

Canada, the accompanying copy of a despatch to His Majesty's Representative at Moscow relating to the position of the Mennonites in the Soviet Union.

I have etc.

J. H. THOMAS

[PIÈCE JOINTE/ENCLOSURE]

*Le secrétaire aux Affaires étrangères britannique à l'ambassadeur  
britannique en Union soviétique*

*British Foreign Secretary to British Ambassador in Soviet Union*

DESPATCH 1147

London, October 11, 1930

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 365 of March 18th last, regarding the Mennonites in the Soviet Union, I have to inform you that the Reverend David Toews, Chairman of the Mennonite Church in Canada, called recently at this Department to ask if assistance could be given to these Mennonites, or whether any other way of helping them could be suggested.

2. Mr. Toews said that the sufferings of the Russian Mennonites, whose numbers he estimated at eighty thousand, were beyond description. According to the reports laid before a special conference of his co-religionists at Danzig, from which he had just returned, about twenty five thousand of these unfortunate people had been "liquidated as kulaks";—that is they were arrested, packed into trains as "volunteers for the timber industry", and taken off to Siberia or to the White Sea Area. There they were planted down in mid-winter, without any preparation, in so-called "concentration camps", where they had to make houses out of snow and live like Eskimos. When the snow thawed in the spring, the whole country was flooded, and they had to live in the trees; and Mr. Toews believes that in consequence of these hardships, twenty thousand out of twenty five thousand have already perished. In some cases whole families were thus deported; in other cases the families were split up.

3. The conference at Danzig had been unable to think of any way of helping these people, either by obtaining permission from the Soviet Government to remove them from the country, or by sending assistance to them: but Mr. Toews hoped that by appeals to the Red Cross Societies and to foreign governments some pressure might be brought to bear on the Soviet Government to induce them to treat the Mennonites less barbarously.

4. Mr. Toews was informed that, though every sympathy was felt at the tragic plight of these Mennonites, it was unfortunately impossible for His Majesty's Government to render them any assistance, as they were Soviet citizens.

I am etc.

H. J. SEYMOUR  
for the Secretary of State