

# What Are They If Not Martyrs?

by D. Frederick Dyck\*

**In** years past there has been some discussion among Mennonite scholars and historians as to whether or not German Mennonites who were killed in the Soviet Union/Russia, during the years 1917-1957, were deserving of the term martyr. The general consensus was that they are not martyrs because they were not killed for their faith alone.

Being killed for one's faith is the most recognized definition of a martyr. However, it is not the only definition. Enduring loss of life as a scapegoat, surrendering, giving up, sacrificing one's life for myriad reasons defines many people as martyrs. Famous Soviet writer Varlam Shalamov, author of *Kolyma Tales*, who spent 14 years in the notorious Kolyma slave labor camps, wrote in an unpublished manuscript, "Kolymski Napiski," "Political [they were called] . . . unbridled repression against millions had put under this title innocent men of all politics. They were martyrs but not heroes."<sup>1</sup>

When Mennonites think of martyrs, images from the book *Martyrs Mirror* most likely come to mind. Written by Thielman J. van Braht and first published in the Dutch language in 1667, a copy of this book in English is still in many Mennonite households. The first part of the book gives a history of the persecution of many groups of people under the Anabaptist umbrella. This includes the genocide of Christian sects that existed in Europe circa 900 AD-1244 AD in the case of the Cathars,<sup>2</sup> and 1174-1655 for the Waldensians.

Only a very few Cathars and Waldensians are known by name and estimates of their numbers vary widely. The Cathars were exterminated in an on-going Roman Catholic crusade ordered by Pope Innocent III (known as the Albigensian Crusade after the French district of Albi where the Cathars were centered) in



Varlam Shalamov (1907-1982) taken from his personnel file (1937, NKVD archive). Shalamov is considered the greatest Russian chronicler of the Soviet Gulag. He spent 14 years in the notorious Kolyma camp complex in Far Eastern Siberia. His most famous work is titled *Kolyma Tales*.

the years 1205-1244. The estimates of the number of Cathars killed ranges from a low of 20-30,000 to an unlikely high of 250,000. Many historians consider this to be the first European genocide.<sup>3</sup>

The Waldensians were the victims of lethal persecution by the Roman Catholic Church from their beginning in France in 1174. In 1487 the Roman Catholic Church called for their extermination. The last major attempt to eradicate Waldensians occurred in 1655, although Waldensians in Europe suffered continued persecution until the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Conquest, *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* (1978). Written by a pre-eminent historian of the Soviet Era. This book can be found occasionally on the used book market.

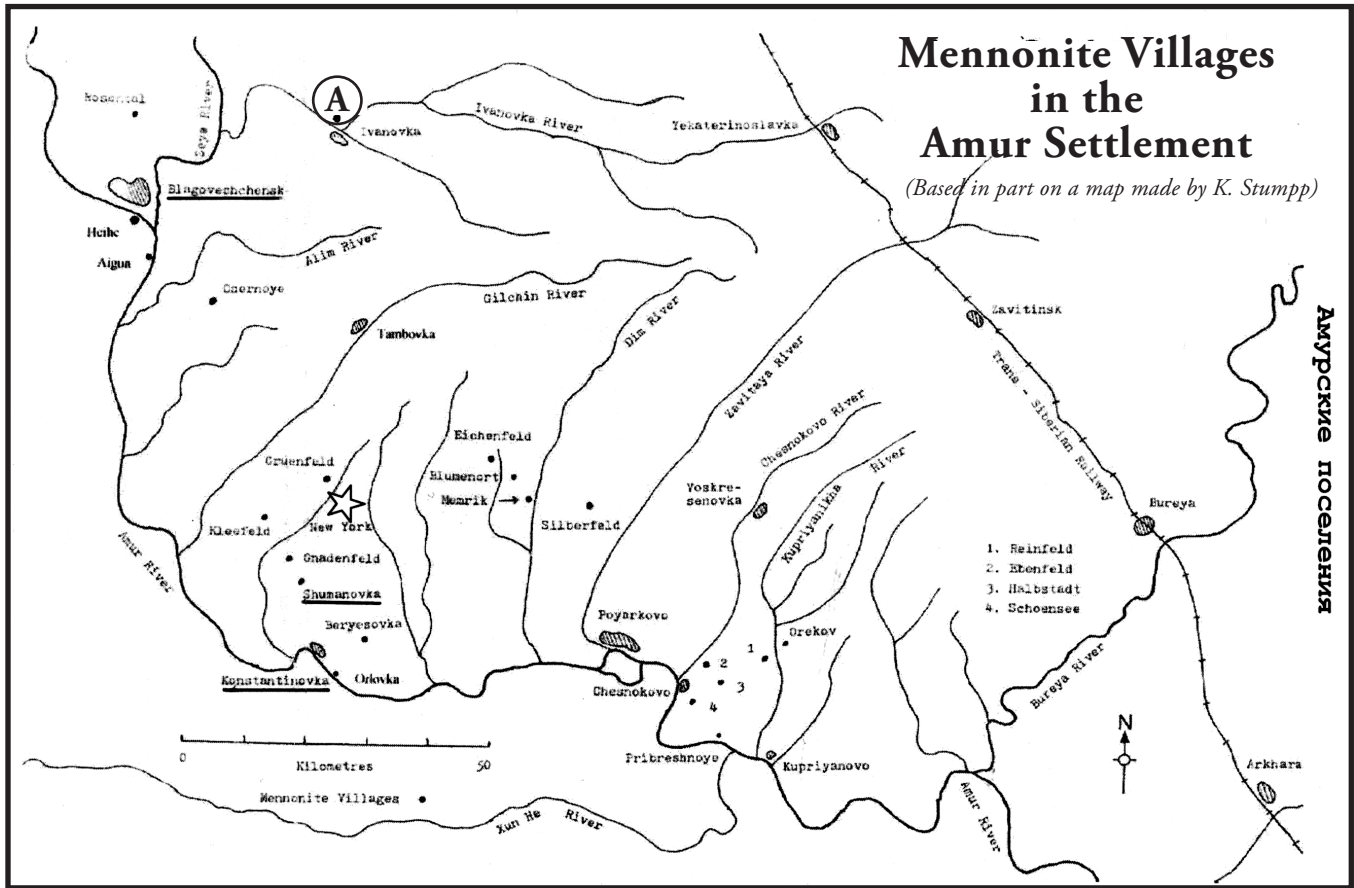
<sup>2</sup> Zoe Oldenburg, *Massacre at Montsegur: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*. A highly recommended general history of Cathars in the Languedoc region of France. Widely available, reasonably priced.

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Lambert, *The Cathars*. A more advanced work by a Reader in Medieval History at the University of Bristol, England. Difficult to find and expensive.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Murry Williams, *The Waldensians*, <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/waldensians>



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*Underlined place names are mentioned in this article. Note the many German Mennonite villages indicated by black dots and their names brought from villages far to the west in Chortitza and Molotschna, and West Prussia, Germany. "A" is the village of Lugovoye, home to Gustav J. Froese.*

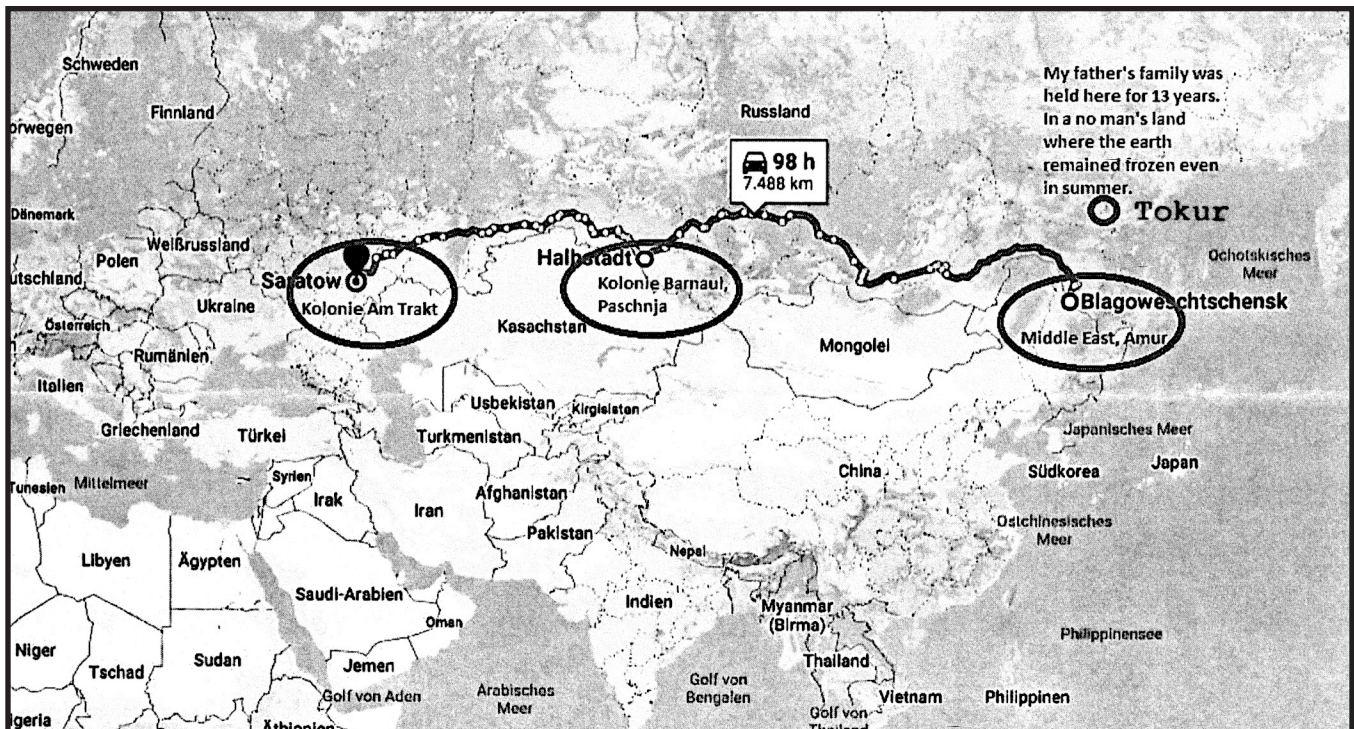
Like the Cathars and Waldensians, Russian Mennonites in the years 1917 to 1957 were as likely to be killed for their ethnicity, where they lived, or their perceived wealth as they were for their religious beliefs. This comes to the heart of the difficulty most people have with considering Russian Mennonites as martyrs. French kings and Italian dukes saw the call by the Roman Catholic Church to exterminate the Cathars and Waldensians as an excuse to acquire their land and wealth in the southern provinces of France and the Piedmont area of Italy.

This same reasoning was employed by the Soviet Russian government in the 1920s and 30s when they sought to eliminate German Mennonites. One of the results of World War I (1914-1918), when Germany and Russia were bitter enemies, was a visceral hatred of the Germans in Russia. This hatred was combined with an official condemnation of religion. The Mennonite religion was particularly despised because, even in Czarist times, it was not the state sanctioned Russian Orthodox Church.

Although not developed exclusively for German Mennonites, the Soviet policy of farm collectivization hit rural Mennonites especially hard. Private ownership of land, livestock, and machinery ceased. All of these assets were now held in common in the farm collective. Any farmer who owned beyond the bare minimum of personal property was condemned as a *kulak*. Designation as a *kulak* would likely bring a sentence to a forced labor camp, if not a death sentence. Once the head of household (likely the husband and father) was deported to a camp, his family faced nearly insurmountable hardship. Left without a home, clothes, and food, they were dependent on their neighbors for survival. Often the neighbors were in the same dire straits. This resulted in death from exposure and starvation on a massive scale.

In Ukraine, where the large Mennonite colonies of Chortitza and Molotschna were located, death by famine/starvation became so pervasive that a special word for it was developed. The Ukrainian word *Holodomor* means "to kill by starvation."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*.



This German language map shows the vast distance by automobile from the Am Trakt Mennonite colony to the Barnaul Mennonite colony and on to the city of Blagoveschensk. The journey would be about 98 hours by auto, 7,488 kilometers, or approximately 4,654 miles. Tokur is the name of the place of exile noted on the map by Willi Frese. Jacob Janzen mentions this place in his included memoir.

During the worst years of *Holodomor*—1932-33— it is estimated that 3.5 million people died from this man-made murder/famine. This would also include many Mennonites in the Volga German Republic area, the German Mennonite colony of Am Trakt. In an acknowledgment of widespread cannibalism the Soviet government printed posters that declared: “To eat your own children is a barbarian act.”<sup>6</sup>

Today, noted scholars Anne Applebaum, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book *Gulag and Red Famine*, and Timothy Snyder, author of *Bloodlands*, consider the *Holodomor* a genocide. Fittingly, because it is home to many Mennonites and Ukrainians, the province of Saskatchewan in Canada was the first jurisdiction in North America to recognize the *Holodomor* as a genocide. Today, Ukraine and 15 other countries recognize the *Holodomor* as a genocide.

Further east across the Ural Mountains, at the Barnaul Mennonite settlements, people began to flee to far eastern Siberia in an effort to escape the worst excesses of the Soviet government. Crossing the border with Manchuria many people went to the city of Harbin to seek visas to other countries. These desperate people would emigrate to virtually any country that would give them a visa and allow them entry.

In my own family of German-Russian Mennonite ancestors, only my paternal grandfather, Jacob J. Dyck (1881-1954), of the Am Trakt colony came to the United States prior to the Russian Revolution in 1917. He settled in rural Whitewater, Kansas, in 1907. His sister Anna (1872-1945), husband Peter Tgahrt (d. 1928) and son Bruno (1908-1980) emigrated west to Germany ca 1930.<sup>7</sup>

Jacob’s twin sister Johanna (1881-1970), husband Jacob Cornelius Froese (b. 1877) and son Cornelius also got out of Russia ca 1930 by going west. They wanted to settle in Canada or the United States, but neither country would accept them. As a last resort, Brazil agreed to take a shipload of German-Russians. The Froese family settled near Curitiba, south of Sau Paulo, Brazil.<sup>8</sup>

One more of Jacob’s siblings got out of the Soviet Union before all exits were blocked: sister Maria (1876-1957), husband Heinrich Dyck (1871-1938), and their younger children in 1927. Maria and Heinrich came by separate routes, one via Europe, one by an Asian route and reunited in Saskatchewan, Canada.

<sup>6</sup> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodomor. Subheadings; Genocide Question, Remembrance, Death Toll, Cannibalism.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about this family, see: D. Frederick Dyck, “Threads of a Life: Searching for Bruno Tgahrt,” Oct. 2003 *MFH*.

The remainder of Jacob's siblings perished in the Soviet Union. Brother Johannes (1878-1921) died of typhus during an epidemic at Am Trakt brought on by appalling living conditions and lack of food during the Russian civil war. Half-brother Will Froese is rumored to have been thrown from a horse to frozen ground and broke his neck. Sister Justine (1879-after 1938) "disappeared" along with her husband Andrei Penner and an unknown number of children in far eastern Siberia, north of the Amur River. Half-brother Gustav Froese (1888-1938) "disappeared" in far eastern Siberia in 1938. Only recently did family in the United States learn that he had been shot in or near the city of Blagoveschensk on the Amur River border with Manchuria on March 10, 1938.

Gustav stated during his interrogation by Soviet KGB police in 1938,<sup>9</sup> that his reason for coming to far eastern Siberia was to get to Harbin, Manchuria, and eventually emigrate to the United States.

This goal of Harbin and eventual emigration was one that thousands of German Mennonites aspired to. Few ever made it. The success stories kept hopes alive for multitudes of others in the far-flung Mennonite villages north and east, between the Amur River and the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

Perhaps the most famous of these success stories involved the village of Shumanovka in the Konstantinovsky District. See the underlined village on the map of Amur Mennonite settlements. As told in a brief history of local lore by Nadezhda Vladimirovna Komissarova, *Ethnic Germans in the History of the Konstantinovsky District* (cited hereafter as *NVK*), the mass escape occurred in December 1930:

On December 16, at midnight, after preparing for six months, 217 people, 175 of them from Shumanovka, crossed the border and left their Bolshevik homeland forever. They spent a year in Harbin, then moved partly to France and Paraguay, partly to Brazil.<sup>10</sup> Local authorities reported that it was not possible to establish a collective farm in Shumanovka because the entire population "fled abroad to China, taking with them most of the property, including workers and cattle."

Judging by the reference,<sup>11</sup> this village was very wealthy, many residents had ten or more horses. "Jacob Siemens had 14 horses, 3 plows, 6 cows." "Peter Warkentin had 12 horses, 6 cows, 3 plows." There are still legends about Schumanovka [*sic*] in Konstantinovsky district and about the escape of the Germans abroad.

It is bewildering that economically strong farms were destroyed. All crops were planted on

3,924 hectares [9,692 acres], there were working animals, machinery, and equipment. People kept apiaries and produced all grain crops, soybeans, and potatoes. As of January 1, 1939, 1,116 people remained in seven German collective farms [nearly all were Mennonites from Barnaul, western Siberia]. Only 419 were able to work (195 men, 224 women).

These are some horrible statistics that show the political madness of the authorities. The main reason for the repression of these people was that they were Germans [Mennonites]. The fate of the people was shared by the German [Mennonite] villages on the Amur [River].<sup>12</sup>

A brief first-person account of life in one of the Amur River District Mennonite villages was written by Jacob Janzen after he was allowed to emigrate to Germany in the 1990s:

I am eldest son in the family, I was born March 22, 1934, in Lugovoye village (New York) of the Amur region. . . . On the paternal line grandfather Yakov Frantsevich [Jacob F. Janzen] (1879), grandmother Justina Klassen (1881) were also born in Ukrainian Zaporozhye or Dnepropetrovsk regions [the area of the German Mennonite colonies of Chortitza and Molotschna], the village Maximilianovka.

Grandfather Yakov Frantsevich was not in very good health, but enterprising. Until the October Revolution [1917], he took a loan from a bank and built a steam mill. Immediately after the revolution, he was declared a capitalist [*kulak*], and the mill was requisitioned. At first, he was left to work at the mill as a mechanic, but then he was fired. The capitalist's shadow remained on my grandfather for the rest of his life. He was constantly persecuted for owning the mill, first by the Cheka, then by the NKVD [Secret Police]. In 1928, someone warned him that he would be arrested and tried as a former owner of an enterprise [the mill]. Tired spiritually and materially, grandfather left the house and remaining property, collected things that could be taken away with him, and went to the Far East with his family in the hope of avoiding persecution by the punitive authorities.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information about this family, see: Alice Sitler Dyck, "The Story of Johanna Dyck Froese," Apr. 1990 *MFH*.

<sup>9</sup> D. Frederick Dyck, "Gustav J. Froese (1888-1938), One of the Disappeared," Jan. 2021 *MFH*.

<sup>10</sup> Nadezhda Vladimirovna Komissarova, *Ethnic Germans in the History of the Konstantinovsky District* (cited hereafter as *NVK*).

<sup>11</sup> *NVK*.

<sup>12</sup> *NVK*.

The Janzen family and several other families settled in the empty lands of Konstantinovsky District, Amur Oblast (see map of Amur settlements) and founded the New York village (Lugovoye). In 1932, the collective farm “Energiya” was organized, and grandfather was appointed as a competent person to the collective farm accountant. From this position he was arrested.

At first, he was guarded in a collective farm office, and relatives handed him food. Then he was taken to a prison in an unknown place. At the end of the 1980s, after rehabilitation, it turned out that he was in the regional prison in Glagoveshchensk where he died. Grandfather’s house was in the poorest village. It was made of crates, and the roof was turf. During the rain, the roof was constantly leaking, so we had to collect all the buckets and put them under drips. I loved to visit them. First, they lived close to us, across the street; and second, they had a garden. I do not know what was growing there, but I remember well the blue and yellow plums.

Some episodes from childhood I remember from about age four years. In August 1938, an order came from the district center to arrest all men over 15 years old for sabotage. Trucks with police arrived at the collective farm yard. All the men were loaded into the loading area of the truck. A farewell ceremony was also held at the collective farm yard. Mother at that time worked in the dining room and gave her father bundles with meat. The women were all crying and wailing about what would happen to them and what the men were being taken away for.

In March 1940, those who survived were released for unproven crimes. We rode on a swing in the hayloft of our house and saw them brought home in cars. We can imagine what joy it was. Relatives gathered in our house and celebrated this joyful event.

All men were very pale, weakened. It took some time to recover life forces. Father told about this time of absurdity and misunderstanding. Yesterday’s prosecutors, investigators, and judges in a short time were themselves victims of arbitrariness and this was repeated over and over again to the point of madness. For example, father was accused after the revolution of owning a horse farm/stable and supplying the White Army [Czarist] and gangs of *Makhno* [bandit leader] with fighting horses. My father during the civil war was 13 years old! Not reasonable. The arguments against the prosecution did not help. During the investigation there were 6-7 investigators working in the prison. The investigators made long pipes from paper and tried to talk to the prisoners through them. The accusations were absurd, the defendants did not agree. Then, the investigator would get up from the table and with kicks and punches get what he wanted. After sign-

ing the charges, everything was repeated over and over again. The prison guards mocked the prisoners with impunity as they wanted. For example, there was one guard of small stature. While escorting the prisoners, he would stand several steps higher so that he could kick the prisoner’s head or between his legs. There were 30-40 people each in the cell. We slept side by side. The toilet was one bucket for the whole cell and there was a terrible stench in the cell.

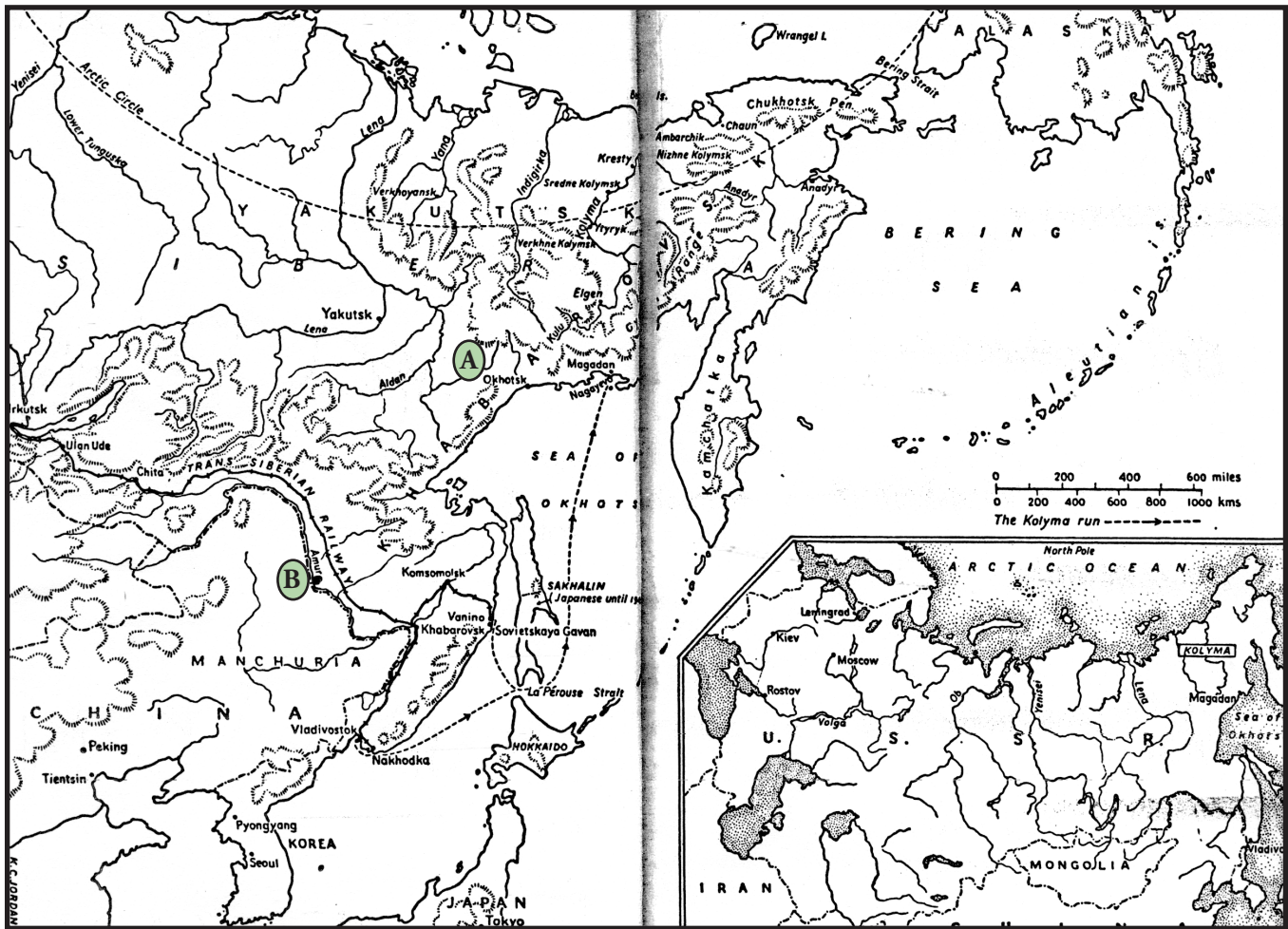
After the arrest of all the men in August 1938, there was no one to harvest from the fields. We had to urgently organize tractor and combine drivers’ courses for girls. All girls had to drop out of school and take mechanic’s courses.

... On November 15, 1941, a completely new era began in the life of the German population of the Amur region. On Saturday, November 15, 1941, at 6:00 AM, there was an unexpected knock at the door. Militiamen came in and ordered us to be ready for the journey in eight hours. It was permitted to take only the most necessary things with us. Where we were going, they did not know. An armed militiaman watched the door. When the first shock was over, the preparations for the trip began.

The earth was covered with snow, it was cold. Since there were no refrigerators yet, people had always waited for stable, frosty weather to slaughter pigs. Many had just started. As far as I can remember, we had already finished slaughtering in our house. The militiamen were very happy that they could take fresh meat with them because people were not allowed to take it with them. As it later turned out, all Germans were suspected of espionage for Japan—without exception.

We were taken far away from the border to Olginsk (60 km from Tokur). Here we were held for the first two years. The place was in the north, about 1,000 km from our village, where the earth was permanently frozen. Because there was no other work, the men had to wash gold. To get to a vein of gold, a campfire was made. After one day of heating, the earth, which had thawed out around 40 cm, was removed and a new campfire was made. After a gold vein was reached, the sand with gold was transported up and washed out in a sieve at temperatures of minus 30-40 degrees. In March 1942 my father was admitted to Trudarmee (Labor Army/Work Camp).

A little later, all women whose children were older than three years and boys older than 15 years were also admitted to the Trudarmee. As far as I know, the people were not allowed to leave this settlement until 1956, after 15 years of captivity, and could not return to their old villages and houses. Everything useful in the houses had been stolen and often completely destroyed, or strangers had been living in the houses for a long time. . . .



From Robert Conquest's book *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps*, "A" is the approximate location of the death camp Serpentinka, and "B" is the location of the large regional city of Blagoveschensk.

By 1942, all German Mennonite villages had been liquidated. Many people were exiled to the most inhospitable places in Siberia where many died of starvation and exposure. Years later, in the mid-to late-1950s, some survivors were allowed to return to their original settlements in the Barnaul area.

Again quoting historian Ms Komissarova, "Nowadays there is not a single German village in this place. The lands where German villages were located are plowed. Rows of huge poplars, and sometimes blooming gardens in spring, indicate the places where there once was a village and clean smooth streets."<sup>13</sup> Those not exiled had already been tried and sentenced to slave labor camps or executed.

Geographically, the largest slave labor camp complex closest to the Amur River German Mennonite villages was the Kolyma gold mines. These villages were also close, relatively, to the only known extermination camp in the Soviet Gulag system, called Serpentinka. This notorious site was 375 miles west of the main camps of the Kolyma

complex and the port of Magadan. No labor was performed at Serpentinka. Prisoners brought here were shot, usually in less than 24 hours after arrival from Kolyma.

There is no mention of any overland route to the Kolyma camps from the Amur River District, city of Blagoveshchensk, in any of the Gulag histories. As it is only about 75 miles from Blagoveshchensk to the Trans-Siberian Railroad, this is likely how prisoners went to the port of Vladivostok and then to Magadan/Kolyma by the sea route.

Those sentenced to death in the Amur River District, city of Blagoveshchensk, were shot in the city prison or perhaps locally. They were then buried in mass graves purposely unmarked and forgotten.

However, human remains have a remarkable capacity for endurance. They have the ability to tell a story long after some wish they couldn't.

<sup>13</sup> NVK.

In the summer of 2018, on the outskirts of the city of Blagoveshchensk along the Amur River, a human skull was unearthed by a homeowner building a home addition. Continued excavation produced more skulls and skeletal remains. Eventually the homeowner dug up the remains of 70 people and put them in plastic bags before being ordered to stop digging by city officials.

City and district officials were concerned with the fact that an ugly crime of the Soviet era had been exposed and they were unsure how to handle it. The homeowner, retired policeman Vitaly Kvasha, waited a year and decided to proceed with his building project.

Again he was stopped by the Mayor, Valentina Kalita. Kvasha was informed that a group of experts, led by Denis Volkov, Director of the Center for the Preservation of the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Amur Region, would properly excavate the site for further human remains. From then on the building site was treated as an archaeological excavation.

Exhumation of further remains and artifacts got under way in June 2020. It was quickly determined that all the remains had been in the ground for 80+ years, since the time of the “Great Terror” of 1937-38. Nearly all the skulls had bullet holes from a large caliber revolver. Some bullets were found in spines indicating these people were shot in the chest, the bullet stopped by the spine.

When the excavations were completed there was a total of 153 skulls. It was possible to reconstruct some of the skeletons of the top layer of victims. Clothes,



*Skulls and skeletons uncovered in a mass grave in the suburbs of the city of Blagoveshchensk in 2018. Notice the bullet holes in the skulls. That these remains include people from nearby liquidated Mennonite villages cannot be ruled out. Photos from July 16, 2020, newspaper article in Amurskaya Pravda.*



shoes, boots, wooden buttons, spoons, a carved comb, were cataloged and bagged.

This careful excavation took two weeks and was extensively documented and filmed. All remains were to be re-buried in a local cemetery.<sup>14</sup>

This lengthy article about the gruesome discovery in Russia, with the many photos, was sent to me by my cousin Willi Frese of Rodgau, Germany. Willi was born in 1964 in a village of the Barnaul Mennonite settlement of western Siberia and emigrated to Germany with his extended family in 1992. Willi has relatives still living in the Amur region and keeps current on local news.<sup>16</sup> When I queried my cousin Willi as to the likelihood that DNA testing would be

done on these remains, he was almost disdainful. His reply, paraphrased here, was, “Not in Putin’s Russia, not ever. They do not want to know who these people are.”

My article in the January 2021 *MFH* is about Willi’s great-grandfather.<sup>15</sup> When I asked Willi about the possibility that one of these skulls and skeletons might be his great-grandfather and my Uncle Gustav J. Froese, (1888-1938), Willi’s response was, “That can’t be excluded.”

During Gustav Froese’s interrogation by Soviet NKVD-KGB police, prior to his execution, he was

<sup>14</sup> *Amurskaya Pravda*, Russian language newspaper of the Amur District, Russia. “Pravda” means “Truth.”

<sup>15</sup> D. Frederick Dyck, “Gustav J. Froese (1888-1938), One of the Disappeared,” Jan. 2021 *MFH*.

<sup>16</sup> Willi Frese, “Discovering My Ancestors through a Photo,” Apr. 2020 *MFH*.

asked if he was a preacher. Gustav's reply was, "No, I am a simple member of the Mennonite community [in Lugovoye]." This statement by Gustav was so important to the police that it was underlined in the original transcript of the interrogation. (See copy of the original on this page.)

I believe Gustav's statement is important for another reason: **It makes him, and other Mennonites like him, martyrs.**

In closing, I again quote Gulag survivor Varlam Shalamov from his short story, "The Glove" (1972):

The documents of our past have been destroyed, the watchtowers taken down, the barracks razed to the ground, the rusty barbed wire wound up and taken away somewhere else. On the ruins of Serpentinka, the willow-herb blossoms—the flower of fire, of oblivion, an enemy of archives and human memory. Did we exist? I answer: "We existed"—with all the poignancy of a judicial transcript, with the responsibility, the lucidity of a document.

Right: Copy of a transcript page of Gustav Froese's interrogation by NKVD-KGB Secret Police. The line marked by the arrow and underlined is Gustav's claim to be a "simple member of the Mennonite community."

2510  
 Вопрос: Когда вы прибыли на Дальний Восток?  
 Ответ: На Дальний Восток я прибыл в 1927 году.  
 Вопрос: Вы были там... где?  
 Ответ: Там же, где и сейчас. Дрезде Г.  
 Вопрос: Если вы закончили прием на Дальний Восток?  
 Ответ: Прием на Дальний Восток я закончил в 1927 году в районе г. Сиверск, где стал заниматься земледелием. Дрезде Г.  
 Вопрос: Прием на Дальний Восток вы закончили...  
 Ответ: Нет, закончил я не закончил. Дрезде Г.  
 Вопрос: Вы были проповедником? Ответ: Да.  
 Вопрос: Нет, проповедником я не был. Я был...  
 Ответ: Член общины мennonитов. Дрезде Г.  
 Вопрос: Связь с заграницей имелись?  
 Ответ: До 1932 года имелись связь с...  
 Вопрос: Свидетельство известно, что вы член общины...  
 Ответ: Да, я член общины мennonитов. Дрезде Г.  
 Вопрос: Намерение эмигрировать в 1930 году...  
 Ответ: Да, намерение эмигрировать в 1930 году...  
 Вопрос: В 1933 году можно было бы эмигрировать...  
 Ответ: Да, можно было бы эмигрировать...  
 Вопрос: ...и эмигрировали бы. ...  
 Ответ: Да, эмигрировали бы. ...  
 Вопрос: ...и эмигрировали бы. ...  
 Ответ: Да, эмигрировали бы. ...  
 КОПИЯ ВЕРНА 19 12 1937

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ВЫПИСКА ИЗ ПРОТОКОЛА  
 тройки УНКВД по ДВК от 15 " февраля 1938 г.

СЛУШАЛИ	ПОСТАНОВИЛИ
Дело № 20821 АМУРСК ОБЛ. УНКВД по обвинению ФРЕЗЕ Густава Яковлевича, 1888 г. р., ур. с. Линден-Ау Самарской г., немца, г. СССР, о/п, колхозник, член общины мennonитов. Обвиняется: Прошлый в колхозе про- водил среди колхозников японскую агитацию, направленную на развал колхозов.	ФРЕЗЕ Густава Яковлевича РА С С Т Р Е Л Я Т Ь. Известно, лично при- нять осужденному кон- вать.

КОПИЯ ВЕРНА 19 12 1937

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ВЫПСКА ИЗ АКТА

Постановлением тройки УНКВД по ДВК от 15-16-38 года  
 застрелен... Дрезде  
 ...установка... Яковлевича  
 ...исполнение в 20 " час." 17-го... 38 года.



Gustav J. Froese/Frese (Jan. 15, 1888-Mar. 10, 1938), son of Jacob and Justine (Dyck) Froese, and husband of Margaretha Froese, while in a Soviet prison awaiting execution. He was shot on March 10, 1938, at age 50 in Blagovyeshchensk, Amurskaya Oblast, Russia. The sign board around his neck in Cyrillic alphabet reads: "Frese, G J(acobovich)."

Copy of the death sentence for Gustav J. Froese (1888-1938) issued on February 15, 1938. Gustav was shot in or near Blagoveschensk on March 10, 1938.