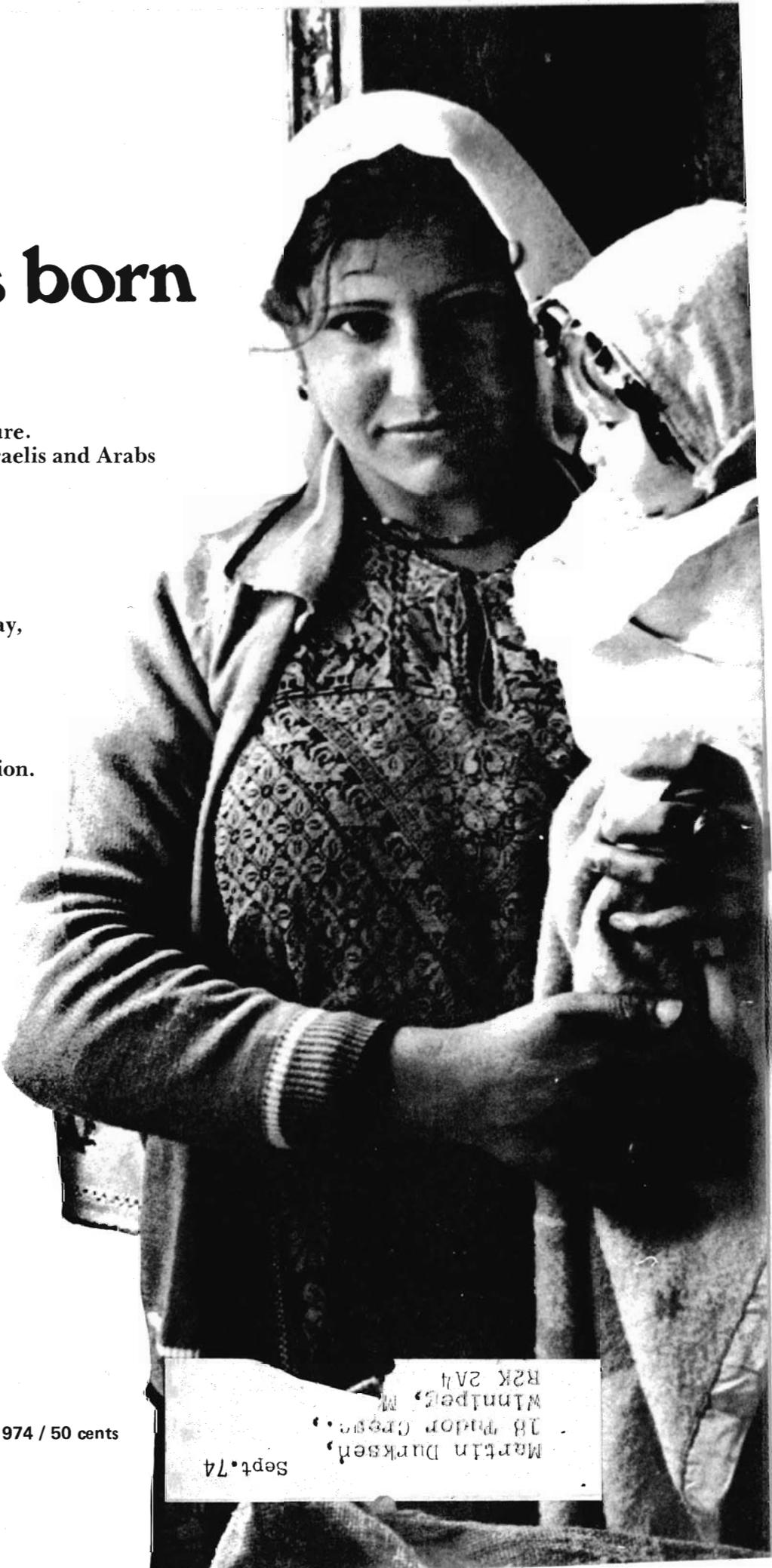


a child is born

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like a pack of cards.

Years ago
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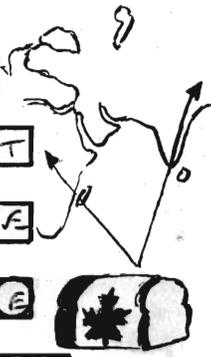
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Almost 40 persons entered the November Mix-up. The winner is Mrs. John G. Reimer, of Landmark, Manitoba.

The answers to the November Mix-up are: fight, peace, strife, battle, serene, placate, and blessed are the pacifists.

The letters are to be re-arranged and written in the squares to form real words. Letters which fall into squares with circles are to be arranged to complete the answer at the bottom of the puzzle.

A winner will be drawn at random from among all the correct entries, and a cash prize will be awarded.

Entries must be sent to the Mirror office by December 20, 1974.

Contest entrants are reminded that the Mirror staff would prefer to award the prize to a household where the subscription is paid up. Please try to remember to pay yours if you haven't done so already.

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About this issue

The Mennonite Central Committee provided the cover of this issue. It has a Christmas thought which remembers the real reason for the celebration without forgetting that there are real human needs. No one has been able to escape the news of the past year which has described the very real spectre of famine and economic distress in many parts of the world. Mennonite Mirror readers are comparatively very fortunate - indeed rich. Those who are wondering what to buy as a present for the person who has everything may wish to consider a donation to an organization which helps those who have nothing.

One of the feature articles in this issue is a tribute or memorial to the coming of the first contingent of Mennonite settlers in 1874. This was written by Al Reimer of the University of Winnipeg and was read by him to the people who gathered at the confluence of the Rat and Red rivers, south of Winnipeg, in August to celebrate the Mennonite landing there exactly 100 years previous.

The Mexican Mennonites have been in the news this fall and a great deal of concern has been generated as to whether they will be able to stay in that country. Dr. H.L. Sawatsky, of the University of Manitoba, has written what might be called "an inside story" which describes the problem rather differently from the news reports. Dr. Sawatsky is the author of a highly acclaimed book, *They Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*.

Eric Friesen, a radio announcer with the CBC who has a great interest in the arts, reviewed the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre presentation of *Prozess Jesu*. Elizabeth Peters, who has written for the Mirror in the past, presents a short appraisal of the work of the late Gerhard Wiens.

Mennonite Mirror readers are encouraged to write letters to the editors to let them know what you want (or don't want) in the magazine, and to debate a point made in an article.

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mennonite
mirror

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A new life half way around the world

A dramatized meditation on the journey of the first group of Russian Mennonites to Manitoba in 1874, presented at a special centennial ceremony held at the original landing site on July 31, 1974.

By Al Reimer

We are gathered here today, in this venerable place, to listen to the voices of our Mennonite past, to meditate together on the meaning of a journey half way around the world, a journey undertaken in answer to God's command, in hopes of a brighter future, in the faith that with God's help all present and future obstacles would be overcome, a journey that both ended and began on this river bank exactly one hundred years ago.

We, the spirits of your ancestors, welcome you, our descendents, to this historic ground upon which we first set our travel-weary feet to begin the adventure in faith for which you are honoring us today. We welcome you to this spot, but we also remind you that you have waited to commune with us here until all living witnesses to the event have disappeared from your midst. Since the generations cannot make physical contact with each other across the gulf of a century, our spirits must reach out to yours to draw you into a living but unknown past as we once felt ourselves drawn into a vivid but unknown future.

Listen now as we try to tell you how it was in that never-to-be-forgotten summer of 1874, that summer in which a living Mennonite orchard was transplanted root and branch, flower and stem, from one continent to another. It all started, of course, long before that fateful summer. Trees and orchards have to grow from seeds, after all, and so did our plans for mass migration.

We were a humble, submissive people in Russia, and unschooled in the ways of the outside world; but even we "Stillen im Lande" were hardly blind or deaf; a good farmer can smell the stormclouds gathering. We did not need to go to Moscow or St. Petersburg to see the Czar's frown or hear the hostile mutterings of his advisors. The threat of a government decree that our young men would be taken from their villages and forced to bear arms was enough for us. We had no intention of waiting for the lash to fall, and so we cast our eyes in

the direction of a new, safer country, as our ancestors before us had done in other lands.

The story of the many is often best crystalized in the story of a few. One voice may symbolize many voices. Open your minds and hearts, then to one such voice, a voice that speaks for a single family in that first group of immigrants, a voice that tells you of the hopes and fears, the joys and agonies, the hardships and triumphs of that monumental journey to the heart of an unknown continent.

We were the Peter Hieberts from Rosenfeld, a village in the Kleinemeinde colony of Borozenko, South Russia. We, my wife Maria and I, our three growing boys, our infant daughter and my elderly parents, the Jacob Hieberts, were part of that first group of emigrants that left Russia for Canada in June, 1874. My wife and I, both in our early thirties when we came here, were born in the village of Ruekkena in the Molotschna. My wife came from the Frank Rempels there. My family had been known for generations as the "Groute Hieberts" because the men in our family were usually tall and thick and strong as horses.

In our colony many of us had talked of going to America years before our delegates were finally sent to spy out the land in the summer of 1873. Whenever Maria and I looked at our three sturdy sons we were gripped by fear that someday our government might force them to put on uniforms and teach them to shoot guns. And we didn't like it any better that they would soon learn nothing but Russian in school and grow up to despise the German of their forefathers.

When our delegates, Ohm Cornelius Toews and Ohm David Classen, returned from America and gave their reports in church everyone in the village was there. It was a very hot Sunday morning during threshing time, and even with all the windows open the church was stifling. But no one seemed to mind. Everyone — even the small fidgety boys — listened eagerly as the delegates described their long, difficult journey. The dignified Ohm Toews could hardly keep the excitement out of his voice as he reported that in Manitoba every adult could get 160 acres of free land, that we could live in villages or on separate farms,

as we chose, and that they had brought back a written agreement signed by the Canadian government that our young men would never have to go into military service.

Our actual preparations for the migration took the better part of a year. There was so much to do. I had to dispose of our farm and stock, and that wouldn't be easy. Our people had only been established in Borozenko for about eight years and my Wirtschafft, like most of the others, was promising but far from complete. The rumours were that we would probably have to sell everything at half price or less, and even then we would be lucky to collect all the money before we left. Most nights Maria and I lay in our bed in the Eckstouv talking and planning and wondering how everything would make itself in the end.

Above all, we wondered about this strange America that was beckoning us. The boys were full of questions, especially our ten-year-old Heinrich, the middle boy, who was the "Niehschieh" in our family. I told them what little I knew at the Faspas talbe. The boys knew that the earth was round and that America was on the other side. They also knew that we were on top, so then Canada had to be underneath, below our feet. And what would we find there, they wondered? Was it really a wild country with only savage people in it — Indians, or perhaps even Menschenfresser? And what about the wolves and wild bears?

We wondered what the weather would be like. How cold would it get in winter? After all, our delegates had only been there in summer, but they had heard some stories about the harsh winters. Would the soil be like the rich, fertile loam of the Ukraine, or would it be a thinner soil, less suitable for farming? On this point our delegates had been a little vague and noticeably less enthusiastic, and I had noticed some of the older men looking at each other uneasily.

But there would be *freedom* in Canada, freedom to live and worship our God as we saw fit. And most important of all: under the protection of the gracious Queen Victoria, who looked so much like a Mennonite Ohma in the pictures we had seen of her, our young men would never have to put on uniforms and fight no matter what happened.

At last the time for our departure arrived. I had managed to sell our young farm, but for a very bad price, and the same with our stock and equipment. After paying for our tickets we had some money left but we would arrive in Canada with very little. I must confess to my shame that I could think of very little else as we sat in church for our farewell on that final Sunday.

That last night in our old home none of us could sleep — not even the boys. I knew that there must be many homes in the colony that night where people about to depart were lying rigid and sleepless with anxiety over what the future would bring. My dear wife lay quietly sobbing beside me, and I knew that no words I could say, no Scripture I could quote to her, would relieve her woman's heart of the burden it bore that night.

But Maria was up with the sun, her face puffy from crying, checking and rechecking

the food and belongings we were taking with us. We had prepared several big bags of roasted Zweiback (Roescke) which we knew would keep for the whole voyage. We had boxes of warm clothings and fur coats. We would be warm in Canada no matter how cold the winter — at least for the first winter. Maria was also taking her most prized possession, a beautiful Kroeger clock that she had inherited. She had sewn a special little canvas bag padded with wool and rags, so that her precious clock would not be damaged during the long journey. She would carry it as part of her handbaggage. I had sometimes joked with my Mumje that she thought as much of that clock as she did of our children. Now I teased her a little more by saying that perhaps she could sew another special bag to carry our little Tina in.

The moment came to depart. The first part of our journey would take us by

water to the port city of Odessa from where the train would take us to Berlin. We took a last look at our old Heimat and knew in our hearts that we would never see it again. As we pulled out of our yard, I looked down at Maria. She was glancing back at the house, but dry-eyed now. And then I noticed that she was wearing her Sunday lace cap, even though it was raining softly as we drove away.

Never in a hundred years could I describe everything that happened on that journey. At times it was pleasant — even thrilling, especially at the beginning when the trains, the ships, the cities and people had not yet run together in one stupefying jumble of sights and impressions. Much of the time it was a bone-numbing nightmare we thought would never end. I couldn't get it out of my mind that we had made a decision that could not be reversed. Yes, we were now truly, helplessly, in God's hands and we would have to bear what He had in store for us as best we could.

As we sat in the swaying train to Berlin going at a speed we could not have believed before, we heard an old lady near us say: "Nah, joah, wie sent je nuh uk aulla fein benne." Yes, I thought, so far, so good. But what was yet to come? New sights and sounds were rushing at us from all sides, How different it all was from our quiet, peaceful little Rosenfeld. It felt strange to sleep sitting up in the railway car. For Maria and the boys it was not so bad. They could curl up on the seats. But for me, a man of close to 250 lbs., the seats were not built. I had to sleep upright with my feet tucked under till they ached with cramp.

In a few days we reached Berlin, a city so vast and busy and noisy that it made our heads ache. Here our belongings were loaded into a huge wagon and taken to another station. The women and children sat on top of all the boxes and bags. It was a strange sight. When we arrived in Hamburg we were taken to the immigration house to wait for our ship. There we met a group of our brethren who were migrating to Nebraska. From Hamburg we took a freighter across the North sea to England. It was loaded with sleek looking oxen which we compared with our own oxen left behind in Russia. We agreed that these were not as fine looking as ours had been.

By the time we got to Hull we had already had enough of boat and train travel, and our ocean voyage hadn't even begun yet! We had now been on the road for about ten days, and we were all travel-weary, rumped, dirty and red-eyed from lack of sleep. The lice were already among us and would stay with us for the rest of the trip. Already two infants in our group had died and several other children and old people were sick. We prayed night and morning that our little Tina and the boys would be spared the dreaded small pox or other diseases that could strike tired travellers.

In Liverpool we were joined by a large Contingent of Mennonites from the Colony Bergthal in South Russia. They were led

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by their Eltester, Onkel Heinrich Wiebe. As we again had some time on our hands, many of us looked for small supplies to buy. We found most things too dear. A small axe was a dollar and more. I bought some razor blades and a small oil lamp. I even bought some candy for the children, but told them they should not expect any more till we were safely in our new home in Canada.

After several days of waiting, we finally boarded the small steamer that was to take us out to our ocean steamer. While we were

going up the gangplank an accident occurred that proved once again that God's ways are wondrous to behold. Just ahead of us, the elderly Onkel David Enns, who was nearly blind and a little unsteady on his feet from fatigue, slipped the gangplank and toppled over the side into the water. As luck would have it, he was carrying a big bag of Roescke, which he now clutched in the water as a life preserver. A sailor quickly jumped into the water and pulled Onkel Enns, still squeezing his bag, safely out of the water.

Just after breakfast on the 2nd of July, our big ship, the *S. S. Peruvian*, slipped anchor and began to move out to the open sea. Again our spirits sank as we realized that we were now being separated even from the ancient continent of Europe from which all our people sprang. Before us lay the cold, heaving Atlantic Ocean and beyond that a huge, unknown continent in whose tracts we were to carve new lives for ourselves and our descendents. Again, few of us slept that first night at sea.

On our second full day at sea a frightening storm sprang up and almost everybody in our group quickly fell into the terrible agony of sea-sickness. In our family only my father and I remained relatively well. Maria lay in our cabin, pale and moaning. Even when her beloved clock fell off a shelf during the storm she hardly gave it a glance. I knew then that she must be very sick. The children cried and whimpered and threw up, although little Tina seemed to be unaffected and smiled and jabbered away as always. For two whole days and nights the storm and the seasickness raged on. Then on the third morning we woke to a calm sea. In every cabin the people began to stir again, weak and shakey, but interested in living again. On Sunday, our sixth day at sea, we held a thanksgiving service on deck. Prediger Frank Wiens read Psalm 90, which begins: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations," and preached a sermon that sounded a little odd among the wind and waves and the ship's noises. After

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the service we noticed that our little Tina had a slight fever, but nothing serious.

On the eighth day we reached the city of St. John's, Newfoundland. It was a cold, windy, foggy morning. Those who had their winter coats with them wore them. Unfortunately, we had packed our heavy coats in boxes that were in the ship's hold. So we had to shiver through the day. And looking at the awesome icebergs all around us did not make us feel any warmer. Marie and the boys seemed well again, but my mother seemed to get a little weaker with each passing day.

Worse, our little Tina was now quite sick and we were getting worried. In the evening of our tenth day at sea, as we were approaching Halifax, she suddenly got much worse. By morning we had lost our lovely little girl with the blue eyes and soft blonde hair. The ship's doctor told us politely that since our little girl had died of small pox, she would have to be buried at the mouth of Halifax harbour. The authorities would not permit her body to be brought to shore. So we sewed her into a tiny canvas bag and with many salt tears and prayers we lowered her into the salt waves. I recalled my old joke about the canvas bag my wife had made for our clock, and remorse was added to my grief. God in His wisdom had not allowed our daughter to see the promised land, but we still had each other and our three boys, and we thanked God for sparing them — so far at least.

On July 16th we disembarked at Quebec City after exactly two weeks at sea. What a relief it was to set our feet on firm land again. But we had little time to rest. By four A.M. the next morning we were off by train to Montreal. There we were served a welcome meal of good thick soup, white bread and ham — then off again to Toronto. During our stop there a delegation of ministers from the Old Colony Mennonites came to greet us. In true Mennonite style, they brought us not only words of welcome but also some much-needed food for the poorer families among us. There were several barrels of salt pork, cured hams, beans and small barrels of dried apples. Our leaders promised to distribute these gifts fairly.

At Collingwood, Ontario, we again switched from the train to a lake boat that would take us across the Great Lakes to Duluth. From there we took the train to Moorhead on the Red River. Our journey was now nearing its end, but I wondered if it would end soon enough. My Maria was still grieving and looked pale and tired. My parents, too, were obviously suffering, although they never complained. In Moorhead we bought some apples and other fruit. Here also the food we received from our brethren in Toronto was carefully divided. Marie and I received some beans, but nothing else.

After two days of waiting we started down the Red in a small riverboat with two passenger-laden barges in tow. There was a buzz of excitement in our group when we were told that we had crossed the border and were now in Manitoba. But we could

have done without the welcoming party that accompanied us. Swarms of mosquitoes attacked us from all sides. Never had we experienced anything like that. It was as if one of the plagues of Egypt had been loosed upon us. And we were trying to get into the country, not leave it. Tears we had already shed on our new land; sweat we expected to shed in future; now we found that we were also required to give our very blood to these ravenous little creatures.

And then, finally, on the last day of July, after seven weeks of indescribably tedious and burdensome travel, we reached our destination here in this very place where the Rat and the Red rivers meet in watery union. I don't know just what we expected to find here, but I do know that we hardly expected to disembark on a muddy little river bank covered mainly by willows and long grass. We expected a wilderness, yes, but a more majestic wilderness. This little place seemed, somehow, too mean and inadequate a setting to mark the end of such an epic journey as ours. Aside from a few swarthy, long haired brown men with ox-carts standing on the shore, there was nothing here of any interest to see. Back home in Russia we would not have given such a place as this a second glance.

We spent several hours here unloading our freight and left some of our men to guard it, along with many of the women and children. Our boat captain had his men build some large smudge fires to ward off mosquitoes. The rest of us continued on to Winnipeg, where we spent the rest of the day buying supplies. I bought a good cook stove, an axe and other tools — also some fresh milk for Maria and the boys. That night we slept for the last time on the boat and the next morning we came back here to our landing place.

And now it came to us fully for the first time that from now on this wilderness was to be our "home" — and what a hollow ring that word had in these surroundings. Maria sat down on one of our boxes and broke down in sobs. Just as I had felt helpless to comfort her on that last night in our old home, so I felt helpless to comfort her now, except to place my hand on her thin shoulder in silent sympathy. Even the boys were tired and subdued and hardly bothered scratching the lice that had so annoyed them throughout the trip.

And then somebody struck up the familiar old tune of "Nun Danket Alle Gott," and as we all joined in singing our sincere thanks to God for his "countless gifts of love" our heavy hearts began to lift. We realized once again, on this humble shore, that like the Children of Israel, we wanted to follow God, but that instead it was so easy for us to start following our own desires and interests — especially in times of stress and hardship. And so we picked up our belongings and trudged towards the waiting ox-carts that were to take us to our temporary quarters a few miles from here. Maria walked beside me carrying her clock and once again wearing her Sunday lace cap.

mm

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A Look at the Mexican Situation

Mennonite Exodus from Mexico to Canada?

by H. L. Sawatsky

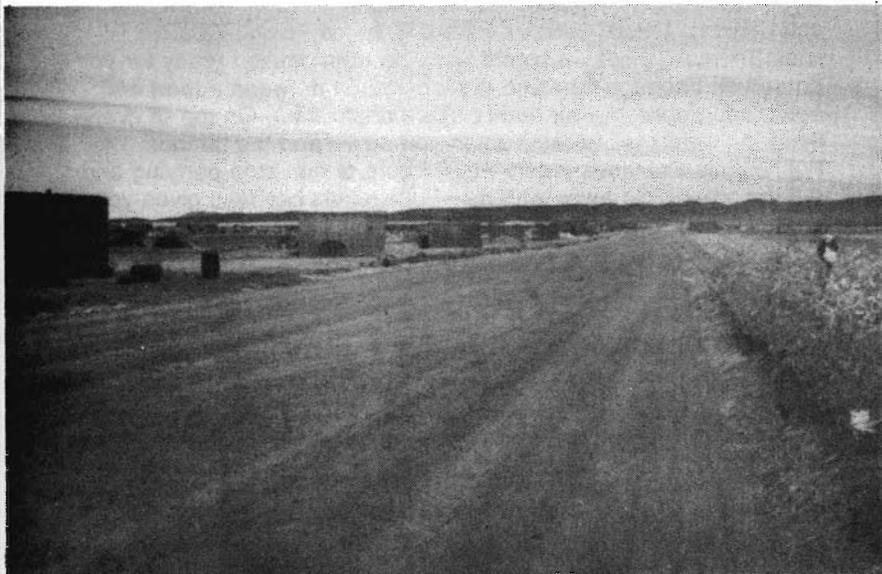
In early October a story which caused considerable stir among Mennonites in Canada - and to some extent in the populace at large as well - hit the national headlines. The Mennonites in Mexico, so the initial stories would have it, were about to be expelled from Mexico en masse. The Mennonites, it was said, had entered Mexico in the 1920's under a 50-year lease arrangement. The 50 years were now up, the lease was not being renewed, and the Mexicans - large landowners sending their henchmen ahead to force the Mennonites off - were repossessing the land, and the Mennonites, with nowhere else to go, looked to be imminently knocking, some 40,000 strong, at the doors of Canada, their former home. Well-meaning citizens, Mennonites and others (a few out of concern for its news value as 'sensation of the day' rather than for the plight of the "refugees") made impassioned representations to the immigration authorities on the Mexican Mennonites' behalf.

As with most 'news' there is some truth to this story, although in this case it took a lot of sifting to get to it. But perhaps it is better to first dispel the inaccuracies. First: the Mennonites did not go to Mexico

on the basis of leasing land for a term of 50 years. They have bought and paid for all of it, and own the surface rights absolutely under titles equivalent to those applying to real estate in Canada. The total area in 13 colonies in four states (Chihuahua, Durango, Zacatecas and Tamaulipas) is approximately 500,000 acres of which about half was purchased in 1922, before onset of the migration from Canada, and the rest at various times up to the mid-1960's. Under the terms of the agreement worked out with the government of President Alvaro Obregon in 1921 they enjoy the right and privilege to reside and own property in Mexico "positively and permanently," and to refrain from military service. Second: no large landowner is sending in his private army of peasants to dispossess the Mennonites by force. Mexico is a 'revolutionary' country its government is formed by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (in power for over 50 years) and the large landowners are themselves, and have been for more than four decades, having their own lands expropriated for redistribution to peasant farmers. Third: there is no large-scale migration of Mennonites from Mexico in the offing. For one thing, the Mexican government, while it does not hinder their

departure (freedom to leave being part of the 1921 agreement, or Privilegium) has no wish to see them leaving en masse. The Mennonites are valuable to Mexico. They are recognized as productive (if somewhat peculiar) people who have never been delinquent in paying their taxes and who cause neither expense nor embarrassment to the government in any direct way. The only visible cause of embarrassment to the Mexican government stemming from the Mennonites' presence is the fact that they continue, essentially, to be aliens with privileges rather than citizens with rights (and obligations, one of which they are not willing to shoulder being the gun, militia service being universal in Mexico). At all events, were a massive migration of Mennonites from Mexico to take place, it is doubtful in the extreme that more than a relatively small percentage would come to Canada, even if measures were taken to make it possible to enter Canada easily and pick up their ties with this country once more. The majority would almost certainly go to Paraguay and/or Bolivia, the only nations in the western hemisphere still more or less favorably disposed toward immigration of minority groups under special terms.

How, then, did the story arise, that large numbers of Mennonites in Mexico were being hounded off their land, and, perhaps, out of Mexico itself? The basis of it (and I have checked this out on the scene in 1971, and again recently with my always reliable sources in Mexico) appears to be a situation which revolves around a disputed title in respect to a single piece of land - approximately 10,000 acres - in the Santa Rita area some 60 miles north of Cd. Cuauhtemoc in the state of Chihuahua. This block of land was, prior to its purchase by the Mennonites in 1956, part of the Hacienda Santa Rita, owned by the family and descendants of Don Jesus Almeida, a powerful and wealthy clan of Spanish colonial ancestry. In 1946 the Almiedas were put on notice by the government that portions of their hacienda - the above mentioned 10,000 acres included - were slated for imminent expropriation for purposes of creating an ejido, a semi-co-operative peasant farming community. The Almeidas protested, claim-



A Mexican squatter village near Sta. Rita, 1971.

ing that the area in question was vital, because of its water and grass, to the successful functioning of the entire hacienda, comprising in total well over 100,000 acres. This may well have been true, since much of the land is droughty and stony and there are few permanent streams. Considering the thousands of head of cattle the Almeidas were pasturing, and the fact that the animals have to be able to walk to water each day without exhausting themselves, the arguments must have appeared reasonable to the government officials. The Almeidas were accorded a 25-year moratorium on expropriation, during which time they might adjust their ranching enterprise in such a way as to be able to carry on without the land which they would ultimately have to relinquish. From 1971 onward, then, they might at any time expect the land to be taken, if there still was a need in the area for the establishment of a new peasant ejido. This they did, by drilling wells and otherwise accommodating themselves to the situation as it must almost certainly evolve in the future. However, rather than wait for 1971, they jumped the gun and in 1956 sold the land to the nearby, always land-hungry Mennonites, who paid for it at the rate of some \$20 per acre and took what seems even today to be a perfectly legal title.

When 1971, the terminal year of the moratorium to the Almeidas, rolled around, however, Mexican political agitators, wise to the fact that the Mennonites are land-owners under special conditions that are somewhat at variance with Mexican law as it is interpreted today, mobilized the peasants in the region, claimed the land had been set aside in 1946 for just these peasants and persuaded a considerable number of them to simply move onto the Mennonites' land, build villages and plant crops and, in effect squeeze the Mennonites off. The total area thus involved was somewhat over 7,000 acres, representing about 30 per cent of all the land owned by the two villages affected. Between 75 and 100 families - perhaps somewhat fewer, certainly not more - were thus deprived of some or all of their land, which on the average, already ran to only the almost pitifully small size of 100 acres or less (with a productive capability comparable to some of the poorest drought-prone areas of Saskatchewan) considering that the average Mennonite family runs to a total of eight or more persons. The Mennonites protested, first to state authorities and ultimately to the president of the country, against being thus deprived of their property. Since the Mennonites do not, as a matter of principle, resort to the courts, the issue is not likely to be resolved on its legal merits. In my opinion, if the issue did go to court, the trial might very easily become one of the legitimacy of the Mennonites' alien status under the terms of the 1921 Privilegium. As it stands now, there is very little incentive for Mexican officials at either the state or federal level to act for the Mennonites, who do not vote and therefore have no real political leverage,

against the Mexican peasants. At first there was serious talk of the two affected villages sharing the loss, but it appears that those who lost little or nothing aren't very keen on the idea, and so far nothing has been done.

Since the average farm size among the Mennonites was already painfully close to the subsistence level, loss of even a relatively small acreage can drive many of them below that line. Such people may then have to make moves based on desperation. The events described have had ramifications far beyond the actual limits of the land-taking activity. The fears aroused effect a considerable radius. The result is that those who lost part of their land cannot sell what is left in order to raise capital for a new start elsewhere, since nobody will take the risk for fear that the peasant encroachment could at any time resume. At best they can sell their modest inventories of equipment, and that seldom if ever gives them more than capital enough to undertake the

journey to a place where a new start can be attempted. One group of about 15 families has gone to eastern Paraguay, into heavily forested land with which they have no prior experience, almost totally destitute. Others have taken the easier way to the homeland of their immediate ancestors, Canada, where they readily find employment in agriculture and other laboring activities, often with other Mennonites, so that few serious barriers of language and culture have to be overcome.

The preferred destination in Canada for some time now has been southern Ontario. Since the early 1960's a community of several hundred families of Mennonites from Mexico had emerged in the Port Rowan and Aylmer areas, in the heart of the canning crop region. They are highly regarded by farmers and other employers for their omnivorous appetite for work of any description - against a backdrop of large rosters of Canadian "jobless" and welfare recipients in those and other nearby centers,

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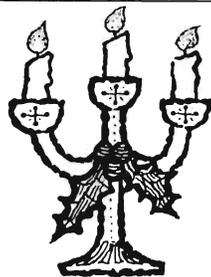
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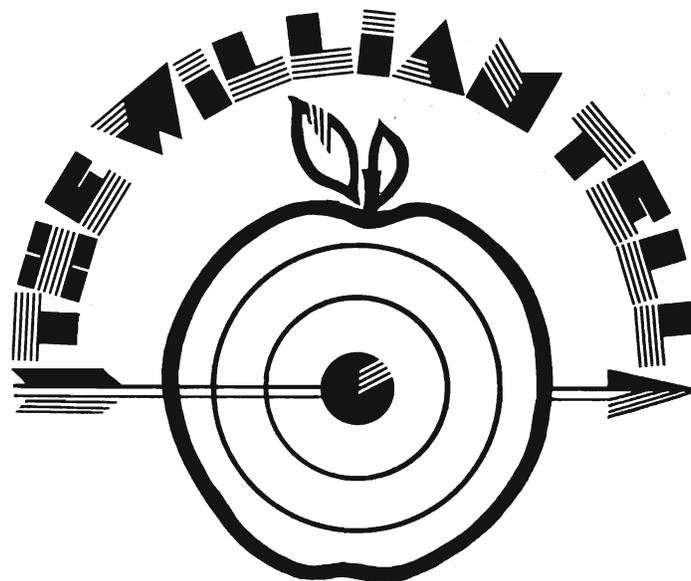
while crops are rotting in the fields for lack of hands - and for their low incidence of involvement with social and law-enforcement agencies. In those communities many more of them would be more than welcome.

In Mexico the situation is not likely to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Mennonites, for a combination of several reasons. As long as the Mennonites prefer to be aliens with privileges, however fragile, rather than citizens with rights, they must, I believe, reckon on failure to retrieve their land, however "legal" their title to it. Were they to declare their willingness to assume full citizenship, as Mexicans they could almost certainly win a case in court. The most serious barrier there would seem to be the fact that to accept full citizenship would automatically mean the acceptance of military service, which is universally required. The dilemma of the present then revolves around the political reality that Mexican officials "cannot" find for the "alien" Mennonites against the claims and interests of the peasants, who, not "aliens" were after all, the designated beneficiaries of the Revolution, while the Mennonites "cannot" accept full citizenship as long as this carries the requirement of military service. The only solution I can see, that might ultimately bridge the gap between Mennonite and Mexican positions - although going far beyond the limits of the present land problem - would be if Mexico modified its military service requirements, either by providing for alternative service opportunities for conscientious objectors, or by removing the compulsory service provision altogether, as has been the case in Canada except in wartime, and just recently adopted by the U.S. The likelihood of such an event may be small, considering Mexico's militaristic cultural legacy inherited from Spain, perpetuated as it is in the myth of the dauntless peasant fighting for the glory of *la patria*. The key elements to be considered from the Canadian point of view are, in my opinion, the fact that the problems of land loss in Mexico have not magnified, that the number of potential migrants to Canada as a result of these events is not likely above 400 - not 40,000 as the media at first would have it - that these people do have roots in Canada, have shown themselves capable of functioning here in useful ways and without embarrassment to Canadian society, and that therefore a liberal interpretation of the immigration regulations is most likely in the best interests of all concerned. mm



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An Appreciation of Gerhard Wiens, writer and scholar



by Elizabeth Peters

The Mennonite world has suffered a significant loss this summer through the untimely death of one of its foremost contemporary writers, Dr. Gerhard Wiens, Norman, Oklahoma. His passing will be deplored in many circles of our society in diverse ways and on various levels, according to the particular facet of appeal that this versatile writer had for his wide reading audience. To the teachers in our midst he will be known best for his texts in German and in Russian, *Bilderlesebuch fuer Anfaenger* and *Beginning Russian Reader*, respectively; the Mennonite reader will fondly recall his quaint narratives such as *De Wiedebom, daut Aejdatsjtji* and numerous others which appeared in *Der Bote* and in various periodicals. Those of us who had the good fortune to know him personally will sorrow for him because we have lost a fine friend.

Gerhard Wiens, born on January 3, 1905, came to Canada in 1924 as an immigrant from Russia at the age of 19, leaving behind his parents and sisters in his native Lindenau in the Molotschna. He had attended the Fortbildungsschule in Lindenau and Lehrerseminar in Halbstadt, but left the latter in 1922 due to the famine which stalked the countryside, including the prosperous Mennonite villages. The terrible suffering of those years of horror left a deep impression on the sensitive young man. Many years later he wrote a novel *And Ever the Sun* based on the experiences of the *Hungerjahr*, which was published serially in 1956 in *Mennonite Weekly Review*, Newton, Kansas.

The sudden uprooting from home surroundings at such an early age is always difficult, but even more so for someone endowed with an artistic temperament, that blessing and torment of artists and writers such as Gerhard Wiens. In his *Outline Sketch of My Life* (1974) he describes the agonizing loneliness, the homesickness he, who had never been more than 15 miles from home, suffered. In his simple warm style so characteristic for his *Schilderungen*, he depicts the departure of the train which bore the first eschelon of Mennonite emigrants to the Latvian border. Slowly it pulled out of Lichtenfeld, the neighbour village to

Lindenau, the rat-ta-tat of its wheels emphasizing the pain of parting from his loved ones whom he was never to see again. Sitting on the floor of the box-car in which the emigrants were transported, idly chewing at a piece of the black bread and cheese that was a part of home, he clutched in his hand a little metal coffee pot which his mother had given him to take on the journey. A few favorite books and this coffee pot were only tangible ties to that part of his life which he left behind forever.

In Canada he worked on farms and with harvesting crews until he was able to attend the MCI in Gretna on a scholarship made available to immigrant students through the efforts of the principal, H. H. Ewert. Working hard, he completed his high school education in Manitoba within two years, and then proceeded to Bluffton College, Ohio. Bluffton promised financial assistance to deserving immigrant students in the form of long term loans and the possibility to earn a small salary by working on the side. Gerhard Wiens improved his meagre finances as best he could by tutoring in German, Russian, and French, in which he was proficient, and by working in dormitories and in private homes of some of the professors.

In 1930 he earned his BA from Bluffton, majoring in English literature and philosophy; 1931 his MA at the University of Ohio (Thesis: *The Technique of Static Imagery in Pater and Hardy*), and in 1934 the Ph. D. In Germanistik at the same university (Dissertation: *Ludwig Tiecks Altersnovellen als Spiegel ihrer Zeit*).

The depression of 1929 brought in its wake a great scarcity of university employment, and he was unable to get a position. For several years he worked as an assistant at the University of Ohio, earning an annual salary of \$450 — hardly enough to keep alive, not to speak of his heavy financial obligations now that his studies were completed. Somehow he lived through the dirty thirties, his happy, gentle disposition and his excellent sense of humour sustaining him in the most difficult times.

Romantic that he was, it is not surprising that in his *Sketches* he tenderly describes

his courtship in 1931 of his future wife, Helen Francis Miller, from Bethany, West Virginia. They were married in 1932, and managed to live on the \$450 and what Helen could earn (she was also a teacher, having graduated with an MA with her husband) until 1935 when at long last a job offer from Moscow, Idaho, improved their financial situation. During the happy years in Idaho one son, John Anthony, was born (1939), and their happiness "knew no bounds" as Gerhard Wiens writes in the *Sketches*. After 11 years in Idaho, the family moved to Oklahoma because salaries were higher there. Here tragedy came upon them when Helen died of a kidney disease on March 7th, 1953.

A year later he married the widowed Lois Payton Kaufmann, and once again happiness came to the lonely man and boy. As he once said "she brought the sun" into their lives again.

His remaining professional years were most productive, and he became engrossed with his writing. A great longing for his Mennonite heritage suddenly swept over him at this point in his life, but he had been away from his people for many years and had forgotten much of his Low German. With his usual enthusiasm he set about to correct this, and in 1958 his *Maunch eena kaun ejen Plautdietsch mea* appeared in *Der Bote*. He had a great appreciation for Arnold Dyck, read his books many times and adopted Dyck's system of writing Low German. His prolific mind teemed with ideas and incidents related to his beloved "Plautdietsch," and he collected reams of notes to be used in his writings after his retirement in 1972.

Fate had decreed otherwise. His health failed, and in spite of several operations, he could not gain back his strength. Characteristically, even at a time when he was physically very low, he summoned all his will power and dedication to his Mennonite people and wrote the introduction to Henry Dyck's translation of *Lost in the Steppe* by Arnold Dyck. This was his last item for publication, and it is fitting that it should appear in the volume of the author whom he so greatly admired.

He had a great love for music and flowers,

and tended his garden through the hot weeks of June and July, apparently rallying in spite of the heat. On July 25, death came quickly, unexpectedly, after a sudden heart attack.

It is perhaps significant that the *Sketches* emphasize two thoughts, one a Schiller quotation: *Still, auf gerettetem Boot, treibt in den Hafen der Greis*. The other is appended to a description of his garden where in spring "forsythia and flowering quince are glowing." He ends his memoirs with the following sentence: "With more meanings than one I say: *Il nous faut cultiver nos ajrdins!*" (We must tend our gardens.) **mm**

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Douglas: "I broke a window at home, size sixteen by twelve. Do you have one?"

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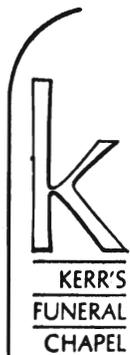
Douglas: "Maybe, if I stick it in sideways nobody'll notice it."

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Anne E. Klassen,
Altona, Man.

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Supermarket clerk to customer: "It was an inevitable price rise. We had to cover the cost of relabeling the last price increase."

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Faithfully,
Noah Hege,
Rt. 2, Box 166,
St. Charles, Minn.

Aufruf:

Ich habe einen Aufsatz ueber Mennonitische Literatur in Russland geschrieben, Behilflich waren mir dabei Aelt. G. Lohrenz und das Archiv des Mennonitischen Bibelcolleges. Die Zeitschrift sagt, der Artikel ist gut aber ein wenig mager, d.h. etwas mehr Fleisch bitte. Damit ich also eine kraeftigere Suppe zu kochen vermag (20-25 seiten) bitte ich um Ihre Hilfe.

Bitte bald?

Herzlichen Gruss,
Prof. Jack Thiessen
University of Winnipeg



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Review

Tomorrow has roots

by Urie Bender, with music by Harold Moyer.

A Review by Ruth Vogt

Tomorrow Has Roots is a dramatic production celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Mennonites in Kansas. This joint venture of the three Mennonite colleges in Kansas (Bethel, Hesston, and Tabor) was written by Urie Bender and has been presented in several Manitoba communities during the past month.

Confronted with the problem of depicting the history of a people in dramatic form, the writer chose the format of a play within a play. The history of the Mennonites is seen through the critical eyes of Kathy Van Riesen, a teen-age girl from a Mennonite family. As the play opens she is asking the question — "Where in all this ethnic jungle can we find the basics of Christianity - faith, hope and love?" Her search is conducted through her own participation, together with her family, in a historical drama. This drama contains a series of sketches showing life in Russia and the problems that arose when the Mennonites learned from Russian officials that they could not longer count on being exempt from military service.

The second act portrays the long and difficult journey by boat and train (the Santa Fe) from Russia to Kansas. Scenes of the arrival in Kansas and the problems faced by the early settlers were thought-provoking and interesting. Language, grasshoppers, the strong wind, initially poor crops and discontented wives were some of the problems which pressed in on the pioneer farmers. But the land was cleared, good homes were built and the crops did grow. The Mennonites prospered. We were brought back to the present. Kathy now understands her past, but continues to question the essence of her religious heritage. In the final scene she is taken back to the 16th century and shown the early Anabaptists, who had to suffer persecution and death, and did so gladly, because of their faith. A candle is handed to Kathy from her forefathers, and as the play ends she walks off the stage, through the audience, carrying this flickering symbol of the Anabaptist vision. *Tomorrow* has found its roots. While this is artistically most effective, one wonders whether the premise behind this is sound. Undoubtedly each generation must know and build on its past, but is not each generation required to forge its own vision, based on present reality? Perhaps Kathy should have been taken to see the VS worker at work in a city slum, MCC helping the needy anywhere in the world, or a TAP teacher in Ghana. Here are faith, hope and love alive and very much in action today.

The traditional simplicity of the Mennonites was reflected in the plain burlap

backdrop and geometric shapes which serve as props. A chorus was effectively used to provide transition from scene to scene. The beautifully choreographed expression of thanks for the "rust brown gold wheat of Kansas" was for me a highlight of the play. Technically the performance was of the highest calibre - costumes, lighting, sound and visual effects were imaginative and well-executed.

Parts of the play were absorbing and interesting, and credit must be given to the actors for a consistently high standard of performance. Because of the episodic nature

of the presentation, the production was somewhat lacking in suspense, and the play moved too slowly at times. Some of the scenes showing the discussions in Russia had little dramatic value and became a little tedious. In general, though, *Tomorrow Has Roots* provided a worthwhile evening of entertainment and an opportunity to think seriously about our past and future.

(Ruth Vogt is a High School teacher of English at the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute and a member of the *Mirror* editorial committee.)

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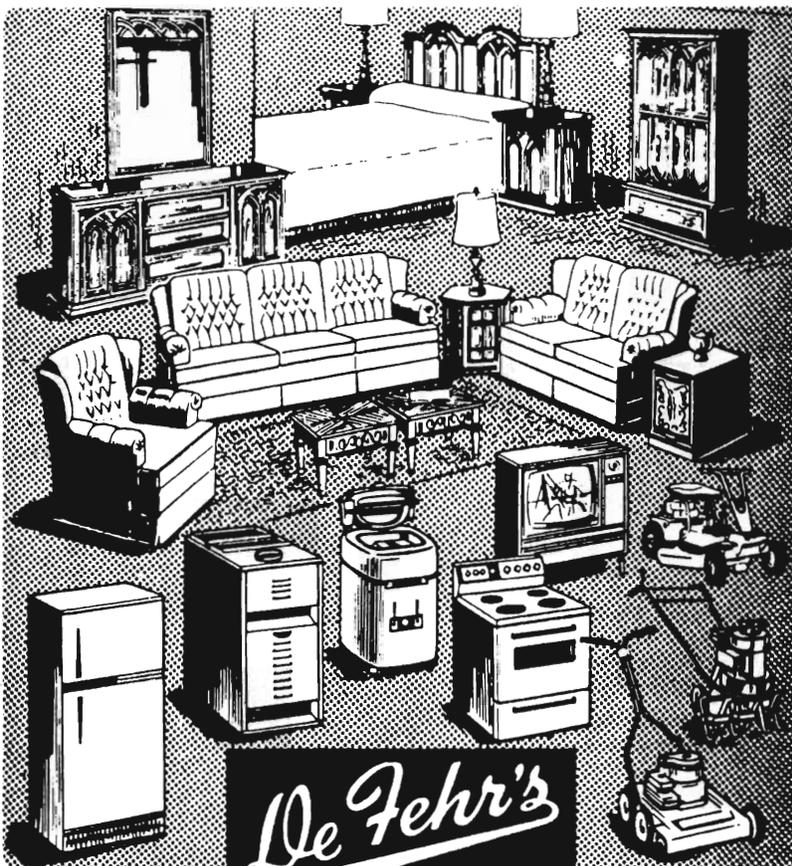


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Hard questions after Centennial

By Vic Penner

As the Manitoba Mennonite Centennial Year 1974 winds down I become increasingly aware of the impression it is leaving on me.

With the centennials of Canada (1967) and Manitoba (1970) barely behind us, many of us were just a little tired of centennial celebrations, and enthusiasm generally was a little slow in getting started. And that's not surprising for the Mennonites who traditionally are said to keep a low public profile.

But as the Saengerfest in the Centennial Hall and the Mennofest at Polo Park gave way to Mennonite centennial themes at such commercial events as the Altona Sunflower Festival, Winkler Old Tyme Value Days, and Steinbach Pioneer Days, interest in things Mennonite and things old (not necessarily in that order) started to grow.

By mid-summer the Mennonite Rally in the Winnipeg Arena drew as many Mennonites as that city's professional hockey team the Jets — were able to draw fans in winter.

Perhaps the rally was the highlight of the centennial in terms of number of Mennonites gathered in one place at one time for one purpose, but to me a folk opera *The Bridge*, and an imported drama from Kansas *Tomorrow has Roots* had the greatest impact. Both had a great deal of social and religious significance for Mennonites today. The opera and the drama came to grips with the present in relation to the past. They were no mere parading of past and present achievements, and yet they showed how tangled together are our moral, religious and economic values.

These presentations, for instance, made one wonder about many of the Mennonite migrations. How much of the incentive to move was grounded in economics? How much was truly based on the faith? How much was simply a matter of following a leader to a new land where separation from society was easier and the leaders had more power? Perhaps it is unfair to ask such questions, but I don't think so. The purpose of the centennial should be to arouse just such questions and even lead us to finding some answers.

One of my intended centennial projects was to read *The Martyrs Mirror*. But the original volume was too formidable in size when I examined it in our church library so I settled for an abridged version published this year by Dr. Cornelius Krahn. Even then I haven't finished reading it, but I am deeply impressed by those early Anabaptists and the fervor they showed for their faith.

How many martyrs would one find among the Mennonites in Manitoba today? Some, I dare say, would be prepared to die for their businesses or their land — their life's work. Some are dying for that material success right now simply by working themselves to death. But then that's a virtue isn't it? After all, who else is as well trained in the work ethic as Mennonites?

And in all this striving for success in farming, business, and industry there is an underlying (or overriding) guilt feeling, depending I suppose on upbringing, education and social consciousness that makes us Mennonites give fairly generously to church-related causes and other benevolences. We tithe and even over-tithe (now that 20 per cent of donations to charity is deductible for income tax purposes) because it is so much simpler than leaving our comfortable homes and communities to actually do something for the underprivileged.

A missionary speaking at a mission conference in a rural Manitoba church recently exhorted local wealthy farmers to leave their farms for a while and go to Bangladesh and teach the farmers there to produce the food so badly needed to conquer famine.

And what about unity among Mennonite sects? Has the centennial year done anything in that direction? I hope so, for it is high time that this happened in Manitoba. In the first decades of our hundred years here we were too busy simply surviving in a harsh climate fraught with drought, flood and grasshoppers to waste our time on petty inter-group squabbles. Now we have more time for such pursuits. Now we have to consciously ward off the temptation to enter and foster such unworthy animosities.

To me it is ironic and sad that in our flight from country to country we have continued to put so much stress on material success. Many of us assimilate into the host culture, or at least adopt the customs and values of our new home in every way except that on Sundays (or when it suits us) we go to a church called Mennonite.

Is a time of adversity needed to unite us? Dr. Cornelius Krahn recently related how he had attended a service in a large Russian church. All pews were occupied, and three ministers preached for three hours straight (in German.) Nobody left from boredom, and the faith was very strong.

Given those circumstances, would we unite and find strength in unity? How many would endure? How many would choose the easy path and fall by the wayside?

The Mennonite Centennial has raised some very serious questions. Questions I would hate to have to answer.

mm

Manitoba News

Bernie Wiebe, President of Freeman Junior College and Academy, was recently awarded a Ph.D. from the College of Human Resources Development at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. His doctoral dissertation was on Adolescent-Parent Communication and Relationships. Wiebe is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Peter D. Wiebe of Altona.

Menno Wiebe, former volunteer in Paraguay and now a director of native concerns with MCC (Canada), plans to visit Mennonites in Paraguay, Bolivia and Belize for a month to see if some 9,000 Mennonites of Bolivia, in particular, have any interest in establishing lines of communication with Mennonites in other countries.

Eleanor Bueckert, Winkler, was the winner of the Toronto Conservatory of Music

Silver Medal for scoring the highest mark in Grade 9 vocal in the province of Manitoba. Eleanor is the youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dave Bueckert.

A former Niverville resident, **Wanda Toews**, has won Canada-wide acclaim as a pianist. She has performed as a soloist with the Winnipeg and Toronto CBC Orchestras and with the Vancouver CBC Chamber Orchestra and has given a recital in New York. Dr. Eckhardt-Gramatte of Winnipeg, a European-Canadian composer, said of her, "One of the foremost Canadian pianists".

The official opening of the new **Concordia Hospital** in Winnipeg was held on Saturday, November 23 at the new site on the corner of Concordia Ave. and Highway 59. The hospital has been supported for decades,

both through finances and personnel, by the Mennonite community of Manitoba. Mennonite participation will continue to be important in the new and greatly enlarged facilities but the main costs are now borne by the provincial government. Taking part in the official ceremony were Mr. H. Willms, chairman of the Board, and Mr. Ed Schreyer, premier of the province. The new hospital opened its doors to its first patients in the first week in December.

The annual meeting of the **Manitoba Mennonite Central Committee** was held in Steinbach on Saturday, November 23, chaired by Peter Peters, Principal of the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute. Great emphasis was placed on the need to alleviate the problem of acute hunger that threatens numerous areas of the world.

Jake Epp, M.P. for Provencher, appeared on the CBC television program "Some Honorable Members" on Oct. 31 which dealt with matters pertaining to immigration. Epp, now the opposition critic on manpower and immigration, is drafting a policy position of Canada's future immigration needs.

An essay entitled "Nationalism and Internationalism - Ground Rules for Discussion" by **David Schroeder**, instructor at CMBC, appears in a booklet on Nationalism now available from the Peace Section of MCC.

Helena Toews, first resident of Altona and District Personal Care Home cut the ribbon to officially open the 25-bed home which is linked to the Altona Hospital.

Henry Dick, a history student at the University of Winnipeg has been awarded a bursary of \$2,000 for studies which will increase the research material in the library of the Co-operative College of Canada. His study is called "The co-operative movement in Manitoba, with special reference to the Mennonites."

Premier Schreyer, in reference to Mennonite families who moved to Mexico from Manitoba back in the 20's and subsequent to that, says that despite immigration problems which the younger ones born there would be subject to, efforts would be made to welcome their return - if they wish to return.

Three young people to receive University of Winnipeg Alumni Scholarships valued at \$500 each were **Susan Fehr**, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. D.A. Fehr of Morden; **Wes Martens**, son of Mr. and Mrs. B.R. Martens of Altona; and **Dave Banman**, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Banman of Winkler.

Dr. Henry Enns, formerly of Steinbach, research scientist and sunflower breeder stationed at Morden for the past eight years, has resigned from his position with the Morden Station to accept a one-year term of service in Nepal with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

A 391 page book **Arnaud - Through the Years** is off the press and available from Peter Kathler, Box 14, Arnaud at \$7.95 postpaid or from Derksen Printers, Steinbach.

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Review

Propaganda, not drama

PROZESS JESU, a play in two acts with a brief dramatic interlude, by Diego Fabbri. Presented at the Playhouse Theatre, Winnipeg, 15. and 16. November, 1974, by the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre.

Reviewed by Eric Friesen

. . . For in all the play there is not one word apt. . .

- Philostrate, *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

Prozess Jesu opens to citizens of a contemporary community drifting on stage, taking their places to watch the performance of a company of touring Jewish players. The company includes a family (father, mother and mature daughter), the daughter's lover and an additional group of 10 students and actors. They move from village to village acting out in dramatic terms the problem of whether or not Jesus was justly dealt with by the Jews and Romans. The problem is examined in the setting of a legal inquiry ("prozess") in which the biblical characters who were witness to the events of Jesus' life and death are cross-examined by a group of five magistrates. It is an attempt either to discredit Jesus as an interloper, or to establish for all men his Messiahship.

This particular performance of the "prozess," however, does not proceed as usual. It soon becomes apparent that the family and the daughter's lover are caught up very personally in the "prozess", and that they are in spiritual torment as they near the resolution of the dramatic question. The question is resolved in a personal sense for all those on stage, and it is supposedly also resolved in a theological sense for all of us. The parade of biblical witnesses and

the interpretation of human experiences on stage destroy the cynicism that is mounted against the claims of Christianity and Jesus is affirmed as the true Messiah, the Way for all men. The curtain comes down on the "prozess," presumably forever.

Watching *Prozess Jesu*, the thought crossed my mind that there really exists very little first-rate religious drama and I think this play provides a good basis for considering the problem. It really has nothing to do with the religious convictions of our best dramatists. Rather, it is a problem similar to that of the political propagandist who wants to clothe his ideology with the lineaments of drama. You cannot simply dramatize rhetoric, putting into the mouths of your characters the arguments for or against an issue. The dramatic situation is too contrived to be convincing, too right or too wrong, too true or too false, too virtuous or too evil, as is the case with much of the social realism we have seen in Soviet literature. It is this preaching-through-drama that reduces the impact and success of *Prozess Jesu*. Fabbri strains dramatic credibility to make his point come out right, rather than developing the argument through his characters in the unimpassionate way an artist must. He cannot, for the sake of the art, decree which way the verdict will go. Fabbri obviously comes to the task with his Christian assumptions intact, and so what he gives us is Christian propaganda (in the best sense), not art and therefore not drama.

A few questions might suffice to make my point. Is it really valid to assume that a group of Jews would wander about Europe, spiritually tormented by the notion that they, as Jews, share an ancient responsibility

for Jesus' crucifixion? Catholics are still rooted in their accusation that Jews share the guilt for Jesus' death. But a quick survey of contemporary Jewry would find no such sense of guilt at all. A Jew's self-conversion to Christianity seems to me a very improbable phenomenon.

Fabbri also makes spectacular demands on his characters. Members of the touring company can suddenly be demanded to change their roles in the midst of a performance and become, in a flash, an eloquent re-creation of a new biblical character. Is it possible, for example, that an actress who is a veteran in the role of Pilate's wife can suddenly become an eloquent Mary of Nazareth, mother of Jesus? The same demands are made on members of the audience. Is it possible that an ordinary citizen can be transformed into a dramatically believable Joseph, eloquent enough to convince sceptical Jews that Jesus is the true Messiah?

I lament the choice of this play all the more because this production brought us some fine individual dramatic performances. Werner Regier, as the father and chief magistrate, gave a gracious and dignified performance. His daughter, played by Selma Enns, was a fine amalgam of petulance, obstinacy and a restless desire for the resolution of the "prozess." Horst Friesen's Judas probably deserves the most fulsome praise; he was cunning and crafty to just the right degree, with the quick movements and the easy, rapid speech of the clever opportunist. It was one of the few illuminating moments of the whole evening for me. David Riesen must also be mentioned in his performance of Caiphas, with his magisterial bearing and self-confidence of

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the powerful. Fred Jansen's Pilate was a fine study in Roman arrogance, and particularly as it manifested itself in disdain for the Jews and their internal difficulties. Will Schaefer as the apostle was a fortunate bit of casting. It was Peter as I imagine him: large, physically powerful, yet attractive and gentle, Alfred Wiebe, the prosecutor of Jesus and betrayer of one of his own people, could be convincing in his cynicism for Christianity and in his attacks on the veracity of the biblical witnesses, but when he became distraught, filled with terror, in anguish, and completely broken down at the end in his confession of betrayal, I regretted the lack of subtlety in his change of mood. It was not gradual and natural enough, too quickly achieved, unconvincing.

A few final notes. I found the set too ponderous, both in its suggestion of scene and in accomodating the movements of the actors. I also think the lighting could have been more subtle, and I think we could have done without the sentimental musical reinforcement of the biblical flashbacks.

I am sorry at having to be so critical of the evening simply because I saw so many fine dramatic performances going to waste

on a poor play. I wish I could have seen them to better advantage.

Eric Friesen is a native of Altona and a graduate in Honors English from Conrad Grebel College. Following broadcasting experience with CFAM in Altona and the CBC in Ottawa he recently became host of Radio Noon, CBC Winnipeg and of The Passing Show on Saturday morning. He is co-producer of a dramatic film about the Mennonites and has taken part in several dramatic productions. mm

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Der Weihnachtswunsch des armen Schusterjungen

(Eine Weihnachtsgeschichte zum Vorlesen)
von Gert Neuendorff

Vor gar nicht sehr viel Jahren lebte einmal ein armer Schusterjunge. Nicht nur dass er arm an Kleidern und Spielzeug war, da sein Vater nicht genug Geld verdiente um ihn damit zu beschenken, sondern arm weil seine Eltern, die er beide ueber alle Massen liebte, nicht miteinander in Frieden leben koennten.

Oft schalt der Vater die Mutter so sehr, dass der Junge es nicht mehr anzuhoeren vermochte, und dann versteckte er sich im Kleiderschrank und weinte bitterlich.

Leider kam dies den Kunden auch zu Ohren, denn die kleine Werkstatt des Vaters war zugleich ein Teil der Wohnung und nur durch einen schon verblichenen Vorhang von der Kueche getrennt. So passierte es oft, dass die Eltern sich laut zankten ohne zu merken dass ein Kunde eingetreten war und ihnen lauschte, bis es demselben zu lang' wurde und er sich vernehmlich zu raeusperrn begann.

Dadurch verlor der Schuster viele seiner besten Kunden, denn keinem war es angenehm sich diesen Streit dauernd anzuhoeren. Das tragische aber war, dass viele Eltern darauf hin ihren Kindern verboten mit dem armen Schusterjungen ueberhaupt noch zu spielen oder zu sprechen.

So fuehlte der kleine Junge sich ganz verlassen auf der Welt, denn die Kinder mit denen er so gerne gespielt haette, brachen ihre Spiele ab wenn er kam und liefen davon.

Seine Eltern aber fanden immer wieder einen Grund um sich zu zanken und oft schien er noch-Schuld daran zu sein. Das machte ihn am traurigsten, denn wenn seine Mutter mal sagte dass er draussen spielen sollte um an die frische Luft zu kommen, dann meinte der Vater sofort, dass er doch wirklich schon alt genug waere um etwas in der Werkstatt mitzuhelfen und schon war wieder der groebste Streit im Gange.

Dabei haette der Junge am liebsten beides auf einmal getan. Waere der Mutter zuliebe hinausgegangen, und haette dem Vater zugleich irgendwie in der Werkstatt geholfen.

Nun war es wieder einmal kurz vor Weihnachten, dem Fest der Freude und des Friedens, an dem das Christkind in die Haeser einkehrt, die Familien um die geschmueckten Baeume sitzen, Weihnachtslieder singen, Geschenke auspacken und froh und zufriedener und dankbar sind.

Nichts von all dem aber erwartete unseren armen Schusterjungen. Und wenn er die Erwachsenen mit grossen Paketen nach Hause eilen sah, wenn er sich die hell erleuchteten Schaufenster neugierig betrachtete, wenn der weisse Schnee in dicken Flocken zur Erde hernieder fiel und die Glocken der Pferdeschlitten lustig klingelten, dann musste er an die Worte seiner alten Grossmutter denken, die frueher immer zu ihm gesagt hatte: "Junge, das Christkind liebt dich genau so wie all die anderen Kinder. Und wenn es dich mal nicht so reich beschert, dann bedeutet das nur, dass es dich ganz besonders ins Herz geschlossen hat.

Denn wen das Christkind sehr liebt, dem schenkt es weniger hier auf Erden. Dafuer geht es dann zum lieben Gott und erzaehlt ihm ganz genau wer du bist. So kennt Er dich noch besser als all die anderen Kinder und passt auf dich ganz besonders auf."

Oft hatte die Grossmutter bei diesen Worten geweint. Warum, das verstand der Junge nicht, denn anscheinend hatte das Christkind ihn doch wirklich gern. Geschenke hatte er nur selten empfangen und wenn, dann hoechstens ein paar Struempfe oder Handschuhe, aber nie etwas zum spielen wie all die anderen Kinder. Da musste der liebe Gott ihn bestimmt schon sehr gut kennen.

Und jetzt fiel dem armen Schusterjungen sogar ein, dass das Christkind seit dem die Grossmutter gestorben war, ihn zu Weihnachten nicht mehr besucht hat. Darum faltete er seine Haende und betete: "Liebes Christkind, bitte erzaehl dem lieben Gott wieder wer ich bin. Dank ihm fuer alles doch einen ganz grossen Wunsch erfuehlen koennte," dabei presste der Junge seine Finger zusammen bis sie ihm schmerzten und sprach den Wunsch aus, dessen Erfuehlung ihn von allen anderen am gluecklichsten gemacht

haette. "Bitte, bitte schenk mir, dass mein Vater und meine Mutter sich nicht mehr zanken und dass sie einander so zu lieben lernen wie ich sie beide liebe!"

Als er wieder aufstand glaubte er fest daran, dass der liebe Gott ihm zugehoert hatte und seinen Wunsch erfuehlen wuerde, doch etwas wollte er auch selber dazu beitragen. Draussen wurde es langsam dunkel und es waren jetzt nur noch ein paar Stunden bis zum Heiligen Abend. Darum lief er, so schnell ihn sein Fuesse zu tragen vermoechten in die Stadt, wo gerade die letzten Leute ihre Tannenbaeume kauften und mit frohen Gesichtern eilig nach Hause trugen.

Schnell bueckte sich der Junge, denn da lag ein schoener, gruener Zweig im Schnee den jemand von seinem Baum verloren hatte. Noch war keiner draufgetreten. So hob er ihn behutsam auf und lief, den Zweig unterm Arm zum Laden hin in dem die Leute den Schmuck fuer ihre Christbaeume kauften. Dort sammelte er all das Lametta vom Fussboden auf, das bei zu hastigem Einpacken herunter gefallen war, und bald hatte er genug um seinen kleinen Tannenzweig damit zu schmuecken.

Auf diese Art wollte der arme Schusterjunge seine Eltern ueberraschen, und so lief er voller Freude ueber seine gefundenen Schaetze wieder heimwaerts durch die kalte Winterdaemmerung.

Ein leichter Wind hatte zu blasen begonnen und die Schneeflocken wirbelten ihm beim Laufen ins Gesicht. Doch das machte dem Buben nichts aus. Er war jetzt froh und gluecklich und dachte nur daran wie er seine Eltern ueberraschen wuerde. So rannte er voller Erwartung dahin.

Zuhause angekommen oeffnete er ganz behutsam die Tuer, doch wie erschrak er, als er die laut schimpfende Stimme seines Vaters hoerte und das Schluchzen seiner Mutter vernahm.

Versteinert blieb der kleine Junge auf der Schwelle stehn. Kaum wagte er zu atmen in der Angst entdeckt zu werden. Sein vom Laufen wild pochendes Herz, das vor kurzem noch voller Freude war, zog sich jetzt vor

traurigem Schmerz wie in einen Knoten zusammen. Am liebsten haette er die Augen geschlossen und waere gestorben, so verlassen kam sich der arme Schusterjunge vor. Bitterlich entaeuscht dachte er: "Wahrscheinlich war der liebe Gott zu beschaeftigt um meinen Wunsch zu hoeren und deshalb hat das Christkind ihn nicht erfuellen koennen!"

Grosse Traenen fuellten bei diesem Gedanken seine Augen und rollten langsam seine kalten Wangen hinab, und auf einmal schien es ihm als ob das silberne Lametta lauter Traenen waren, die von seinem Tannenzweig herunter flossen.

Traurig drehte er sich wieder um, schloss hinter sich leise die Tuer und wanderte einsam in die kalte Dunkelheit.

Lange stapfte der Junge, seinen Zweig fest an sich drueckend, verloren durch die Nacht bis er an einem grossen Hause vorbei kam. Dort blieb er stehn, denn durch die Waende vernahm er den Klang von singenden Stimmen. "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" hallte durch den dicht fallenden Schnee, an seine Ohren.

Fasziniert lauschte der Junge den Klaengen des Liedes, doch der Wind riss die Melodie an sich und trug sie fort. Darum schritt er langsam und vorsichtig an das hell erleuchtete Fenster heran, und drueckte sein Gesicht gegen die glatte, kuehle Scheibe.

Mit grossen, erstaunten Augen sah er die flackernden Flammen eines Kaminfeuers und fuer einen kurzen Moment glaubte er draussen die Waerme zu spueren, die die Menschen drinnen umgab. Menschen, die mit frohen Gesichtern um einen hell erleuchteten Weihnachtsbaum standen sangen. "Christ der Retter ist da, Christ der Retter ist da!"

Der kleine Schusterjunge aber sah die strahlenden Gesichter der Kinder und die Liebe in den Augen der Eltern. Er sah die flackernden Kerzen und die bunt verpackten Geschenk unter dem Baum. Er hoerte die schallenden Stimmen und leise, ganz leise versuchte er mitzusingen. Doch waren seine Lippen zu steif, um sie zu bewegen, und langsam glitt er vom Fenster hinab, legte sich in den weichen Schnee und traumte von der Heiligen Nacht und ihrem Frieden.

Fern, ganz in der Ferne vernahm er Stimmen, die er kannte und liebte. Sie riefen seinen Namen, doch er war zu muede um ihnen zu antworten. Dann wurde es ganz still und Dunkel um ihn.

Als er wieder die Augen aufschlug sah er zuerst das Gesicht seiner Mutter vor sich und spuerte ihre sanften Finger auf seinem Stirn. Dann vernahm er ein leises Raeuspern und begegnete dem sorgenvollen Blick seines Vaters. Keiner sprach. Doch der Junge fuehlte

sich geborgen und warm.

Zwischen den Fingern spuerte er die stechende Nadeln seines Tannenzweiges, doch als er ihn hob, um den Eltern zu zeigen, sah er dass alles Lametta abgefallen war. Der Zweig hatte die Traenen verloren.

Langsam versuchte der Junge seine Lippen zu bewegen um etwas zu fragen, doch die Mutter drueckte ganz sachte einen Finger auf seinen Mund und er

Prozess Jesu

Mennonitische Theatergruppe bucht neuen Erfolg.

Von G. K. Epp

Die Mennonitische Theatergruppe, in Winnipeg, hat sich am 15. und 16. November 1974, im Playhouse neue Lorbeeren geholt. Im Vergleich zu Duerrenmatts *Physiker*, so moegen manche Theaterfreunde denken, hatte man diesmal ein verhaeltnismaessig einfaches Drama gewaehlt. Doch die Regie muss sich der Schwierigkeit des Stoffes bewusst gewesen sein, als man den *Prozess Jesu*, von Diego Fabri, in Angriff nahm. Sollte bei der Wahl darueber nicht volle Klarheit gewesen sein, so muss man der Regie um so mehr fuer die gelungene Auffuehrung applaudieren. Wenn Diego Fabris Monologe und Dialoge auch niemals gefaehrlich lang werden, so ueberlaesst es der Autor den Schauspielern immer noch, mit der Tatsachefertigszuwerden, dass sich das Drama mehr im Wort, als in der Handlung entwickelt. Die Gruppe hat diese Schwierigkeit mit erstaunlichem Erfolg gemeistert. Alle Achtung fuer die Regie! In diesem Zusammenhang muss auch die Wahl der Spieler erwaeht werden. Selbst die kleineren Rollen wurden gut gespielt. Die alte Putzfrau (Kay Klassen) wurde trefflich dargestellt. Petrus, Johannes, Maria . . . sie waren alle echt. Es gab, im Grunde genommen, keine Entaeuschungen in der Rollenbesetzung, und die vielen Hauptrollen waren durchweg stark besetzt. Alfred Wiebe wirkte als Anklaeger ueberzeugend, auch wenn ihm die Reue nicht so recht gelingen wollte. Hervorragend waren Pilatus (Fred Janzen), Kaiphas (David Riesen) und Judas (Horst Friesen). Pilatus blieb der

hoerte ihre sanfte Stimme sagen: "Pst, wir erzaehlen dir alles spaeter. Jetzt musst du viel schlafen und wieder gesund werden."

Und als der Schusterjunge seinen Vater heftig mit dem Kopf nicken sah und seine rauhe, harte Hand auf seiner Schulter spuerte, da wusste er dass das Christkind ihm seinen Wunsch erfuellt hatte und er schlief ruhig und gluecklich ein. mm

hochmuetige Roemer, auch wenn er nur dasass. Horst Friesen spielte den Judas meisterhaft. Er spielte nicht nur einen Typ - er gab Fabris Judas Leben. Selbst mit dem vielfarbigen Stimmungswechsel des Judas wurde Friesen fertig - und das ist die grosse Probe fuer den Schauspieler.

Es sei aber nicht uebersehen, dass der Erfolg dieses Dramas, weit mehr als viele andere, von der Atmosphaere auf der Buehne abhaengt, und diese kann nur eine geschlossene Gruppe schaffen. Die Atmosphaere war da - das ist der wahre Erfolg.

Es gab allerdings auch eine schwache Stelle, die der Zuseher nicht uebersehen konnte, wenn er beteiligt war. Die schwierige Schlusszene erinnerte zu sehr an eine etwas gefuehlvolle, aber doch nicht sehr ernste "crusade." Hurrapatriotismus ueberzeugt nicht, und so liess gerade die Schlusszene den Zuschauer kalt, wenn er nicht nur einfach froh war, dass es "doch noch christlich" endete. Dieser Schluss wird auch zukuenftigen Auffuehrungen Schwierigkeiten bereiten, denn wie spielt man echte Entscheidung fuer Christus? -

Der Mennonitischen Theatergruppe gebuehrt alle Achtung und Anerkennung fuer das Geleistete. Es gebuehrt ihr besonders Anerkennung fuer die Courage, sich auch an schwierige Buehnenstoffe heranzuwagen. Gutes Theater wirkt erzieherisch, es darf daher nicht im Oberflaechlichen stecken bleiben. mm

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“Multiculturalismus ist ein staendiger Grundsatz unserer Regierung”

Die Regierung Kanadas betrachtet Multikulturalismus als einen wesentlichen Teil der kanadischen Gesellschaft und somit als einen Eckstein echter und fortwaehrender kanadischer Einheit, die auf gegenseitigen Respekt und Verstaendnis basiert. Unsere Regierung ist der Ansicht, dass Multikulturalismus voll und ganz mit der Zweisprachigkeit wirken kann und dass beide Sprachen ein Stueck echtes Kanada sind.

Ich war in der gluecklichen Lage, in einer Umgebung mit reichhaltiger Kultur und Sprache aufzuwachsen. Durch meine jetzige Rolle als Mitglied des Parlaments und Kabinetttminister habe ich grossen Anteil an den Rechten und am Wohlergehen der ethnischen Gruppen in Kanada genommen. Vielleicht ist dies ein vorwiegender Grund, dass ich die vielseitigen Kreise in meinem multikulturellen Aufgabenbereich verstehe.

Als Minister bin ich mir den Anforderungen Ihrer Gemeinschaft bewusst. Es ist meine Pflicht, Ihr Vertreter im Kabinett zu sein und sicherzumachen, dass das Regierungsverhalten mit den Zielen und Wuenschen aller ethnisch-kulturellen Gruppen uebereinstimmt. Die Beitraege der nicht-englischen und nicht-franzoesischen kulturellen Gruppen in Kanada, verbunden mit den Anglophone - und Francophone-Gemeindeschichten, bringen eine staerkere kanadische soziale Struktur hervor.

Multikulturalismus ist ein staendiger Grundsatz unserer Regierung. Das Programm erfordert weitere Aufmerksamkeit und Entwicklung. Ich bin verpflichtet und dazu bestimmt, ihm beides zu geben.

John Munro



Minister Responsible
for Multiculturalism

Ministre chargé
du Multiculturalisme





Christmas Greetings

CHRISTMAS MAY BE
DIFFERENT THIS YEAR.

This Christmas can be the best ever if we draw upon inner resources to find the true Christmas spirit.

There are many influences in the world today that tend to bind families closer together. This is most apparent during the Christmas season as we look back over a year which may not have been what we hoped it would be, and look forward with renewed hope to the year that lies ahead.

As families throughout the world gather together, may they find the real joy of Christmas and look to their fellowman with love and understanding.



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