had met Unruh and Quiring during the Mennonite World

Congress in Elspeet in 1936, where Quiring's arrogance and bluntness left a bad impression. A gap between Mennonites in democratic countries and those in Germany had opened there. Unruh complained about the former's criticism of Hitler and argued for a more pragmatic attitude because Stalin's Soviet Union was the greater evil. He could not understand that the Dutch Doopsgezinden regarded Hitler and Stalin as equally reprehensible and he found the Doopsgezinden "too lenient towards Moscow."[89] When it turned out that Quiring was back in Brazil and involved in the leadership crisis, the HDEB board became very concerned.[90] Quiring tried to support Nikkel by intimidating Klassen. The latter then complained to Gorter, who gave him his support. To Unruh, Gorter expressed his surprise about the behaviour of Quiring, who was, after all, only a guest of the colony.[91] Unruh stood up for Quiring and justified his heavy-handed approach: "Klassen definitely needs a good whipping. I will see that he is not beaten to death [underlined by Altmann] because this he does not deserve. Police are needed to restore order."[92]

Nevertheless, Gorter and Altmann began to see that Nikkel deserved the benefit of the doubt. When Nikkel wanted to subordinate *Die Brücke* to the new leadership, Klassen appealed to the importance of a free press in the colony. Altmann supported Nikkel, arguing that the press should be subordinate to the goals of the community.[93] At the same time, the HDEB board remained extremely critical of Quiring's role and clearly indicated that Dutch support would stop if the colony descended into Nazism. Annoyed, Unruh wrote to Nikkel: "If someone in the Netherlands no longer wants to help, because Bro. Quiring is a National Socialist, then he must justify that to his conscience and to God."[94] For Unruh, Hitler was a William of Orange, a Washington, who, together with western Europe, would defeat Stalin.[95]

Unruh's Nazi sympathy increasingly became a problem for the Doopsgezinden. Nazis had harassed a Hutterite community for months and used tax evasion as a pretext for the Gestapo to raid the community. In May 1937, their members fled Germany. The Doopsgezinden regarded them as Mennonites, welcomed them warmly, and helped them move on to England. But Unruh did not consider them Mennonites and asked Gorter for some understanding of the Gestapo's action. Gorter responded in the *Zondagsbode*: "It is like kicking someone's leg and then reproaching him for not being able to walk!"[96] Unruh apparently did not get the message, because shortly afterwards he recommended that Gorter fill a teacher's vacancy in Witmarsum with Heinrich Janzen, "a National Socialist and good Christian. Very sympathetic!"[97] Furthermore,

Unruh regarded the Mennonites as Germans and hindered their integration in Brazil. He wrote to Altmann, "We are Germans and only want to become better ones."[98] Based on this conviction, Unruh pointed to a "wonderful" lecture by a member of the Nazi government who called for international recognition of the rights of German minorities. A reader of the *Zondagsbode* wondered in response: why ask other countries to respect the rights of German minorities, and trample on those of the Jewish minority in their own country?[99] Some Doopsgezinden followed attentively the developments in Brazil. They worried that the colony would become "an object of German national socialist propaganda" and advised the HDEB board to strengthen the ties with the colony to prevent this.[100]

In the autumn of 1937, Klassen and Löwen left Witmarsum and Quiring returned to Germany. The leadership crisis seemed resolved. Although Altmann admitted afterwards that he may have judged Quiring too harshly in cleaning up the Brazilian "Augean stable," the HDEB's confidence in Unruh had suffered a major blow.[101]

"We are finally tired of the endless bickering": The End of Support, 1938

At the end of 1937, the HDEB board discussed continuing its support for Mennonites in Brazil. In early 1938, when Altmann reported he was short of money, the board decided not to start a new collection immediately and restricted itself to asking a select group of donors to help. It was unclear to what extent the colonists still needed help and how great was the risk that support would promote Nazi ideas. Altmann had restored contact with Martins at the end of 1936. Martins was no longer living in Witmarsum but was still involved in the colony. He spoke and taught Portuguese and did not show the fanatical attitude towards German and the *Deutschtum* that Unruh did. For the HDEB he was a kindred spirit and a more reliable informant than Unruh.[102]

In addition to the correspondence with Martins, Altmann tried to obtain information from the Dutch diplomatic representation in Brazil. In February 1938, he wrote to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the HDEB had already spent 110,000 guilders on Witmarsum. Therefore, he wished to know whether the colonists could provide for their livelihood now and in the near future, and "whether there are indications that their relationship with other countries, especially Germany, should give us reason . . . [to question] whether or not the specifically Dutch support campaign should be continued."[103] Two months later, the envoy, Mr. Schuller van

Peursum, replied. He had not been able to conduct an investigation, but information from people who had recently been to the area gave him the impression that the settlers could be self-sufficient. He added that, because the colonies had a strong German influence, the residents spoke German, and the "Nazi party fuer Auslanddeutsche" was quite active, the relationship between these groups and the Brazilian government "would not always be cordial." Brazilian Integralists, fascists who supported the slogan "Brazil for the Brazilians," were active in the area. As soon as he could conduct an investigation on the ground, he would do so.[104]

The board did not wait for this. The leadership in Witmarsum had resumed its quarrels and Altmann took stock of the financial situation. Since 1929, the HDEB had collected almost 180,000 guilders and used this money to help Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union.[105]

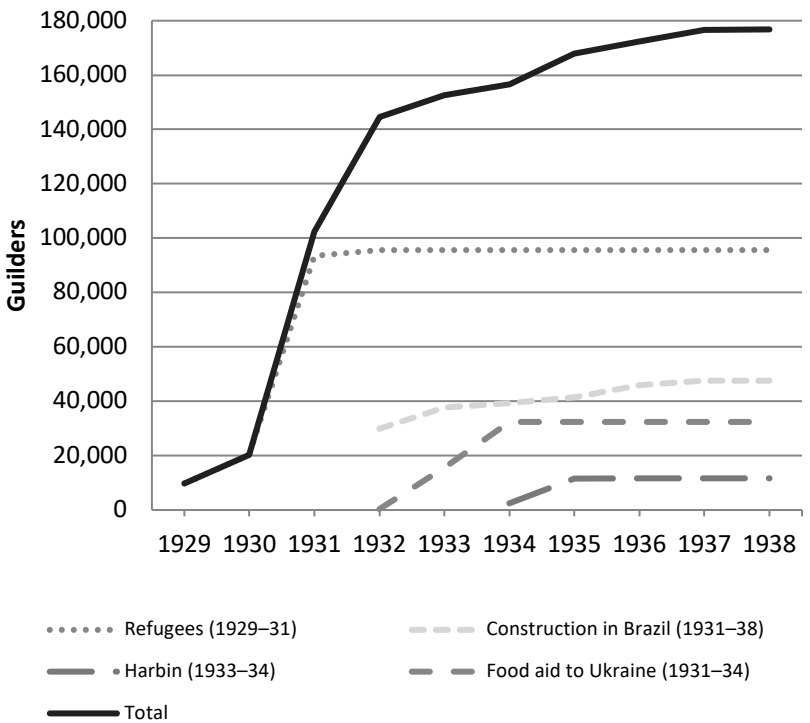

Figure 3. Accumulated amounts of funds collected by HDEB, 1929–1938.

On May 27, he wrote to Unruh that the board members were "finally starting to get tired of the incessant bickering between the

colonists" and that there were groups in Europe that need the help of Dutch Doopsgezinden more than the colonists in Brazil, even though he realized that the fighting often had economic causes. They could keep the *Hollandkasse,* and divide the funds them amongst themselves, but the HDEB would not organize a new collection.[106] A month later, MCC leader Harold Bender startled the colonists by announcing that they still owed a significant debt to the German government through the MCC.[107] From the German government, Unruh succeeded in obtaining a deferment of payment and a waiver of interest for the first years.[108] Because the HDEB knew about the precarious financial situation of the settlers, the board cancelled their debts to the HDEB on November 10. The colonists were allowed to pay their debts to the SCW, so that the money remained to benefit the development of the colony.[109] Unruh and Nikkel were astounded by such magnanimity. They agreed that the colonists did not deserve this at all, because of their bickering and rude behaviour.[110]

On November 9, the *Reichspogrom* in Germany put an end to aid from Dutch Doopsgezinden to Mennonites from Russia. A few weeks later, the ACBN resumed its activities. This time they offered help to Jews who fled the "new Germany."

Conclusion

The HDEB archive is a rich source for the history of the relations of Dutch Doopsgezinden and Russian Mennonite refugees. A first sketch of the history of the HDEB, based on archival materials, shows how both groups identified along perspectives of origin, gender, religion, and nationality. This identification motivated the Doopsgezinden to generously support Mennonite refugees in general and, specifically, those who founded colonies in Brazil.

From 1924 until 1930, the Doopsgezinden and Russian Mennonite refugees identified primarily on aspects of shared religious origins in the Netherlands, although the predominantly agricultural Mennonites had difficulties accepting the fact that women could preach in the services of the urban Rotterdam Doopsgezinden. From 1930, most of the 150,000 guilders the Doopsgezinden collected was invested in the development of the Brazilian colonies.

Around 1934, tensions arose over matters of national identity. Influenced by German Mennonites with Nazi sympathies, like Unruh and Quiring, the Brazilian Mennonites appeared to change from a religious into a German national group. Although national identification was no issue for the Doopsgezinden, insufficient distancing from Nazi politics was. Because the Nazi threat was increasing at

the Dutch border, Doopsgezinden were no longer willing to give donations to support Brazilian colonists who seemed susceptible to Nazi propaganda. Besides continuing leadership problems and the assumption that the colonies were ready to survive without foreign help, this was an important reason for the HDEB to end its support in 1938.

Notes

The author is grateful for the valuable comments of Carola Sosef, Josephine Braun, Jan Pendergrass, and an anonymous reviewer.

1 *Maandblad van de Doopsgezinde Gemeente te Rotterdam,* Mar. 1926, Stadsarchief Rotterdam (Rotterdam City Archives) (SAR), inv. 27C/5000/42 (hereafter cited as *Maandblad*).

2 During the bombing of May 14, 1940, the church with the archive of the Doopsgezinde community of Rotterdam was nearly completely destroyed. What remained were documents that board members kept at home, especially the archive of treasurer Altmann. This archive is extensive but incomplete. Little remains of the period up to 1929. Documents from the archives of the community in the SAR, inv. no. 27, partially fill this gap. The HDEB archive is temporarily housed at the Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek (Amsterdam). It will be freely accessible after it has been transferred to the city archives of Rotterdam or Amsterdam.

Both archives provide a provisional inventory. A first inventory for the HDEB is Appendix I in Jeanet van Woerden-Surink, "Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau, 1924–1940" (proponent thesis, Doopsgezind Seminarium, 1999), the first scholarly history of the HDEB (hereafter cited as "HDEB"). I refer to this inventory as HDEB(o). Jelle Bosma has almost finished a more detailed inventory, which I will refer to as HDEB(n). For SAR inv. 27, Loek Nijholt has drawn up a provisional placement list for the period after 1908. All *Maandbladen* can be found in SAR 27C/5000/42.

3 Additionally, there were contributions to the World Collections and assistance to individual refugees. The Doopsgezinden contributed 19,160 guilders in 1930–31 and approximately 3,000 guilders in 1936–37 to the World Collections. The assistance to individuals included the ransom of Anna Siemens's son and his family in 1933, futile attempts to help the relatives of Herman Jantzen from Turkestan to South America, and scholarships to settler sons such as Julius Heinrichs. *Zondagsbode*, June 21, 1931, HDEB(n)/027; Kasboek, eindoverzicht, HDEB(n)/23; Ad J. van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie naar Molotsjna. Nederlandse Doopsgezinden, mennonitische 'burgers van Hollandse komaf' en bolsjewieken in Oekraïne tussen 1920 en 1938" (PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2023), 253, https://research.vu.nl/en/publications/rein-willinks-hulpexpeditie-naar-molotsjna-nederlandse-doopsgezin; Unruh to Altmann, Feb. 12, 1938; Altmann to Unruh, Mar. 17, 1938, HDEB(n)/002.

4 Van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 238–62.

[5] In spring of 1920 it was not clear whether Taurida would become part of Bolshevik Ukraine or White southern Russia. In 1921 the Mennonites tried to organize themselves in the Verein der Mennoniten Süd-Russlands (VMSR), the predecessor of the Verband der Bürger holländischer Herkunft (VBHH) in Ukraine, which was recognized in 1922. So for the period until the recognition of the VBHH I employ the name "southern Russia."

[6] Van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 86–93.

[7] *Zondagsbode*, June 8, 1924; Simon H. M. Gorter, "Doopsgezinde Emigratie. Radiotoespraak" (unpublished manuscript, 1931), 7; Simon H. M. Gorter, "Tien jaren emigrantenwerk," *Doopsgezind jaarboekje* (1935): 69; passenger list of the *Maasdam*, on which the first group left on June 4. https://www.openarch.nl/srt:52F0D243-B36E-4694-AB70-A58515ACCFFD. Gorter refers to Mennonites from the Urals and the Caucasus but have them refer to Dutch relief that had only been given in Ukraine. If these references are correct, there must also have been Mennonites from Molochna at this first meeting.

[8] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 13; *Maandblad*, July and Aug. 1924, HDEB(n)/43; Unruh to Fleischer/Gorter, June 20, 1924; Baerg to Unruh, June 16, 1924, Stadsarchief Amsterdam (Amsterdam City Archives) (SAA) 1118/015a/10.254, 10.255.

[9] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 14–15; *Maandblad*, Aug. 1924, HDEB(n)/43; Hylkema to Dagelijks Bestuur, July 8 and 15, 1924, SAA 1118/020; conceptreglement, SAA 1118/015a/10.200; Minutes of the Dagelijks Bestuur (Executive Committee), ACBN, July 24, 1924, SAA 1118/019; *Zondagsbode*, Nov. 2, 1924, and Jan. 18, 1925.

[10] Gorter in *Bericht über die Mennonitische Welt-Hilfs-Konferenz vom 31. August bis 3. September 1930 in Danzig*, ed. Christian Neff (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1930), 65; Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 16.

[11] Lena Töws arrived from Russia in Rotterdam on October 1926 but could not leave for Canada until September 1929. *Maandblad*, Sept. 1929.

[12] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 15–16.

[13] *Zondagsbode*, Oct. 5, 1924.

[14] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 17–19 (half of the emigrants arrived between June 1924 and January 1925); *Zondagsbode* Oct. 5 and Nov. 2, 1924, and Jan. 18, 1925.

[15] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 19; *Zondagsbode*, June 29, 1924, and Jan. 10, 1926; *Maandblad*, Dec. 1926. Plautdietsch obviously was not useful for a shared service.

[16] *Maandblad*, May 1926; Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, MB: Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council, 1962), 163–64.

[17] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 17–18; *Zondagsbode*, Sept. 7, 1924 (with the notification that about 1,500 guilders had been donated, 655 from Deventer); *Maandblad*, Aug. 1925; *Maandblad*, Oct. and Dec. 1928.

[18] Charles A. Bailey, "The Medical Inspection of Immigrants," *Public Health Journal* 3, no. 8 (Aug. 1912): 433–39.

[19] Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 143, 168, 174; refugees coming from Lechfeld noted in Gorter, "Tien jaren," 71.

[20] "When I strolled through the streets of Rotterdam with a group dressed in heavy pelts and high fur hats and boots, I saw many surprised looks directed at our group." Gorter, "Doopsgezinde Emigratie," 8.

[21] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 18–19.

[22] S. H. M. Gorter, "Doopsgezinde Russen in Nederland," *Doopsgezind jaarboekje* (1926): 60.

[23] "Dina GROENEVELD (1899–1969)," Doopsgezinde Historische Kring, https://dhkonline.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2024/01/GROENEVELD-Dina-1899-1969.pdf. In 1911 the Doopsgezinden were the first Dutch Christians to appoint a woman, Anna Zernike, as preacher.

[24] The Mennonites were often not capable of understanding Dutch, but they felt kinship as well: "Wenn man die alte Mütterchen mit den Hauben sieht, kommt einem auch der Gedanke, dass unsre Vorfahren wirklich aus Holland stamen." Gorter, "Doopsgezinde Russen," *Doopsgezind jaarboekje* (1926): 53–54, 59–62; Unruh to Abram Bärg, June 16, 1924, SAA 1118/015a/10255. For analyses of the different criteria Doopsgezinden used to identify with the Russian Mennonites, see van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," chap. 3.2 and 8.4.

[25] *Maandblad*, Dec. 1929.

[26] Although most refugees were from Siberia, an unknown number of Mennonites from Ukraine joined them. It is remarkable that Willms included many memories from Ukrainian Mennonites. Markus Wehner, *Bauernpolitik im proletarischen Staat. Die Bauernfrage als zentrales Problem der Sowjetischen Innenpolitik 1921–1928* (Köln: Böhlau, 1998), 366–74; Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 231; H. J. Willms, *Vor den Toren Moskaus, oder, Gottes Gnaedige Durchhilfe in einer schweren Zeit* (Abbotsford, BC: Komitee der Flüchtlinge, 1960), 11–20, 35–38, 51–60.

[27] Van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 234.

[28] Benjamin H. Unruh, *Fügung und Führung im Mennonitischen Welthilfswerk 1920–1933. Humanität in christlicher Sicht* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1966), 28; van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 233–236.

[29] Unruh to Oberregierungsrat Lichter, July 8, 1938, HDEB(n)/02.

[30] "Die holländ. Hilfe ist ein Segen für die Bruderschaft im eigenem Lande, die dadurch zu neuen Taten belebt wird." Gorter in Neff, *Bericht*, 66; Gorter, "Doopsgezinde Russen," 60. This echoed Unruh's call to the "Community" (the Mennonite diaspora) to help the "brethren from the East." *Zondagsbode*, Dec. 22, 1929.

[31] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 21–22; *Zondagsbode*, Nov. 27, Dec. 1, and Dec. 22, 1929; *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, s.v. "Altmann family," https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Altmann_family.

[32] *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, Dec. 31, 1929, and Jan. 3, Jan. 8, and Jan. 15, 1930. Gorter thought the series "excellent." *Maandblad,* Mar. 1930.

[33] *De Standaard*, Feb. 25, 1930; *Het Volk*, Mar. 3, 1930; *Algemeen Handelsblad,* Mar. 20, 1930; see also a fierce denial of religious persecution in the communist daily *De Tribune*, May 16, 1930. Karl Cramer, ed., *Das Notbuch der russischen Christenheit* (Berlin: Eckart, 1930) described the first year of persecution through many supplications for help from the persecuted. The book was immediately translated into Dutch as *Christendom en Bolschewisme. Het noodgeschrei der Russische christenen* (Rotterdam: Korteweg & Stemerding, 1930). This was followed by the series Geloof en Vrijheid (Faith

and freedom) published by the Rotterdam Calvinist preacher Frederik Johan Krop. Van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 254, 271.

34 *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, Jul 20, 1930.

35 *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, July 7, July 12, July 20, July 26, Aug. 2, Aug. 9, Aug. 16, Aug. 23, and Sept. 6, 1930. This ambivalent attitude of the Doopsgezinden towards Bolshevism was characteristic of their congregations in the 1920s. Van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 83–85.

36 *Zondagsbode*, Dec. 22, 1929, and Jan. 5, Jan. 12, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, Feb. 9, Feb. 16, Feb. 23, Mar. 2 (with report of a lecture of Gorter in Enschede with lantern slides), Mar. 16, and Mar. 30, 1930.

37 *Zondagsbode*, Nov. 17, Dec. 1, Dec. 8, Dec. 22, Dec. 29, 1929, and Jan. 5, Jan. 12, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, Feb. 9, Feb. 16, Feb. 23, Mar. 2, Mar. 16, and Mar. 30, 1930.

38 *Algemeen Handelsblad*, Jan. 22, 1930.

39 The donations were exclusively from Doopsgezinden. This had not been the case with the collection for famine aid in 1921–22, when many non-Doopsgezinden also contributed. *Zondagsbode*, Jan. 19, 1930; Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 236–39; van de Staaij, "Hulpexpeditie," 111–18.

40 *Maandblad*, Feb. 1930.

41 *Zondagsbode,* Jan. 26, 1930; Unruh, *Fügung*,34; Gorter, "Doopsgezinde Emigratie," inside back cover; also Gorter in Neff, *Bericht*, 65–66.

42 *Zondagsbode*, Jan. 26 and Mar. 16, 1930.

43 *Zondagsbode*, Mar. 1, Mar. 29, May 17, and May 31, 1931.

44 John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland: The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921–1927* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1967), 199.

45 Kasboek, 31–32, HDEB(n)/23; *Zondagsbode*, June 22, 1930, and Feb. 14 and Feb. 21, 1931; Minutes, Apr. 15, 1931, HDEB(n)/020; Epp, *Mennonite Exodus,* 239–40; Unruh, *Fügung*, 37.

46 When the collection closed, 95,617 guilders had been raised. *Zondagsbode* May 31, 1931.

47 The standard work about the Mennonites in Brazil is Peter P. Klassen, *Die rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, vol 1., *Witmarsum am Alto Rio Krauel und Auhagen auf dem Stoltz-Plateau in Santa Catarina* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1995). Klassen refers mainly to the archive in Paraná (p. 8), and the remainder of this article is intended as a possible complement to his findings.

48 Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 69–70, 143–45; Willms, *Vor den Toren*, 51–60.

49 The pressure on the emigrants to choose Brazil led to rumours in Siberia that the emigrants raised a "scandal" about this in Germany. The Soviet press eagerly exaggerated this to discourage emigration. Cramer, *Notbuch*, 59; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 59–62, 78–84, 110–13; *Zondagsbode,* Jan. 26, 1930.

50 Dr. Zeno Kamerling pointed to the fact that the "colony of the German tribe" had been able to retain its German nature very well. Z. Kamerling, *De Doopsgezinden in Brazilië*, Geschriftjes ten behoeve van Doopsgezinden in de verstrooiing, no. 58 (Amsterdam, 1933), 6–7; Neff, *Bericht*, 90–93.

51 Z. Kamerling was a private lecturer in Leyden and secretary of the pacifist organization Arbeidsgroep tegen den Krijgsdienst. In 1913 he had not seen many opportunities in Brazil, but Gorter had gained confidence when he visited the Brazil pavilion at the Antwerp World Exhibition in 1930. The first series of articles in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* had no reference to

an author; the second series of articles were attributed to "K." Because Kamerling suggested that the board publish the articles, one can safely assume he was the author. Kamerling in *Zondagsbode,* June 7, 1931; Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 22; Gorter in Neff, *Bericht*, 91; Minutes, Dec. 2, 1930, HDEB(n)/34.

52 Gorter in Neff, *Bericht,* 93.

53 Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 118.

54 Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 59–62, 78–84, 110–11; *Zondagsbode,* Jan. 26, 1930.

55 *Zondagsbode*, May 17, 1931.

56 *Die Hanseatischen Kolonien im Staate Santa Catharina, Brasilien* (Hamburg, 1927), HDEB(n)/42.

57 Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 85–99, 130–33, in particular 98 and 132 ("verlorne Paradies").

58 Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 163, 262–63.

59 There was no labour cost because the labour was delivered as a communal duty. *Zondagsbode*, Apr. 20 and Apr. 27, 1930; Gorter in Neff, *Bericht*, 93; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 119–20, 122–23.

60 Lange received a monthly allowance of 500 Reichsmarks (as salary and compensation for costs). Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 114–16. In January 1931, Altmann transferred 23,302 guilders, HDEB/23, 26.

61 *Zondagsbode*, July 20, 1930; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 103; Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 24.

62 Minutes, Dec. 2, 1930, and document about the loan from January/April 1931, HDEB(n)/34; *Zondagsbode*, Oct. 12 and Dec. 14, 1930, and Jan. 25, 1931 (the loan was until 1948 with the first year without interest and the remaining 15 years at interest rate of 3 percent); Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 120, 264, 272.

63 The Soviet government allowed the reunion of families. This meant an extra sixty refugees. Possibly as many as a hundred would arrive later. *Zondagsbode*, Feb. 1, Apr. 26, and Aug. 9, 1931.

64 *Zondagsbode*, May 10, 1931. Unruh, *Fügung*, 35, informs that Brüder in Not provided an extra 250,000 Reichsmarks.

65 From December 1928, the south Russian missionary Jakob/Jacques Thiessen supported the board in practical matters. *Maandblad*, May 1931.

66 Zondagsbode, May 17, 1931.

67 Martins to HDEB, June 27, 1931, HDEB(n)/34.

68 Gorter, "Doopsgezinde Emigratie"; Martins to HDEB, June 27, 1931, HDEB(n)/34. Since 1926, the Doopsgezinden had their own radio association. *Zondagsbode*, Mar. 21, 1926.

69 *Maandblad*, Sept. 1931; HDEB(n)/47.

70 In February 1933, *Zondagsbode* communicated that the construction of the colony had been successful, and in July it concluded that Witmarsum could stand on its own feet, so the main task of the HDEB had finished. In 1934, the collection dried up at a total sum of about 40,000 guilders. *Zondagsbode*, May 24, Sept. 20, and Oct. 4, 1931; Kamerling to Bestuur, May 19, 1931, HDEB(n)/34; Altmann to Klassen, Sept. 9 and Nov. 25, 1932, HDEB(n)/34; *Zondagsbode*, Feb. 5 and July 9, 1933, and Apr. 15 and July 29, 1934.

71 For example, Gorter in *Zondagsbode*, May 18, June 1, July 20, Oct. 12, Oct. 26, and Dec. 14, 1930.

[72] Martins to HDEB, June 24, 1931; (in survey) Kamerling to Unruh, July 13, 1931, HDEB(n)/34; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 114–15.

[73] Unruh to Gorter, Aug. 8, 1931, HDEB(n)/34.

[74] Minutes of HDEB, Sept. 24, 1931; Altmann to Martins, Sept. 27, 1931; Martins to Altmann, Oct. 21, 1931, HDEB(n)/34.

[75] Minutes of HDEB, Sept. 24, 1931; Altmann to Martins, Sept. 27, 1931; Martins to Altmann, Oct. 21, 1931, HDEB(n)/34.

[76] Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 151–60.

[77] Kamerling to Unruh, July 13, 1931, HDEB(n)/34.

[78] Kamerling to Martins, Dec. 1, 1931; Kamerling to HDEB, July 8, 1932; HDEB to Klassen, July 12, 1932; Altmann to Martins, Sept. 9, 1932, HDEB(n)/34.

[79] Kamerling to Martins, Dec. 1, 1931; Kamerling to HDEB July 8, 1932; HDEB to Klassen, July 12, 1932; Altmann to Martins, Sept. 9, 1932, HDEB(n)/34.

[80] Minutes of HDEB, Sept. 24, 1931, HDEB(n)/34; *Zondagsbode*, Apr. 17, 1932; Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 25.

[81] Woerden-Surink, "HDEB," 26–27.

[82] Quiring was already known in the Netherlands because the secretary of the ACBN, Frederik Fleischer, had supported him in the writing of his doctoral thesis, as can be read from the dedication "Frederik Fleischer in Hochschätzung und Dankbarkeit zugeeignet" in Jakob Quiring, "Die Mundart von Chortitza in Süd-Rußland" (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 1928); Unruh, Bericht LXVII, Aug. 19, 1933, HDEB(o)/03.

[83] All quotes from Löwen in *Die Brücke*, June 1933, 5–6, from Gorter in *Zondagsbode,* Jan. 14, 1934.

[84] *Die Brücke*, Feb. 1934, 9–10; Mar. 1934, 6–7; May 1934, 5–6.

[85] Unruh, "An die Mennonitensiedlungen in Paraguay und Brasil," May 7, 1934. HDEB(o)/3b; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 330–31.

[86] *Zondagsbode*, May 20 and May 27, 1934; Unruh to Gorter, July 23, 1934; Gorter to Unruh, July 26, 1934, HDEB(n)/02; Altmann to Unruh, June 6 and Oct. 7, 1934; Minutes, Oct. 4, 1934, HDEB(n)/20; Kasboek, HDEB(n)/23. Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 74–75; *Zondagsbode* Nov. 11, 1934; Kasboek, 34, HDEB(n)/23; *Zondagsbode*, June 7, 1936.

[87] "Ein offenes Wort zum neuen Kurs," *Die Brücke*, Mar. 1937; Martins to Unruh, May 18, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/M; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 178.

[88] Altmann to Martins, June 24, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/M.

[89] *Doopsgezind jaarboekje* (1937), 60–61; Unruh to Altmann, Jan. 25, 1937, HDEB(n)/02; Klassen to Gorter, Mar. 27, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/K; Gorter to Unruh, Apr. 28, 1937; Unruh to Gorter, May 29, 1937, HDEB(n)/02; Unruh, *Bericht*, July 4, 1937, HDEB(n)/02; van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 271–73.

[90] "Hell hörig," Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 340.

[91] Unruh to Altmann, Apr. 13, 1937, HDEB(n)/02; Unruh to Nikkel, Apr. 15, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/N; Unruh to Klassen, Apr. 20, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/K; Unruh to HDEB, Apr. 22, 1937, HDEB(n)/02.

[92] Unruh to Altmann, Apr. 13, 1937; Unruh, Bericht #7, July 4, 1937, HDEB(n)/02.

[93] Klassen to Gorter, Mar. 27, 1937; Gorter to Klassen, Apr. 14, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/K.

[94] This was not only due to the fact that Klassen had offered space to Nazis such as Quiring and Hajo Heinrich Schroeder in *Die Brücke*, but also that the Deutsch-Brasilinanischer Jugendring (DBJ) became active in the colony. Gorter saw similarities with the Hitler Youth and warned Witmarsum, "Seid deutsch soviel Ihr wollt, aber seid keine Nazis." Altmann asked Martins for clarification, and Martins reassured the Dutch that the DBJ was an interdenominational organization striving for integration into the new Brazilian Heimat while preserving German traditions. Altmann to Unruh, Apr. 12, 1937, HDEB(n)/02; Unruh to Nickel, June 26, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/N.; Gorter to Klassen, June 6, 1937; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 340; Martins to Altmann, Aug. 27, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/M; John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite & Nazi? Attitudes among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933–1945* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1999), 61–62.

[95] Unruh to Altmann, Apr. 13, 1937; Unruh to Gorter, Apr. 29, 1937; Unruh, Bericht, July 4, 1937, HDEB(n)/02.

[96] Altmann to Unruh, May 31, 1937; Unruh to Altmann, June 1, 1937, HDEB(n)/02; *Zondagsbode*, July 18, 1937; van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 276.

[97] Unruh to Altmann, July 14, 1937; Unruh to Altmann, Feb. 12, 1938, HDEB(n)/02.

[98] In the margin Altmann noted, "I think that's incorrect, they are Russians." When the Brazilian authorities increased assimilation pressure on the German colonists in late 1938, Unruh advised his contacts in the Brazilian government to highlight the Mennonites' Russian background, that they had been loyal Russian citizens, and that the colonies had Dutch patrons. He asked Altmann to have the Dutch government intervene. Altmann refused, stating that no Dutch national interests were at stake. The HDEB has always been concerned with ensuring that "unsere Leute ihr Mennonitentum behalten können. Ob sie dabei die russische, brasilianische, deutsche oder sogar holländische Nationalität annehmen möchten, hat uns nicht interessieren können und ist bei allen unseren Ueberlegungen stets vollständig ausser Betracht geblieben." So, Unruh tried the *Holländerei* argument that he had so fiercely opposed in relation to Russia and Germany. Unruh to Altmann, July 14, 1937; Unruh to Altmann, Nov. 1, 1938; Altmann to Unruh, Nov. 10, 1938, HDEB(n)/02; van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 68, 158, 268.

[99] Unruh to Altmann, Aug. 16, 1937, HDEB(n)/02; *Zondagsbode*, Nov. 28, 1937; van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 278.

[100] Quoted in E. I. T. Brussee, "De Doopsgezinde Broederschap en het nationaalsocialisme, 1933–1940," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* 11 (1985): 124; van de Staaij, "Rein Willinks hulpexpeditie," 271–79. Information from *Die neue Brücke* was not reassuring. An article in the October/November 1938 issue reported the visit of the German consul to Mennonite colonies in Paraguay. He proclaimed that Hitler personally had ordered him to take care of the purity of the blood and character of the Germans in Paraguay. A Dutch Doopsgezinde subscriber saw this as "'pénétration pacifique,' silent colonization from Germany." This was a remarkable echo of Gorter's speech in Danzig in 1930. *Brieven uitgegeven door de Vereeniging voor Gemeentedagen van Doopsgezinden* 21 (Feb. 1939): 43.

[101] Altmann to Martins, June 24, 1937, HDEB(n)/11/M; Klassen, *Rußlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Brasilien*, 177–80.

[102] Martins to Gorter, Oct. 12, 1936; Altmann to Martins, Dec. 18, 1936, HDEB(n)/11/M; request as separate sheet in *Maandblad,* Jan. 1938.
[103] HDEB to Buitenlandse Zaken, Feb. 16, 1938, HDEB(n)/10.
[104] Snouck Hurgronje to HDEB, Apr. 28, 1938, HDEB(n)/10.
[105] Collections data according to Altmann's reports in *Zondagsbode*.
[106] Altmann to Unruh, May 27, 1938, HDEB(n)/02.
[107] *Verslag Bender*, June 28, 1938, HDEB(n)/07.
[108] In his request to the government, Unruh referred to the fact that Mennonite colonists in Paraguay and Brazil, like other German colonists in South America, were barely able to secure a living, and that their co-religionists in North America had been affected by the global economic crisis. Unruh to Oberregierungsrat Lichter, July 8, 1938; Unruh to Altmann, July 23, 1938; Gorter and Altmann to Unruh, July 27, 1938, HDEB(n)/02.
[109] Altmann to Unruh, Nov. 10, 1938, HDEB(n)/02.
[110] Unruh to Altmann, Nov. 12, 1938; Unruh to Nikkel, Nov. 12, 1938; Nikkel to Unruh, Dec. 7, 1938: "hundert Mal unverdient" . . . "Es regt sich beides, Schmerz und Dank" (a hundred times undeserved . . . both pain and gratitude are felt); Fast to Unruh, Dec. 10, 1938, HDEB(n)/02.