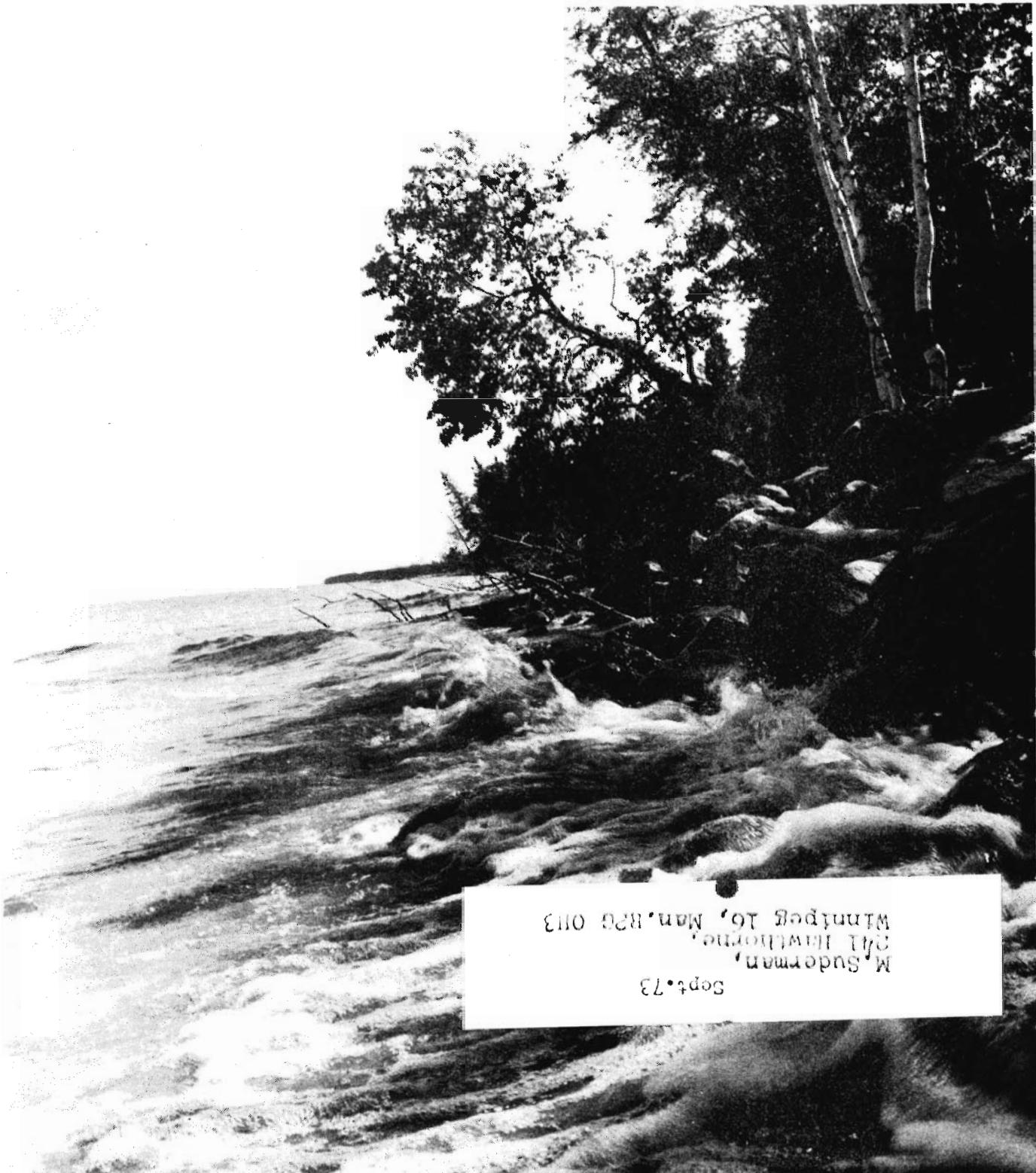


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June 1977

No. 9

# mennonite mirror



#### Too Much Now

A weary father commented to his wife about their 4 year old child: "Talk, talk, talk! Thank heavens in a few years he'll be a teen-ager and we won't be able to communicate with him."

#### Henpecked Divorce

A certain henpecked husband has a serious problem: he quietly divorced his wife a year ago and he doesn't know how to break the news to her.

#### Never Lost Animal

The teacher was quizzing her pupils on natural history. "Now, Johnny," she said, "tell me where the elephant is found." Johnny struggled for a moment for an answer. Then his face brightened and he said: "The elephant is so big it is hardly ever lost."



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**Entries must be sent to Mirror office by June 25, 1977.**

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**By Doreen Martens**

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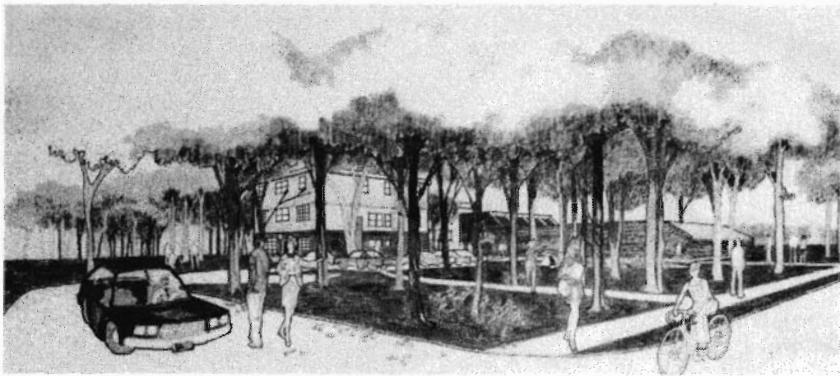
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june 1977

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*Subscription rates:* \$5 for one year and \$9 for two years.

The Mennonite Mirror is normally published 10 times each year from October to July for the Mennonite community of Winnipeg and Manitoba by the Mennonite Literary Society, Inc. Address for all business and editorial matters is 203-818 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, R3G 0N4, telephone 786-2289.

The Mennonite Mirror observes the following part-time office hours: Monday, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.; Tuesday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Thursday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; closed Wednesday and Friday.

ISSN 0315-8101

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# A visit with an older couple in Leipzig gives yet another view of communism

## East Europe Conversations: part 5

by Roy Vogt

**Dr. Richard Lenz** is an older scholar in the economics institute in Leipzig. When I am introduced to him I notice immediately that he is not a member of the communist party. There is no party pin in the lapel of his suit. Almost all people in responsible positions are members of the party and Dr. Lenz is one of the few I have met who is not. On our first meeting in his office he is joined by the local secretary of the communist party, who listens but does not say a word. Later Dr. Lenz and I are able to have some meetings alone.

I discover that he is close to retirement and has lived most of his life in Leipzig. There is a weariness of soul about him which I find strangely refreshing when contrasted with the uncomplicated enthusiasm and dogmatism that one encounters in many of the younger, ambitious scholars. A Canadian colleague who visited East Germany around this time shared my observation that in general the younger generation of communists seemed more inflexible and less imaginative than the older generation. Apparently time often mellows more than it hardens. As a student I found that younger professors were usually more demanding and strict than the older ones. The latter had, for the sake of survival, made the necessary accommodations to the continuing ignorance of their students.

Dr. Lenz and I take an instant liking to each other. His weariness has not given way to cynicism and his wide-ranging curiosity and deep humanitarian spirit immediately attract me. In these matters, as I have so often discovered, age is no barrier. I gather that he married late as he has a younger wife and a teen-age son and daughter at home. Perhaps it is his second marriage. I do not inquire. We spend a lot of time in his office and as we learn to trust each other we talk freely about a large variety of subjects. He is anxious to learn about the Canadian economy and its people and invites me to speak on this subject to a group of

senior students and colleagues. He senses that I may be hungry for foreign news, since western, non-communist, newspapers and magazines cannot be bought in East Germany, and when he leaves me alone in his office he points to a newspaper on his desk which he receives regularly from Switzerland. He has special permission as a professor to subscribe to a few such western publications but he is not supposed to share them with his students or with foreign visitors. Therefore, instead of handing the paper directly to me he allows me to "find" it on his desk, where I eagerly devour its contents in his absence. A lifetime of such games would surely tire anyone!

One day Dr. Lenz invites me to his home for an early evening meal with his family. "Home" is a comfortable three-bedroom apartment not far from the institute and from the university dormitory where I am living. Before going I ask some of the scholars in the institute how long one generally stays on such a visit. "Not beyond 10:00 p.m.," they all strongly advise. "One doesn't visit longer than that with the old Herr Professor." His wife serves a delicious meal and when 10:00 p.m. rolls around the children say goodnight and I too get up to take my leave. Dr. Lenz grabs my arm and says very forcefully: "You can't leave yet. There are so many things we should discuss." His wife eagerly concurs so I sink back into the comfortable chair; he pours us each a glass of wine, and we begin truly to relax in each other's friendship in a way that I would never have thought possible.

"I have noticed," Dr. Lenz begins, "that you have been somewhat shaken by experiences you have had in this country. I hope you are not too disappointed. This would actually be quite a wonderful country if only the politicians would leave us alone. That, of course, is impossible but you can't blame me for wishing it because we have been nagged to death for 40 years, first by dictators on the right and now by dictators on the

left, and both my wife and I are quite tired of it. Still, despair is the refuge of the weak and we live by the hope that we find in this society."

This leads us into a discussion of the things that give them hope. Their first hope lies in the qualities they see developing in their children. "Our daughter is no intellectual but she has a good job in a local bookshop and, most important of all, she is a kind and tolerant person who hasn't been scarred by the slogans and dogmas that she has had to mouth in her communist youth groups and in school. Our son is a more serious student and wants to go into medicine. Both of our children would call themselves socialists but neither would claim that the socialism we have here is the best that is possible."

I had spent an afternoon earlier playing tennis with their son and later when we walked home together I found that he had such a genuine curiosity to know about things outside of his own experience that no system would ever be able to box him in. It occurred to me that his medical training might narrow his focus more than his previous training in a communist system had. Academic studies can do that. In any case, I could understand why his parents drew courage from the children they had raised.

Dr. Lenz and his wife also feel that there is potential for much good in their system, despite numerous problems. Mrs. Lenz observes, "Two thousand years of Christianity have added only a thin veneer of goodness to the human race. There is a lot of room for improvement and some of the ideas our younger generation is working with may produce good fruit. It is not right that professional people should earn much more than a hard-working labourer. No state should tolerate unemployment. Everyone should have access to the best training possible, without financial penalty. These are the goals that we share with sincere members of the party and when it comes to these things we have no dif-

ficulty in working together with them."

I reply that professional people, like lawyers, doctors and professors, often argue that they deserve a much higher income than others because they spend so many non-earning years in extra schooling. However, since much of this schooling is paid for by others it is not clear to me either that there should be a big gap between their lifetime earnings and others. I think, on the other hand, that it is to the benefit of society to give special rewards, in the form of profits, to those businessmen who start up new companies and market new products. Very few people with new ideas actually succeed in the market place. Because the possibility of failure is so great, and the humiliation extreme, there must be special incentives for those who are willing to take risks. I note that one of the weaknesses in the East German economy, as far as I can see, is the absence of people willing to implement new ideas. They have many scientists who understand computers, for example, but they have failed so far to manufacture computers in sufficient quantity or quality to satisfy even their own market. The Russians have been counting on East Germany to supply

them with computers but they too are now turning to the western market.

Dr. Lenz expresses his agreement with this. "We are afraid of profit," he says, "because it has been used so much in your society to create great differences of wealth between people but we are beginning to see that for some types of businessmen it may be necessary. For a time we refused even to use the word but now we are permitting some firms to keep part of their revenue as an extra reward for good performance."

About unemployment: I agree with them that it is a major problem in our society but I maintain that it isn't easy to combat. I mention that we now have very generous social programs which enable people who don't want to work to stay off work for weeks and months at a time, but I also acknowledge that we haven't done a good job of training people for the right kinds of jobs. "Everyone in East Germany must work," Dr. Lenz observes. "However," he adds, "this doesn't mean that we have no problems. We also have people who don't want to work. In Canada these people might work for awhile and then live off of unemployment insurance or welfare. In East Germany we give them a job. There is no unemployment insurance. However, such people may be a real nuisance in their place of work. They know that a job will always be found for them. The manager can fire them but then he must defend his action before the employment bureau which has the problem of finding the dismissed person a new job. The result is that managers generally keep such a person on the payroll, but they do very little and get in the way of everyone else. What we have as a result is what we call 'disguised unemployment'." There seems, in other words, to be no infallible system for combatting human sloth!

I come back in our discussion to Mrs. Lenz's comment about the thin veneer of goodness created by 2,000 years of Christianity. I acknowledge my own disappointment in this seemingly poor record. However, I add, there have been many outstanding examples of Christians who have markedly improved the human condition, by establishing schools and hospitals, and generally by creating a respect for the individual which forms the basis of western notions of justice and liberty. I ask them whether they have read Amalrik's book on the Soviet Union in which this Russian historian (since exiled to the west) maintains that there is little hope for a substantial enlargement of human rights in the Soviet Union because there is no strong Christian-Judaic tradition of respect for the individual in that country. To my surprise they indicate that they are acquainted with the book and while they are somewhat sympathetic to that argument they are not entirely in agree-

ment with it. "We believe that human beings can be changed by a new system. We can't speak for the Soviet Union but we have the opportunity here to create new social and economic conditions which should help to change human character."

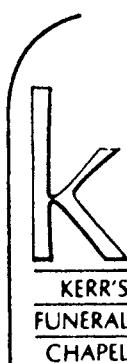
At this point Dr. Lenz injects a very personal note into the discussion. "I grew up in the Christian Church," he says. "It seemed to me as I grew older that the church was both too optimistic and too pessimistic about the human condition. It was too pessimistic in that it located an evil streak in each human being and insisted that this evil could not be overcome except through radical internal surgery initiated by God. It was too optimistic in that it asserted that such a conversion would lead to a very definite change in a person's character. I saw people around me who were improving their characters, and living for goodness, through the subtle influence of their environment, without any apparent dramatic conversion. On the other hand I often failed to detect a substantial change in the lives of those who claimed that they had been changed by their faith. As a result of this I have chosen to adopt the view that human beings are most likely to be changed through changes in their environment. This view happens to be a Marxist one but I believe it is shared by most social scientists in the west. After all, Marx himself was a western scholar."

I express my agreement with this last observation. We forget very easily that Marx's view of human nature and how it is changed is shared by a vast majority of people in our own society. In this sense Christianity is on a collision course not only with Marxism but with basic elements in the thoughts of people all around us. For this reason I have never been much interested in pitting "Christianity against Communism." The Christian adversary is much larger than that, and much closer to home.

I reply that environment obviously plays a vital role in human personality and by stressing education and family nurture Christianity has itself always acknowledged this. However, the Christian faith, I argue, has also maintained that there must be a divine element in the overcoming of evil because evil itself is a virile, mysterious and demonic force which no amount of social engineering - adjusting of the environment - will eradicate. One of the reasons why I remain a Christian, despite many occasions to doubt, is my conviction that it has a correct understanding of human evil and how such evil is overcome.

I tell the Lenz's of an experiment in Czechoslovakia in the 1960's in which a group of social workers, influenced by marxism and western psychology, tried to get a number of "anti-social" men and women in Prague to change their ways

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by building a model village for them. It was assumed that these people were misbehaving because they didn't have the proper home environment and social support. Everything was done to recreate their environment. Two years after the experiment was initiated it was deemed a disaster. The model village had become known as a "Red Light District." It appeared on closer scrutiny that the people enjoyed what they were doing. They revelled in their "anti-social" behavior. This example does not prove that efforts of this kind are always doomed to failure, just as a few bad Christians don't prove that Christianity is bound to fail. But I think that the well-intentioned social workers had begun with an inadequate appreciation of how deep and personal destructive human impulses can be. They had, in my opinion, not shown an adequate respect for the nature of evil. Human evil lies beyond human engineering. That is why even the best homes cannot prevent its outbreak. At the same time, though such evil may not always be cured through an individual's receptivity to divine intervention, I remain convinced that a life lived in openness to the need for personal change and divine intervention - the "way" of Christianity - is most likely to succeed.

The Lenz's discuss these views with great sympathy. "I am fighting against cynicism," Dr. Lenz says. "When the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia I felt sick at heart. I could hardly contain my emotions." "What do you mean 'contain your emotions'?" his wife interjects. "Ever since the Soviet invasion of that poor country not a day has gone by in which you have not cursed the Russians for their action!" Her husband looks startled for a moment, then smiles and admits, "Yes, you are right. There is no justification for it, just as there is no justification for this d--- wall which we are always defending."

We have taken our discussion to a certain limit beyond which we do not dare to go. We spend another pleasant hour sharing our views of the world and our hopes. We feel, without saying it, that in many important ways we are kindred spirits and if only we could walk along

the same road together for awhile we would find that there is almost nothing that separates us. Or would we find the opposite? In human relationships one can never be entirely sure.

It is 2:00 a.m. when I finally say goodbye to them. Next morning I wake up in a cold sweat. I am suddenly convinced that we said too much last night. They had bared their souls to me and thrown caution to the wind, and so had I. Maybe I had been purposely drawn into a conversation which would compromise me and enable the authorities to cut short my work. I suddenly fear, in other words, that I may have been led into a trap. All morning I am haunted by this feeling. I am able to shake it only after I have had a calm meeting with Dr. Lenz in the afternoon at the institute where we look at each other and silently acknowledge that we probably went to the extreme limits of our friendship last night. We express no regrets but we both sense that it was an experience which likely will not be repeated.

We have since exchanged books and letters with each other but we have not had a further opportunity for an intense, personal exchange of ideas. I look forward each year, however, to the simple Christmas card which we receive from the Lenz family.

**Next month: The last article in the series: A Russian sequel to my East German experiences.**

### Fall Rite

"Prince really wild and  
Snorting . . . the snow  
And storm and miles  
Of wind and whiteness.  
You  
Stuck in that moaning  
Farmhouse with your big  
Belly and that kid  
And that pain . . .  
I guess I would fidget  
A little."

Helpless Prairie child,  
A Christly face pressed  
Damp against  
The cold window pane, mild  
Boy fidgeting with mother's  
Pain, the frost  
Needles on the glass edge,  
Like the ice skimmed off the  
Trough for Prince to drink,  
And held against the light  
And let fall.

And before it fell he knew  
What form his dreaming  
Was about to take:  
The axe and the knife and screaming  
Pig and father's red smoking arms,  
And the hands of women  
Lugging out the guts  
To empty  
And fill with meat.

"Yes, your father was away and  
You weren't of any help . . . except  
For the fact that you  
Were there . . . and damned  
Horse, really useless, so  
Scittish you couldn't go near  
Him . . . and so, sister got born."

- Dick Peters

### Menno's Reins on CBC TV

The local channel of CBC, channel 6 will broadcast **Menno's Reins**, the historical documentary of Manitoba Mennonites, on June 27, at 7:00 p.m.



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## The immigrant: part 6

# Era of political ferment marks pre-war years

by Victor Peters

When I left Manitou for Winkler I found that my new friend and classmate, Victor Unruh, was a member of a new political group known as the Canadian Nationalist party. I soon learned that this party had several members in Winkler, possibly as many as seven or eight. Their political mentor was a recent Mennonite immigrant who had a shoe repair shop. He was an intelligent man who later became the owner of a factory in Toronto. He had not been in Canada long enough to qualify for naturalization, and for this reason was not a party member, but his shop became the unofficial local party headquarters. What drew him to the new party was his bitter hatred of Soviet communism. On coming to Canada he had soon met Colonel Ralph Webb, the mayor of Winnipeg, who had lost a leg with the British expeditionary force in Russia fighting the Communists. They became good friends, and Webb assured the uncompromising shoemaker that Canada needed men like him. Webb, who during World War II held an important office in Ottawa, continued to sustain his protege. Unlike many others, the former shoemaker from Winkler was never placed in a detention camp.

The regular party members in Winkler were mostly native Canadians. They were all young unemployed men, except my friend, who was a student. The leader of the Nationalist party, which had its national headquarters in Winnipeg, was one William Whittaker, former RCMP officer. I together with a few others first met him after the party's first public

meeting in Winkler. He was a good-looking, middle-aged man, wore a brown party uniform, with a party insignia, which, if I remember correctly, was a maple leaf. In his tie he had a swastika pin. I found him and his first lieutenant, who was physically less impressive than Whittaker, interesting but not very original men. Whittaker, who was born in England, explained to us privately that his movement had established ties with the British Union of Fascists, a group that was somewhat more radical than Oswald Mosley's Black Shirts. His party, he said, also maintained contact with a Quebec fascist organization headed by Arcand. As for the public meeting in Winkler, its turnout was rather meagre, consisting largely of the town's unemployed and relief recipients.

Before long Whittaker felt that his party was strong enough to challenge the communists. He did this by scheduling a Nationalist open-air meeting on Market Square, which the Communists regarded as their homeground. Since the Communist party in Winnipeg had a membership numbering many thousands, they made short shift of Whittaker's invaders. While the undertaking showed that Whittaker did not lack courage, much like Ludendorff in Munich, it did not reflect too favorably on his acumen as a military planner. He did have the satisfaction that the newspapers reported under large headlines on the battle at Market Square, which was serious enough to fill the wards of several city hospitals. As far as I know Winkler was not represented in that melee. Later I lost contact with the party. During the war most of the Winkler

members ended up in the ranks of the Canadian army. As for Whittaker and his associate Arcand of Quebec, they survived the war in Canadian detention camps.

Michael Kinnear, reviewing Betcherman's *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf* in *The Winnipeg Free Press* (June 19, 1976) writes: "Fascism was a minor, though historically interesting phenomenon in Canada in the 1930s. Most of our fascist leaders were, to say the least, intellectual dwarfs, and their followers tended to come from the dregs of society." Prof. Kinnear may be correct in labelling the Canadian fascist leaders "intellectual dwarfs," and he may even be correct in saying that their followers came from "the dregs of society." That the large majority of these people continued to accept their deprived economic status may be admirable. I must admit, my sympathies were with the rebels, whatever their banner, who challenged the status quo of an economic order that reduced them to peons.

The Canadian Nationalist party required that its members be native or naturalized Canadians. I did not apply for membership because I was not yet a Canadian citizen. I most likely would have joined if I had qualified. The party had its own newspaper and produced other literature in which it advocated a closer association with Great Britain and Germany, and generally regarded the reactivated Third Reich as Europe's strongest bulwark against Communism. It also emphasized how Hitler with his extensive public works program had ef-

fективly reduced that nation's unemployment. All this sounded reasonable enough to me. Especially since the unemployment problem in Canada continued to be severe right up to the outbreak of World War II. I did not view Hitler altogether uncritically. My first shock was the brutal elimination of Roehm, who for years had been Hitler's close associate. The other reason was more subtle. It was the Nazi doctrine of leadership, the emphasis on obedience to authority, especially the authority of the leader. This whole principle was contrary to the Mennonite outlook and tradition, in religion as in everything else. Mennonitism rejects the very idea of a power pyramid or hierarchy. It was from the Anabaptists that George Fox and the Quakers accepted and introduced such practices as not to bare their heads before worldly rulers. Mennonite history has many examples of disobedience to the state, ranging from a stand that could result in martyrdom to a mere defiance of accepted social custom. Among the latter there are numerous stories that reflect the Mennonite attitude to what they regard as excessive deference to authority.

During the Napoleonic wars the Mennonite congregation at Danzig delegated one of its members by the name of Nikkel to present a cash donation to the king of Prussia. Nikkel outraged the Berlin court when he appeared before

the monarch without removing his hat. The king, who knew the Mennonites, took no offense.

A similar incident took place in southern Manitoba in the 1930s. David Schellenberg, a colorful pioneer who lived not far away from the town of Greta, received a notification that the Lieutenant-Governor of the province and his party would like to include a visit to his farm on their itinerary. Schellenberg, who told me the story a few years later, said he deliberately had not put on his Sunday-best clothes for the occasion so that the representative of the crown would not think that he, Schellenberg, was overly impressed by the visit. I was the product of this tradition, and the adulation extended to Hitler offended my Mennonite egalitarianism. In time this reservation eroded considerably as Hitler's domestic and foreign successes mounted and respected world leaders, such as David Lloyd George and our own Mackenzie King visited Hitler and reported that they found the German chancellor agreeable and almost modest. My political sentiments were consequently such, that, had I lived in Germany and been a German citizen, I most likely would have become a party member.

**Next: Adventure into teaching**

## review

**Ohm Franz** by Frank F. Enns, D. W. Friesen Printers, Altona, 1977; 107 pp., paperback, \$4.50 with photos and addendum.

by Peter Paetkau

Rev. Frank F. Enns is the new "not so new" author in Manitoba who shortly after his retirement from a lifetime of teaching has written the biography of his father, the Elder Franz F. Enns (1871-1940), the founder and first elder of the Whitewater Mennonite Church from 1926 to 1938. At the very time of this writing the 50th Anniversary celebrations in the church at Boissevain are drawing to a conclusion.

The author opens the story of Elder Enns with this man's own written account. Born in Alexandertal, Molotschna on October 25th, 1871, as the first child of his parents, he is named Franz, after both his father and grandfather. His father had earlier completed his three years painter's apprenticeship under the instructor Janzen in Gnadenheim, and

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later founded his own business in Mariawohl. In the summer of 1870 he had conducted his services in the home of Johann Franz in the village of Alexanderthal and become acquainted with their daughter Elizabeth to whom he was married in January 1871. Thus the future elder of the Whitewater Mennonite Church came to be born in Alexanderthal.

The account of Elder Enns' memoirs continues in a considerable detail in which he discusses, among other things, the remodelling of a mill and the re-establishment of his *Faerberei* in the early 1880's, and other business ventures, including the invention of a mechanical seeder adapted to the plow.

Another portion of the story to give it strength is the section dealing with the Tereker Ansiedlung in regards to its beginning, its growth and progress and its collapse along with the ensuing escape from the settlement during the course of the Russian Revolution to the nearby Mennonite colony of Suworowka enroute to the Molotschna, followed by the call from Memrik in 1920 to serve there as elder. Enns had earlier been ordained as minister in 1903 and elected as elder in 1906 while in the Tereker Ansiedlung.

During the years 1923 to 1926 many thousands of immigrants had come from Russia and settled in scattered groups throughout the prairie provinces. In order that these could be ministered unto, the Mission Board of the General Conference in North America appointed the immigrant elders to visit these groups with the purpose of gathering them and where possible organize churches. This was the work of the Reiseprediger in Canada to which Elder Enns too was called and committed until ill health made it impossible.

In summary, it is a good story which in every instance maintains the reader's interest. The book is well organized and bears evidence of the author's own mastery of the German language, a subject which he taught at the Gretna Mennonite Collegiate Institute during his four years there (1954-1959). The subject of the biography is a prime example of what private studies may achieve. This is noteworthy since so many of our erstwhile ministers and church leaders were hampered in their work by the lack of any education at all, and consequently the spiritual vitality in the new churches suffered accordingly. There is much in the book that the writer finds impressive, i.e. the language, the letters, and the minor incidents and stories recounted in a memorable fashion, coupled with much historical material placed in the first part of the book. The writing appears to have been set much like a memorial, as well it ought to have been because the work of the elder was expressly such as we do not wish to nor aught to forget. **mm**

## It's father's day not a commercial bonanza

by Betty Dyck

Father's Day should be more than merely a commercial bonanza for businesses. I prefer to think of it as a day when wives and children take time out to say "thank you" for the many day to day matters that a father deals with, in order to provide his family with that sometimes illusive standard of living to which we have become accustomed.

In *The Everyday Cookbook*, published in the early 1900's under the heading "Make Home Pleasant" are these words: "wherever there is found a pleasant, cheerful, neat, attractive, inexpensive home there you may be sure to find the abode of the domestic virtues; there will be no dissipated husbands, no discontented or discouraged wives, no 'fast' sons or frivolous daughters." To me, this is the description of a home where each individual has learned that there is a responsibility to family members and the harmony results in the frequent little remembrances each accords to others. Society helps by setting aside special calendar days.

On the third Sunday in June, I shall give my love a poem. What will you give the dad in your household on Father's Day? Something expensive from the fascinating array of store displays (and charge it on his account)? Why not be original and let a little magic do the trick?

In a popular TV series a few years ago, the leading female protagonist was a witch - and what woman isn't? Samantha accomplished her housework with a wiggling of her pretty nose which set in motion her modern conveniences. In the kitchen she whipped up delights supreme - in the twinkling of a nose.

While most 20th century wives may not possess the full power of Samantha's levitation, still, a kind of witchcraft is being practised in many homes today. Or so it must surely seem to a perceptive husband.

He and the children regularly depart from home in the morning, leaving

mother with disorder - beds unmade, last night's newspaper meandering from the living room to the bathroom to the bedroom, laundry lying on floors, towels askew, breakfast dishes littering the kitchen table - a familiar household scene.

Contrary to women's lib edicts, the wife does not go over the deep end. Instead, she uses her inherent magic and calls upon the helpful Grecian gods. Hestia's handmaids make light work of household chores and Terpsichore is pleased to serenade. Urania will so arrange the heavenly stars that signs will portend a productive day.

Presto! enter family to the same home at 5 p.m. In the living room, today's newspaper is neatly folded on the ottoman for father to read first. In the bedroom, a restful uncluttered atmosphere where he can stretch out for a few minutes and let the cares of the day melt away. In the bathroom, sparkling mirrors, towels at right angles to the bar and soap dish free of hairs. The dining room table is tastefully set, adorned with a floral centrepiece. Chilled red wine, compliments of Bacchus, reflects a rosy hue in crystal glasses and tempting aromas waft out from the kitchen. Terpsichore has deigned to linger and provide a tuneful background for a cheerful, "welcome home!"

The family wonders where the morning disorder disappeared to. Is mother's secret a twitching nose? No, but this magic of a completed meal, a tidy household and restful atmosphere is a gift of tender loving care which wives can freely offer to their mates.

Bewitching may be the proper word for the transformation taking place daily within homes between morning and evening because housewifery is not all drudgery, it is seasoned with a mysterious sense of magic. Evoke the gracious gods and conjure up an inspirational gift for that man of yours, that he may see your works and call them good. **mm**



## Some details may change but the institution endures

by Faith Eidsen

As far back as I can remember the red brick building was there. Before I could read I had memorized the verse that went with the reference on the neon sign above the entrance, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, II Tim. 2:15." The reference was written over an open Bible and a cross. That was the building my dad taught in, the school my parents had attended, and the school I would attend someday as well.

Since my grade school years Steinbach Bible Institute has undergone a major face lift, with the singular red brick tile, unlike any other in Steinbach giving way eventually to white stucco.

But Steinbach Bible Institute wasn't always the square building on PTH 12 at the north edge of Steinbach. In fact, the first Bible school classes in Steinbach were held in the Mennonite Brethren Church basement in the fall of 1931 when 20 students met for three months

of instruction by Rev. Jac W. Reimer and H. P. Fast.

After a four year lapse, 1936 marked the first year of continuous instruction. This time it was a smaller beginning with a promising future. Growth marked the first years of Bible instruction. Nine students, instructed by John Guenther and J. G. Berg, tripled the following year when a second year class was added.

In 1938 four churches pooled efforts to support the new institute and organized the Steinbach Bible Society. A new teacher, J. N. Wittenberg, who is remembered for his delightful narration of Bible stories, and a third year class was added.

In 1939 the Bible school acquired its own building, now the Fehler Apartments on First Street.

Until Ben D. Reimer joined the teaching staff in 1944 all instruction had been in German. But Mr. Reimer had struggled with English grammar at Winnipeg Bible College and his ability to teach Bible in

English added a desirable dimension to the school. The Canadian Mennonites and various individuals recognized the advantage of English instruction. Others were not sympathetic and a heated debate resulted in the release of a Mennonite Brethren instructor.

But language was not the only controversial issue. Until Mr. Reimer came, the primary purpose of the Bible school was to train people for church work and to strengthen them in their Christian faith. Mr. Reimer began to emphasize the need for missionaries and that missions was every Christian's responsibility. The principal held that missions was a gift for only a select few. The issue was the subject of much debate in Bible classes.

That year high school instruction was added. "Both Archie and I thought it would be good to teach high school in a Christian atmosphere," said Mr. Reimer. "Also many people in those days already were not happy with the local public high school." Secondary school instruction also offered adults the opportunity to

upgrade their education in an atmosphere conducive to them.

A third reason for adding high school instruction, admitted Mr. Reimer, was because of the sharp decline in student enrollment. Only a dozen students showed up after the year of controversy and though Mr. Reimer has no concrete explanation he speculates that it was due also to a difference in the definition of heresy. Where Evangelical Mennonite Brethren wrote off the Pentecostal Church as heretical, Mr. Reimer held that all denominations have straw in their teaching and only those movements which deny that Christ came in the flesh can be condemned as heretical.

If Ben D. Reimer taught that mission was every Christian's concern, he also practised it. During the winter he taught Bible school for \$25 a month, "I did it as a service to the Lord," and in the summer he would evangelize for Western Gospel Mission without subsidy.

It was the evangelization of outlying districts that saved the school, believes Mr. Reimer. "Many students came out of those revival movements and the students who came were genuine and meant business. They came to study so that they could serve the Lord."

Especially noteworthy was the revival in the Rosenort community in 1950 when almost 100 first-time decisions were made. One year SBI boasted 33 students from Rosenort. Summer after summer Mr. Reimer spoke in communities in southern Manitoba and Steinbach Bible Institute eventually reached a peak enrollment of 200 during his 20 years as principal of the institute.

When the student body could no longer be contained in the first structure it became evident a new building was mandatory. "We were sitting on the stairs, studying," recalls present Principal Harvey Plett of his Bible school days. "The building had three class rooms, a library and an office. The basement was the chapel." By that time the academy had grown to a student body size of 100.

"First we looked at the piece of land where the golf course is now," said Ben L. Reimer who was then chairman of the board. "But it was too far from town for students who had to walk from Steinbach." So instead they bought 10 acres for \$5,000 at the present site and later purchased another 10 acres.

"It was Archie Penner's idea to buy so many acres," said Mr. Reimer. "He had come from bigger campuses." Mr. Penner's foresight has proved invaluable in recent years as SBI is back at the drawing board again to plan new expansion.

The new building was funded by loans, donations and a gift of \$3,000 from the sale of the old tabernacle, now a garage for Hanover school division buses. But most significant was the \$8,500 of the \$52,000 project saved in volunteer labor.

Location is just one of several evolutions at SBI over the years. Curriculum,

both at Bible and high school levels has been revised. A new gymnasium in 1972 added an emphasis on physical fitness and provided opportunity for interaction with other schools.

A major concern of the Bible department has been to teach courses relevant to the needs of the church. Added to the nucleus subjects of Bible study, theology, prayer, evangelism and Christian service have been courses in modern missionary strategy, introductory psychology and anthropology. Biblical studies are becoming more in-depth and less survey.

Matriculation subjects at the 301 level such as math, biology and science, have been added to the high school university entrance curriculum. Since the gym was added physical education is required for high school students.

Addition of the gym encouraged recreation as part of school life. Athletes have the opportunity to participate in sports on a competitive level, high school in zone 13 or small schools competition and Bible school in the Manitoba Christian Colleges Athletic Association. Not only has the facility provided for healthier physical condition of the students but it is also a service to the community. The Bible school has since been able to accommodate conferences, concerts, and special speakers.

If enrollment was as high as 200 (Bible and high school combined) in 1959-1961, it has never been as high since. A gradual decline hit a rock bottom low of 115 students four or five years ago. Principal Harvey Plett offers this explanation: "In terms of trying to determine the cause I can't put my finger on it. But people seem to be more interested in having a degree and have been going to colleges instead. Also, there was a slump across the board. Most Bible schools experienced a downward trend in the late sixties. Perhaps it was caused by the whole anti-establishment movement. Kids were caught up in the spirit of the times." The movement created a concern for the purpose and meaning of life and since 1973 there has been a gradual increase in attendance with enrollment hovering near 165 this year.

A good per cent of the increase has been in the high school department and it is presently as full as it's ever been.

Mr. Plett believes a general disillusionment with the public system and a lack of discipline in the local high school has brought many students to SBI. This, he illustrated, can be seen in the type of student SBI attracts. It is no longer the adult coming for upgrading but students from Steinbach and outlying districts where there is a lack of Christian influence.

What happens to students after they graduate? Because of the strong emphasis on missions Bible school graduates are now scattered on every continent. An estimated 50 percent enter full time Christian service with an estimated 10 per cent in foreign service.

Steinbach Bible Institute has been able to keep its tuition to a minimum because it still depends on donations for one third of its operational costs. As a result teachers work at a financial loss. Some receive two thirds what they could get elsewhere and some have sacrificed salaries double what they now receive.

"At times this has made it difficult to get a qualified person. On the other hand, it has often brought the person who operates with a deep commitment," Mr. Plett explained. "We have not had to sacrifice academically because of this and have always had enough staff to teach, though at times teachers have had to shoulder a heavy work load.

Steinbach Bible Institute, now in its 40th year of instruction, is in the process of expanding to include a college program. The new curriculum will include the present two-year diploma course but also provides a three year degree to prepare an individual for church work and a four year degree to prepare the student for a career in full-time Christian service.

The new curriculum will necessitate additional staff and a building expansion. On the drawing board are plans for a chapel and music building, a kitchen and a dormitory.

How will expansion affect SBI? There will be a greater division between high school and Bible School predicts Harvey Plett. Also, training has a greater impact on the individual who stays longer. "Two years is a little rushed." Mr. Plett hopes "The college program will produce a student who is more mature, more stable, when he leaves." mm



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## Mennonite Studies Seminar

The third annual Manitoba Mennonite Studies Seminar was held at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg on Saturday, May 14. About 30 amateur Mennonite historians, journalists, genealogists, and persons interested in Mennonite history met informally to exchange recent ventures in historical research and writing. Abe Warkentin gave an interesting report on the birth pants of the new *Mennonitische Post*, Arnie Neufeld reported on the research he is doing on Mennonite Brethren beginnings in southern Manitoba, and Katie Peters gave examples of the numerous genealogical books that are now appearing, many of them compiled by her with the support of Mennonite businessmen. Other reports featured the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre, a kit on Mennonite history, the low German drama club of Landmark, the *Mennonite Mirror*, and the community of Burwalde.

George Epp gave a talk on Canadian Mennonite Literature and introduced a new volume of German Mennonite writing: *Unter dem Nordlicht*. This book will be reviewed in the next issue of the *Mirror*.

## Gerhard Ens Tribute

Many friends, former students, and colleagues of Gerhard Ens will be returning to the MCI in Gretna on Sunday, June 19. They will come to pay tribute to a man who has served the school for a total of 30 years as teacher and principal. A special program has been planned for this occasion by the Board of Directors and the Alumni of the school. The program will begin at 2:30 p.m. and will be followed by a picnic-style faspa.

Gerhard Ens has been associated with the MCI since his student years. He graduated in 1941 and began 30 years of teaching at MCI in 1946. During this time

he took a one year sabbatical. He was principal for 9 years, from 1967 - 1976. It was during these years that he led the school through a fairly difficult transition phase in which many new and innovative steps were taken.

Throughout the school's 88 year history, only one man has had a longer direct association with the school than Gerhard Ens. H. H. Ewert served the school as teacher and principal for 43 years, from 1889 to 1934.

The semi-formal program for the day will consist of music and singing by former students. Former classmates, students, and colleagues will reminisce about their past associations with Mr. Ens. The M.C. for the afternoon will be John Friesen, board chairman who is also a former student and colleague of Mr. Ens. All who have been and are associated with MCI, and in particular former students and classmates of Gerhard Ens are cordially invited to come to Gretna and take part in a pleasant afternoon in his honor.



"*Die Mennonitische Post*": the first issue rolled off the press on April 21 at Derksen Printers in Steinbach in the same location as the old *Steinbach Post*. 17,500 free copies went to Mennonite Communities in Mexico, Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay and Canada and will be published twice monthly. It is intended as a vehicle of communication linking the Kanadier Mennonites (descendants of those Mennonites who came from

Russia in 1870) throughout the Western Hemisphere. For the time being the paper is subsidized by MCC. Editor Abe Warkentin has done a great deal of preliminary work in this venture and reports an enthusiastic response. German, Low German, English and Spanish will be used. Frank H. Epp, Waterloo, Ontario, says the paper is intended for the same audience who read the erstwhile *Steinbach Post*.

**Westgate's Annual Spring Banquet** was held on May 3 at the First Mennonite Church. Guest speaker, John R. Friesen, was, until recently, the pastor of the Mennonite Church in Berlin, at the same time ministering to scattered groups in East Germany. Senior students sang German folk songs. Westgate Ladies Auxiliary felt gratified indeed at the success of the evening. The school's cyclathon took place on May 14 at Birds Hill Park. Ages of cyclists ranged from 6-50 years; 22 completing the 100 miles, and 1 cyclist topping the goal by 7 miles. Congratulations to this dedicated group. In keeping with Winnipeg's newest "in-thing" Westgate's Garage Sale on June 4 should attract a large group of people interested in a fun and bargains day. For further information: Marlies Friesen 452-1207.

H. R. Baerg, of Winkler Bible Institute where he has been president since 1969, was recently installed as vice-president of the Canadian Bible Society.

**MCC (Ontario)** has initiated a service program, appointing Rev. David Friesen of Port Burwell to assist (with the help of several nurses with public health units) the Mennonites from Mexico with the work involved in becoming settled. About 9,000 Mennonites from Mexico now live in a strip along the N. W. shore of Lake Erie.

**Harold J. Dyck**, formerly of Steinbach, now of Reedley, California, has been appointed associate professor of Biblical and religious studies at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas for 1977-78. He will complete requirements for a Master of Divinity degree at MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California in 1977.

The annual session of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada takes place July 23-27 in Toronto.

**Schmidke Millwork** celebrated the opening of its new plant in Steinbach recently. The company manufactures kitchen cabinets, stairs, door frames etc. The expansion is expected to increase employment by 35 people.

**The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society** was the recipient of a \$40,000 gift from the families of George and Cornie Loewen in memory of Mr. C. T. Loewen. The money is to be utilized in the building of a park and lake on the picnic site of the Mennonite Village Museum.

**Henry Harder**, manager of Fellowship Book Centre, is retiring, leaving this position vacant in the immediate future. The Book Centre is a combined effort of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and the Mennonite Brethren Churches.

"**Trudje**", a play by Susan Hiebert, was presented by the Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre in the Winkler Bible Institute on March 26.

**CMBC** graduated 30 students on May 1 at the Commencement in the Home Street Mennonite Church.

Family camp at **Camp Assiniboia** takes place June 24-26 with Mr. & Mrs. Bernie Wiebe as guest speakers.

**Rev. H. T. Klassen** having served as the Manitoba Conference hospital chaplain is now retiring. Bethel Mennonite Church was the scene of a farewell for Mr. and Mrs. Klassen who are planning a move to the Fraser Valley in B.C.

**Dr. F. C. Peters**, president of Wilfred Laurier University has for reasons of health requested early retirement to take effect August 1, 1978. He has been associated with the university for 16 years, continuing to teach at least one class each year while in administration.

**Helen Janzen** of the Charleswood Mennonite Church and Frank Isaac, pastor of the Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, were part of an eight member delegation who met with Russ Paultey, Provincial Minister of Labour. The matter under discussion was the Sunday closing of businesses.

**MBCI Annual Spring Concert** took place on May 16 under the joint leadership of conductors Len Ratzlaf and Peter Braun. Four choirs performed to an almost full house. Highlight of the evening was probably the "Hosannah" by Leinbach sung by the double choir.

The school's Senior History and Geography classes leave on a Study Tour June 14-24. The students will tour Quebec and Ontario guided by Dan Block, teacher. Graduation exercises are on June 26.

**Walter Sawatsky**, of Neuwied, Germany sends word of the dedication of the Bechterdissen Mennonite Church, the largest in West Germany. Former Paxmen will remember this lovely village in N. Germany as the place where they helped to build houses after W.W.II. The church is made up of diverse groups of immigrants (umsiedler) from Russia, West Prussia or Poland. With the help of this church the daughter-group in nearby Bielefeld is already meeting and has a building project under way. The Bechterdissen - Bielefeld church has been described as a model of unity under severe stress, for the latter also contributed considerably to the building of the first.



**Vern Ratzlaff**, Professor of Philosophy at MBBC, resigned his position there assuming his new responsibilities on May 1 as Executive Director of MCC (Manitoba) responsible for budget and supervision of field personnel. This includes the VS workers in Manitoba, material aid, self-help crafts, Thrift shops and Offender Ministries. He will be working with Dan Zehr on Peace and Social Concerns. Ratzlaff's vision for the coming year is two-fold: (1.) Our responsibility to our North (we in S. Manitoba tend to adopt an imperialistic stance to N. Manitoba) (2.) Food issues - our style of conspicuous consumption. Workshops will be conducted for MCC personnel on June 2 in the Morris Mennonite Church. Discussion here is "The churches responsibility in Northern Development" with Menno Wiebe, Dan Zehr and Neil Unrau. Another workshop, in Winnipeg on June 10 with Edgar Epp, to focus on "offender Ministries". All sessions are open to the public.

**Fort Garry MB Church** education department in conjunction with the Fort Garry family life information centre are sponsoring a series of "Parenting" seminars in May and June. Lecturers are Walter Driedger and Len Siemens. Among topics discussed will be "Building your child's confidence and feelings of self-worth," "Family Communication," "Values and Decisions," "Conducting a family meeting." The need for this arose out of pressures and conflicts in a tradition-oriented family coping with the new needs of today. Everyone is welcome.

**MBCI Fund Raising Banquet** was held at the Portage Avenue MB church on April 30 under the sponsorship of the Home and School. John Siemens, chairman, expressed gratification at the excellent attendance. Guest speaker D. D. Duerksen, himself a former teacher at the school, challenged the audience with "Priorities in our Responsibilities."

Inter-Mennonite and cross-cultural sharing of the arts is planned as an integral part of the 10th assembly of the Mennonite World Conference July 25-30 in Wichita, Kansas. Ideas for performers and materials from Mennonite Musicians and dramatists are sought. Interested individuals contact: Virginia Miniger, 213 South Main St., Hesston, Kansas 67062

#### Northern Development

The report by **Mr. Justice Thomas Berger** on the feasibility of a MacKenzie Valley Pipeline, calling for a 10-year moratorium on construction of the pipeline, is resulting in different responses on the part of Mennonite leaders. The MCC has issued a release stressing its "interest in the decision because of its involvement in Native concerns, and as a member of Project North, an inter/church organization recommending a moratorium until certain conditions are met." It adds that "implicit in its membership is support of a moratorium." MCC is not definitely committed to such a position, however, and this summer Menno Wiebe and Daniel Zehr will hold seminars in Ontario and Manitoba to develop a response through constituency discussions.

**M.P. Jake Epp** has said that it would be wrong to reject the pipeline idea "before knowing whether we would have enough natural gas to heat our homes and industries a few years from now. While Canadians want to reduce environmental and social impacts of the pipeline in the north, it is the height of irresponsibility to suggest that no pipeline be built before all the facts are in." Additional facts will be made available shortly by the National Energy Board.

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Hon. John Munro, Minister

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# ... your word

Dear Editor:

I'm enjoying the Mennonite Mirror. The articles by Victor Peters are entertaining and informative.

It would be interesting to know about the sorrow and heartache that Mr. Peter's "wayward" friends caused their families by going off to war.

I also find the connection between smoking and intelligence (c.f. Victor Unruh) strange. Smoking is described by the Canadian Medical Association as Canada's number one preventable medical problems and this drug addiction as "unrivalled tale of illness, disability, and death".

Would the paper or Mr. Peters care to comment on these issues in some future articles.

Sincerely,  
Dave Dueck,  
Winnipeg.

Aun's Redaktion,

Daen vaeaschlag von Oom Juelius Teews jefelt mi. Etj meen dee idee een plautdietschet Kollegium op'e feet too bringen.

Dee jradste schwierigtjeit von mi too veseehn' esz nich jel'd ooda jebieda uck nich leearasch oba: Waea woot leid'n. Bringt daen vaeastaund toop, plont mol'n baet. Enn lot ons aula weet'n waut ji welln. Waea weet, daut kunn schauff'n. Ron Szuetamaun.

Winkla

P.S. Woo stieit 'et met daem "umlaut"? Esz daut too oolt moodsch ve juene dretjorie ooda vesteit de soont nich?

Dear Sir:

Enclosed with my subscription renewal is my best wishes for continued success. Through various friends over the years I have had a window on the Mennonite community. For the past few years it has been good to have a Mirror as well.

Yours truly.

Sue McKay.  
Winnipeg.

## Mennonite Your Way

Would you like to be acquainted with another Mennonite family in some other part of North America this summer? The "Mennonite Your Way Directory" (\$2) lists over 1700 families across Canada and the U. S. who are willing to host travellers passing through their community. Write Mennonite Your Way, Box 1525, Salunga, Pa. 17538.

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You're a kite  
Loose of any string.  
(some new place  
in the sky  
I can't find.)

Loftiest sky-sail  
Free of any mast,  
You've become  
Kite-hawk.  
How can I find you?

Does anyone  
keep a God  
for more than  
one day  
in these times?

Love and promises;  
All strings you have broken,  
All masts you have splintered,  
All idols shattered.

In the jaggedness  
of kite-flight  
is there a new continuity?

(once upon  
a train day-coach,  
on a long journey,  
I saw lovers  
embraced in their sleep  
in the small space  
of a composition.)

Doesn't anyone live in  
The same place anymore?

I'm trying  
To find you.

• by Jim Derksen

# **Viewing the world and the Roseau River**

**fyi \***  
\* for your information

by Vic Penner

Spring came early to the banks of the Roseau River this year and my younger son and I made an early inspection of the Front 40.

My neighbour John had taken only one cut of alfalfa last year, so the remaining growth had caught a fairly good layer of snow in spite of a winter that lacked the usual precipitation. Under the last bit of snow, Steve and I detectd the greenery of emerging alfalfa. Two weeks later, when the snow was gone, the field was green and the soil was moist. Being in its third year, the alfalfa roots are reaching far down into the subsoil. They'll have to go down an extra five feet this summer if the water table is even with the level of the river. Usually in full flow in April and May, the Roseau this year is a mere trickle and at least five feet below its normal level. Our agriculture minister Eugene Whelan has suggested prayers for rain as perhaps the most effective way of fighting drought. Dear Father in heaven...

At the meander where the Roseau enters our property we notice erosion has taken a big bit out of the west bank. A colony of beavers has a dam there. Until now they have been unable to connect with the west bank because of the water pressure from upstream, but with the flow cut down last fall they obviously managed it; and raised the dam about a foot to boot. In spring the extra flow from snow melt pushed around the end of the dam and it cost us some 15 feet of river bank. Our earlier affection for the dear beaver, and their dam has faded somewhat.

This week my wife and I are hobbling around with stiff and sore muscles from planting 170 trees on the weekend. Last year my older son and I together with Neighbour John and his tractor planted about a mile and a half of shelterbelt.

This year we patched it where winter kill and gophers had left their mark. We noticed that the caraganas, and even the ash, were better able to survive the blasts of winter than the sharp little fangs of the gopher.

As Roseau River greenhorns four years ago, we decided on a policy of "live and let live." After watching the beavers and gophers in action this year, our policy is getting harder and harder to live with. The question is, is murder of beaver and gopher justified for doing what comes naturally to a beaver and a gopher.

Maybe the five hives of bees I installed about two weeks ago will provide suitable revenge. The trouble is that bees are looking for flowers, not gophers and beavers. A beaver's chance of getting a stinger in the rump is pretty slim when saskatoon and chokecherry bushes are blooming all along the river banks.

When the wood tick season is over we'll be inspecting the Back 40 (which is on the east side of the river and all bush). We're hopeful that a trail made there two winters ago hasn't grown over with young poplars and rose bushes. The trail connects a dusty municipal back road with the river bank and supposedly will provide ingress and egress for some future cottagers there. In normal years there's a marsh a few hundred yards southeast of the trail where a lot of marsh birds nest. Olly has been wondering how we can get the birds to eat more ticks. She suggests that covering them with honey might help. Guess who's appointed to honey-coat them.

One thing is becoming more and more apparent. Namely, that unless we are going to turn murderous with the birds and the beasts at Roseau River Acres, we are going to have to adapt ourselves to them.



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## De scheene oale Tiet

In einem schoen mobilierten Zimmer sitzt ein Muetterchen und tut Handarbeit. Sie sitzt in einem weichen Stuhl. Der Fernsehapparat steht in einiger Entfernung vor ihr. Sie fuehrt ein Selbstgespraech. Dann und wann schuettet sie den Kopf und spricht dann wieder weiter.

Wo weat doch mau ver faertig Joa?  
Wea kaun sitj duat noch dentje?  
(Schaut sich etwas im Zimmer um)  
De Stoawe weare nich so straum  
Wi saute opp hoate Bentje.

De Heat wort donn mett Holt gehett.  
Daut Holt musst wi ons spoale,  
ENN wenn em Faut nich Woate wea,  
Dann musst wi uns daut hoale.

ENN groate Wausch, du liebe Zeit  
Wea kaun sitj daut nich dentje:  
Daut Ruble, Tetjre. Na etj saj  
Daut wea waut tom verentje.

Ut Kaune aut wi donn noch nich  
Daut wea je donn Sind,  
Nae Mame sorgt vett Aete noch,  
De koakt ve Maun uck Tjint.

Warenitje enn Plumemos,  
Enn feine joaschtne Jrett,  
Du liebe zeit wea daut enn Schmaus  
I never can forget.

Na englisch raed wi donn noch nich  
Wi saede schur en well,  
Na daut saed wi enn Russlaund aul  
Dat's all wat I can tell.

No Tjoatj jinjt mett de Demokrat,  
Wo wea wi jletjlich doch,  
Uck mett de Bax foare de Lied,  
Uck daut wea schetjlich noch

Jo, jo daut wea ne scheene Tiet  
Ver jane faertig Joa;  
Poluschien tjand wi donn noch nich,  
De Loft wea rein enn kloa.

Nu sommt enn brommt daut Dach enn  
Nacht  
Vepjasst de gaunze Welt,  
ENN daut's je kratjt waut mi so schlacht  
Bi diese Tiet gefaellt.

Bi Eatons enn dem Waeatinjrum  
Doa troff sitj Groat uck Tjleen  
ENN onse Lied de jleichte daut  
An ginj daut doa racht scheen.

ENN wenn an dann no Aaete wea  
Daut kune sitj doa tjeepe  
Eenen Hot-Dog na uck sest noch waut  
Daut wudde se nich vejaete.

Jo, jo daut wea ne scheene Tiet  
Ver jane faertig Joa;  
Etj saj junt daut enn jleewt mi mau  
Daut Laewe wea haulf so schwua.

O Jane scheene oale Tiet!  
Na wea etwas bewegt nich werklich  
scheen?  
Etj wensch etj kunn noch blos eenmoal  
Nich blos eenmoal di see'n.

Sie steht jetzt auf stellt das TV an, setzt  
sich wieder, schaut ein paar Sekunden  
aufs Bild, dann wieder dem Puplikum  
zugewand spricht sie weiter.

TV daut wea je donn noch Sind,  
Nu es it woll nich mea.  
(Weiter spricht sie sehr entschieden.)  
Na daut saj etj junt klipp en kloa  
TV daut jleich ejt sea.

- von N. H. Unruh



This is a photograph of the teacher and students of the Rosenheim School, located about 1½ miles north and half-way between Horndean and Rosenfeld. Tina Wiens, the teacher in this picture, is perhaps better known as the wife of Frederick

Phillip Grove, the mysterious but famous novelist who for a time made his home in Winkler. This photo was taken in 1906 before her marriage to Grove.

**Comment on the Play:**  
***Wir Sind Allzumal Suender***

This one-hour German comedy was presented by German students of Westgate Collegiate at the Planetarium Theatre on May 10 and 11, to virtually full houses.

The play itself is ideally suited to the talents of such a group. The speeches were short, the action swift, the characters diverse, and the comedy broad. The actors handled the material extremely well. It was, in our judgment, one of the finest productions of its kind that we have seen in the past few years. Most of the actors displayed a remarkable grasp of the German language, a tribute to parents, teachers, directors, as well as the students. A visitor from Germany who was present the first evening was amazed at the quality of the diction and the confidence shown by the second and third generation Canadians.

Actors showing special talents were Irene Neustaedter, Charlotte Enns, Tom Friesen, and Karl Krahn. All participants are to be commended for an extremely enjoyable evening of theatre.

R. V.



In den dreissiger Jahren gruendete man in Nord Kildonan eine Deutsche Sonnabendschule die den Kindern der Gegend die Muttersprache erhalten sollte. Heute besteht diese noch wie damals. Keiner der Lehrer ist dieser Schule so lange treu geblieben wie Heinrich Klassen, der in diesem Jahr sein 25 Arbeitsjubilaeum begeht. 1952 kam er an die Schule. 1968 uebernahm er die Schulleitung von Karl Fast. Vor zwei Jahren trat er als Leiter zurueck. Er hatte sieben Jahre lang beide Arbeiten, die des Lehrers und die des Leiters, ausgefuehrt. Als Lehrer ist er bis heute noch taetig. Wir wuenschen ihn fuer die Zukunft alles Beste und hoffen dass es ihm vorgennt ist diese Arbeit noch lange zu tun. Im Auftrage des Schulrates unter der Eltern sagen wir Lehrer Heinrich Klassen herzlichen Dank fuer seine Treue und Hingabe in der Erziehung unserer Kinder.

## Die Macht des Wahrhaften Wortes

Auch der, vom Kommunismus unterjochte, Russe liebt und verteidigt, im freien Wortwechsel mit Staatsbuergern anderer, nicht kommunistischer Staaten, seinen Geburtsort, sein Heimatland.

von Irene Nowak

Unter den Fragen, die mir in Briefen von alten Bekannten, aus der Zeit meines Auslandslebens gestellt werden, ist haueufig diese: Koennen russische, stets im Ausland lebende Menschen ihren Beitrag zur gemeinsamen Sache des Kampfes fuer den Frieden und das gegenseitige Verstehen unter den Voelkern liefern, und wenn sie koennen, dann auf welche Art?

Ich lebte viele Jahre in Westdeutschland und habe mich ueberzeugt, dasz viele Deutsche keine richtige Vorstellung von der sowjetischen Wirklichkeit, von unseren Leuten und ihrer Weltanschauung, ihrem Geschmack und den Normen ihres Benehmens haben. Und deshalb glaubt man auch den verschiedenen feindlichen Luegen und Erfindungen. Und dieses dient durchaus nicht der Besserung der Verhaeltnisse zwischen den einzelnen Staaten, und folglich auch nicht der Abschwaechung der Spannungen zwischen ihnen.

Ich denke, dasz jeder im Ausland lebende Landsmann vieles von sich, von seinen Freunden und Angehoerigen, aus dem Leben in der Sowjetunion erzaehlen kann, und so - durch Persoenliches und Privates - Gemeinsames und Groszes aufdecken, die Wahrheit ueber sein Heimatland den fehlerhaften oder freindseligen Aussagen ueber es, gegenueberstellen. Ist nicht das ein Dienst an der Heimat? Waere das nicht ein Beitrag fuer die Sache des Friedens?

Ich denke, doch. Nur musz man dazu selbst ueberzeugt, aufrichtig, konsequent sein. Man darf nicht schweigend eine Luege anhoeren und sich fuerchten die Wahrheit zu sagen.

Ich erinnere mich da eines Falles vom

Jahre 1946, im Krankenhaus in der alten Bayerischen Stadt Regensburg.

Nach meiner Verwundung und einer ganzen Serie komplizierter Operationen, fng ich an vom frischen gehen zu lernen. Diese Beschaeftigung war sehn traurig-mit einer Unmenge von "Notdurfslandungen" verbunden. Doch dann fng ich endlich an, an den Abenden in das Gemeinschaftszimmer hinueberzugehen. Dort versammelten sich die Kranken aus allen Zimmern, um sich an verschiedenen Tischspielen zu beteiligen, etwas zu schwatzen, ueberhaupt, um auf kurze Zeit von der Krankheit zu vergessen. In den Krankenzimmern verblieben nur die, welche zu liegen gezwungen waren.

In diesem eigenartigen Gastzimmer versammelten sich nach dem Abendessen etwa 20 Personen. Ich habe mir natuerlich mit Interesse die Menschen aus der andern Welt angesehen und versucht zu verstehen, wie wer von ihnen ist.

Ein gewisser Ernst Klinge Eigentuemer einer Parfumerie und gewesener Offizier der Wehrmacht - hat besonders meine Aufmerksamkeit erregt. Ein Blondin mit Soldatenschneid, durchsichtige "arische" blaue Augen, wie zwei stechende Eiszapfen; in jeder Geste, in jedem Wort herablassender Hochmut. Von diesem Menschen stroemte es geradezu nazistisch aus. Er war klug, gebildet und deshalb haben welche Deutschen zu ihm von unten emporgeschaut und nach ihm hingehorcht.

Mich erfasste nun grosze Lust, diesen Mythus der Ueberlegenheit zu zerstreuen, zu verwehen. Dazu benutzte ich meine Kenntnisse der deutschen Sprache und Literatur: oft sagte ich aus dem Gedaechtnis Strophen deutscher Klassiker, veranstaltete deutsche Literaturspiele.

Da sagte eines Abends Klinge recht herablassend: "Bravol ich bin stolz auf unsere (!?) Frauen."

Am naechsten Tag hoerte ich, ins Zimmer tretend, wie er zu einem sehr jungen, bescheidenen Burschen, der immer mit groszer Verehrung zu ihm

aufschaut, sagte: "Hans, Sie kennen Ruszland nicht, und deshalb sprechen Sie von russischer Intelligenz. Das ist ja laecherlich! In Ruszland gibt es keine Intelligenz."

Hans wunderte sich: - "Wie so nicht?" "Na, 's ist eben keine da," erwiderte behauptend Klinge. - "Und ein Land ohne Intelligenz ist dem Aussterben geweiht."

Hans war etwas verwirrt. Jetzt rechnete ich es an der Zeit, mich der Fruechte meiner artistischen Vorbereitung zu bedienen.

"Und was nennen Sie Intelligenz, Herr Klinge?" fragte ich. - "Zum Beispiel mich, zaehlen Sie zu dieser Kateguerie?"

Der blonde Prophet laechelte: "Und ob? Weshalb solch sonderbare Frage?" "Eben, weil ich Russin bin. Und nach Ihrer Theorie, Herr Klinge, gibt es ja in Ruszland keine Intelligenz. - Worin liegt denn hier der Fehler: in meiner Zugehoerigkeit zur Intelligenz, oder in Ihrer Theorie?"

Klinge wurde so rot, dasz seine Haare, seine Brauen und Wimpern ganz weisz schienen. Er schien ganz vernichtet und nur ein Negativ zu sein.

Doch er fand sich wieder: "Verzeihen Sie," er neigte den Kopf und legte die Hand aufs Herz. "Ich habe das nicht gewuszt und wollte Ihren nationalen Stolz nicht beleidigen."

Im Zimmer herrschte eine gespannte Stille. Aller Augen waren auf uns beide gerichtet. Und mir schien in diesem Augenblick, dasz hinter meinen Schultern Ruszland ist, dasz ich fuer mein Vaterland in den Kampf ziehe, und dasz von meiner Antwort der Ausgang dieses Kampfes abhaengig ist. Mein Herz schlug sturmisch, doch ich antwortete ruhig: "Um mich seien Sie sind doch ein kluger, belesener Mann; Sie kennen unsere Gelehrten, unsere Schriftsteller, Dichter, Kuenstler und Musiker, und nichts desto weniger behaupten, ja bekraeftigen Sie, dasz in Ruszland keine Intelligenz ist. Also Sie irren sich nicht, sondern Sie liegen einfach, bewuszt Ihre eigenen Landsleute betruegend und mit Dreck das Land begieszend, welches Sie noch gestern grausam mit Fueszen traten. Wie, wenn ich und meine Landsleute alle Deutschen nach Ihnen beurteilen wuerden, was dann? Hier, der Hans, ein Deutscher, hat Ihnen schon nicht geglaubt und so werden Ihnen auch die andern nicht glauben, Die wissen vielleicht weniger als Sie, dafuer sind sie aber ehrliche Leute. Und solche gibt es in Deutschland, Gott sei Dank, nicht wenige. Davon hab ich mich schon ueberzeugt. Ihre Nummer geht nicht durch, Klinge!"

Und was folgte nun: man klatschte, trommelte auf den Tisch und rief durcheinander: "Richtig, - groszartig - Bravo!" Ich warf einen Blick auf Klinge. Er war bleich wie Schreibpapier, - und die Augen . . . Nur gut, dasz dies alles im

Jahre 1946 geschah und ich nicht eins oder anderthalb Jahre frueher in seine Haende und unter diesen seinen Zorn fiel.

Eine Schwester rief ihn zur Unterspritzung. Er ahmte mit ungehorsamen Mund ein miszlungenes Laecheln und verneigte sich: "Die Medizin ruft zur Unterordnung. Nochmals bitte ich Verzeihung!"

Ein lustiger Bayer bemerkte, lachend: "Listig ist die Medizin, sie weisz, wen wan abzurufen." All lachten.

Des Auditoriums verlustig, hat sich Klinge in unsern Gastzimmer nicht mehr gezeigt, und nach drei Tagen wurde er aus dem Krankenhaus entlassen. Ich verlebte dort noch fast ein Jahr. Der Bestand von Kranken wechselte fortwaerend, aber die Verbliebenen erzaehlten den neu Eingelieferten immer wieder ueber diese unsere Auseinandersetzung. Die Reaktion war freilich verschieden, abhaengig von der Weltanschauung eines jeden, und ich hatte noch mehrmals aehnlich Kaempfe auszufechten, was bisweilen nicht ganz leicht war.

Eines kann ich sagen: "Auch in so bescheidenem Maesse fuer die Ehre seiner Heimat einzustehen, ist fuer den russischen, in der Fremde lebenden, Menschen schon ein wirkliches Glueck."

- uebersetzt von J. Neufeld.

#### Ein Leserbrief Zu: Der Soldat kam Zurueck

Ich moechte blos wissen, wem diese Geschichte, zu gute Komen soll, den Russen, oder den Deutschen? Der Nazismus ist schon ueber 30 Jahre tot und ist schon keine Gefahr mehr, fuer die Welt und Menscheheit. Der Kommunismus dagegen ist stark und maechtig und ist im Komen, die Welt vom Elend zu erloesen und die Menscheit mit einem Roten Paradis zu beglueken. Ich neme an Lieber Bruder J. N. Sie Erleben noch die entruedekun ins rote Paradis, wen Sie Glueck haben und nicht ploetlich und hals-ueberkopf zu tote kommen. Ich habe beide Diktatoresysteme am eigen Leibe erlebt, Nazis u. Kommunismus, und auch Fasistische Diktator, die lezte war mein IDEAL! Kan aber auch die schoene Demokraty sehr gut fertragen.

Die arbeiter leben gut, die arbeitslosen leben gut, die Pensionaere leben gut, die auf Wohlfort leben gut, die gegen die Demokraty schimpften, leben gut, die im Gefaengnis leben gut! Alle leben wir im Demokratischen Land im Saus u. Braus, weit ueber unsere ferhaltnise und alle gleich ob arm oder Reich, einfach wie im Himmelreich. Man sieht so viele Hetz-Filme und anderes, gegen Deutsche Volk. Man ist es schon bereits gewoehnt

doch von einem Deutschen und noch ein Mennonit, nach dem Namen nach, und selbsferstaendlich ein Christ. Also sollten Sie versuchen Zu fernen und fergessen was solange Zurueck liegt, und das Deutschland ist eine forbildliche Demokraty geworden und eine neue Generatzion ist entstanden, die Nichst mit Nazis zu tun hat.

Sie Lieber Bruder sollten sich damit troesten alle Laender waren im 2 ten Weltkreig mit ferwinkel und benamen sich auch nicht Engelhaft, die Deutsche Staede wurden mit Vosfor-Bomben, Gnadenlos belegt und in Asche ferwandelt, mit Personen Fuege u. Farm-Haeuser, wurde keine ruecksicht genommen, wen die Flugzeuge Bomben und die Kanonen droenten dan schwiegen die Gesetze, und es waren keine Deutsche, sondern Allierte, dass halbe Deutschland hat man Ihnen genommen, mit man u. Maus. Und hats den Osten gegeben und hat Ihre Obrikheit gehankt, die Fabriken die nicht volkommen Verwuestet wurden abmontiert und in andre Laender ferfrachtet, All die teuren Bomben, die Auf dem Deutschen Volk Erbarmungslos geschtreut wurden, mueste Deutschland, bezahlen, Kreigsferbrecher, wurden gesucht und gefunden und imer wirt noch gehetzet und wie viel Kriege haben nach dem 2 ten Welt-Kriege stat gefunden wie schreklich wurde in Vietnam, Angola, Biafra, Nigeria, Indien, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Israel - Araber, sogar mehrmals Ungarn der Aufstand und wie viel Grentz zwischefoele zwischen Russen und Chinesen, Algier, Franzosen, Englaender, Araber, das waren alles grausame Mord-geschichten und ohne Nazis. Oder waren da doch Nazis? Sie lieber Bruder werden es wissen! und nirgens wirdn Kriegsferbrecher gesucht, als nur in Deutschland! So eine harte Strafe wie dem Deutschen Volk auferlegt wurden, ist einmalig lin der Weltgeschichte.

Wehe den Besiegten! Lieber Bruder! Sie haben die ganze Rostik geschichte so ausfuerlich und schoen geschildert, wie liebe der Statt, Kolchos und Umgebung zu Rostik war. vom Neuen Ziegel haus, mit Blehdach, es schient da wirklich ein Paradis zu sein. Ich sehe Sie Lieber Bruder sint ziemlich gut beschlagen und mit allen Wassern gewaschen und stelle Ich Ihnen eine schlachte und einfache Frage: Nach allen Himmelgegenden wandern jedes Jahr, tausend und aber tausende Leute ein, und nach, das Gespriesene rote Paradis, Keiner, nicht ein mal, unsere unzufriedene Koministen zieht es dahin und der Sozialistische Statt, ist schon 60 Jahres Jung? Warum bleiben die Menschen in dem Kapitalistischen, Ausbeuter-Lander? Was ist der grund? Was haelt ihnen hier?

J. Siemens,  
Winnipeg.

# A special Literary Supplement

A special literary supplement  
In the following pages, the Mennonite Mirror presents original work in prose and poetry by several Mennonite writers.

This feature is made possible through the courtesy and support of the Triple E Foundation.

#### About the writers:

**Helena Dueck** is a Steinbach homemaker and free lance writer.

**Pat Friesen** teaches English in Selkirk and recently published a book of poetry.

**Jim Derksen** is a native of Steinbach and a student at the University of Winnipeg.

**Peter Hampton** is originally from Grunthal, was born in Russia, and writes about the experiences of his family. He is a professor of psychiatry in Akron, Ohio.

**Ralph Friesen** is also from Steinbach and is the author of previously published short stories in the Mirror. He is employed by the secretary of state in Winnipeg.

**Al Reimer** is professor of English at the University of Winnipeg, and author of numerous reviews and articles in the Mirror.

## Letters to Nadine, concern about father

*The letters which follow were written as part of an assignment given to Helena Dueck when she attended a creative writing course at the University of Manitoba. The assignment was to write a series of letters to a friend, with a theme carried throughout all to provide continuity. Although fiction, the letters do provide an interesting exploration of a family problem some readers will have experienced.*

#### First Letter

Dear Nadine,

Since my mother's funeral I have been so fully and traumatically occupied that I have neglected both my correspondence and most of my own personal needs. I'm tired. The world looks tired - even our weeping birch has stopped weeping, with only a few dried yellow tear-stains left on its ravaged form.

As you may now know, my father has always worn both his heart and his mind on his sleeve - and the sleeve is turned inside out. Living with all this emotionalism for four months was enough for me. After that I spent two weeks with him. The days I drove the twenty-five miles to his place (together with Darlene, our three-year-old), I left home as early as 8:30 A.M. and stayed - if possible - till he dried his eyes. He always greeted us joyously, and, while I did jobs that never occurred to him to need doing, he told stories to us. Towards evening his stories became sadder, and by the time I should leave, he was usually weeping.

Finally he mopped his eyes and began looking over all the available females within his neighborhood. He began his courting or proposing to them, and I'd hear all about the steady refusals he encountered. He tried widows and old maids, both of suitable and unsuitable age. I chided him for this, but he silenced me with Biblical references that left no loop-hole for me to argue.

When he had tapped all these resources, he began begging me to take him farther afield. I rebelled strongly, but finally he broke down all my defences. Never in my wildest dreams have I envisioned my doing this, and I'll be horsewhipped before I do it again.

So the series of courting trips began.

I'd take him to his destination but refused to go in with him. He thought as youthful-looking a daughter as myself (ahem) could be in his favor, but I just wouldn't oblige. I sat out his visiting span in the car - sweating as I never have before. But he was back in the car so fast that I sometimes thought the good lady hadn't been home. But she had, and the necessary questions were asked and answered.

After several weeks of this, I began to reason with him. "Dad," I said, "Women your age aren't interested in marriage. Why should they be? For them it's an extra job taken on when they can comfortably live on their own. You just don't know much about women."

He bounced up, sat down and spat. Him, not know women? What was I, a young snippet, daring to say? But I had begun - so continued.

"You," I said clearly, "can go on proposing, but I will not chauffeur you to any more women."

He wilted visibly for several weeks after that, but I never mentioned it again. So you see this past year has been sprinkled with sadness and pain, triumphs and tragedies, and now we're getting ready for a simple wedding. Privately, via letter, Dad finally has been "yessed" by a simple-looking widow whose lot is even worse than his. I can see quite a pleasant future for both of them.

When the whole shindig is over, I intend to put my house in order and enjoy myself. I expect to spend time with my family, listen to myself think, and talk to the wise old spruces back of our lot.

The phone is ringing. It's that time of day again when Dad calls me to tell me how happy he is - and to remind me that he did the whole thing quietly and on his own and will be beholden to no one for his good fortune.

Best wishes,  
Jean-Ann

#### Second Letter

Dear Nadine,

I'm happy.

Dad's been married for two months and I feel free. Well, not exactly completely free, but at least I'm not on call twenty-four hours a day. He still calls fairly often

- after all, when a couple in their seventies marry, there are bound to be a few things I'm still needed for. I can see that a time may come when he may even experience that a few of his vain expectations of a wife will back-fire. But I warned him! He seemed to think he was, marrying Mother over again, instead of an almost complete stranger. Anyway, for now they're still quite content - unravelling each others' histories - to think of any thwarted expectations. They'll come - I know - for who could have been married to my mother for nearly forty-five years and be content with a no-reading, small-thinking woman? But I'm living only one day at a

time now, and today I'm most unashamedly laughing at some of the more comic aspects of their pre- and post-nuptials.

My sister was against the marriage and begged me in season and out of season to help her reason Dad out of his bliss. She's one of those unfortunates who is constantly worrying. I told her to shut up unless she was willing to shoulder Dad's work, to weep with him, and to take him courting on his optimistic days. She looked at me as if I was completely crazy, and said never a word against it anymore.

The wedding was something else. We drove in state behind the bridal car. In the back sat Dad with his arm around his beloved, completely oblivious to the amused hoots and grins of the local yokels we passed on the way. I looked neither left nor right, but sat well back in my seat trying to hide all the indignant unmentionable feelings locked within me. Fortunately most of the wedding guests were oldsters who smiled sympathetically at Dad's obvious happiness.

Our kids are innocently happy about the union, and Dad has always been dreadfully foolish about kids. As soon as the wedding supper was over, our girls rushed to him and clambered on his knees. I saw our new mom glare at the girls, but the glare went by unheeded. I've found since that she holds fast the idea that children should be seen (seldom) and not heard at all, and here they were loving up her bridegroom on their wedding day!

For a change I've been giving my family decent meals and am enjoying my freedom. For joy and freedom are elusive and must be grabbed when the grabbing is good. And I'm doing just that.

Greetings,  
Jean-Ann

### Third Letter

Dear Nadine,

I just hung out an overlarge wash, and most of it stiffened instantly in spite of a merry south wind trying its best to tickle the trantrums out of it. I hate hanging out wash in this type of weather, but our dryer has also gone into a temper tantrum. I turned it on and the noise it made was enough to wake the dead; besides, it danced so madly that I was afraid it would move our new washer from its moorings.

And, yes, Dad is still solidly married, and so far they seem to have fewer problems than people who marry when they are the proper age for marrying. She can't believe that she has a happy, helpful husband, and he can't get over the fact that he did indeed get a wife when he had already given up hope. For although this mother doesn't know a great many things, she knows a great deal about loving and cooking, and a woman can go far on that.

As for myself, I don't care what they eat and drink, as long as they remain as oddly and improperly happy as they are now.

I read some days, sew on others, and even take organ lessons in Winnipeg. I go in each Tuesday, and although I've come to the conclusion I'll never be a master organist, the day out is worth a lot to me.

Last Tuesday was a memorable one. I left home quite early, feeling smug and content. I had the table nicely set, complete with chocolate pudding topped with whipped cream. On the stove I had a large pot of holubschi (meat balls rolled in cabbage) steaming with butter and a little water, potatoes and tomato sauce. I felt happy and pleased to know that at least for now my family needn't come home to an empty house and table, even if I took off for the day. That had happened too often when Dad kept me on the trot.

And I had a nice day - even splurged on a good meal for myself. But when I turned in on our driveway, a curious feeling assailed me. Why was the front door wide open, and the back door too? I stepped out of the car, gingerly sniffing the air. In the dirty snow lay my forty-dollar Queen Anne pot, black and smoking. I began to see things I didn't like to see. My offspring, spilling out the door, began talking all at the same time about coming to a smoke-filled house that drove them all back to school as fast as they could make it. Dad, they said, fired the pot out of the door, saying he never wanted to smell that odious cabbage stink again.

So my leisure is over for the time being. I've scoured the kitchen with all types of deodorants and cleansers, but the stink remains - so now I'm in the process of repainting the whole kitchen, cupboards and all.

Whenever guests come, one or the other of my kids will invariably and very soberly relate the fact that their mom was caught smoking pot recently, which cost her a mint, and a few weeks after that the local police fined her a mere twenty-two bucks for speeding - and what were they to do with a parent delinquent on their hands?

So you see I'm still kept down in one way or another. Besides that, my dad is beginning to feel that the chronic ailments of his widowerhood have not been healed by the magic of a woman in the house. He's beginning to call oftener again - not to complain, just talk, he says.

Anyway, we're all living and so is the rest of this household. When you come to town, drop in for coffee. There's only room for two in our kitchen right now, but it would do me a world of good to see you.

My love,  
Jean-Ann  
mm

-by Pat Friesen

## On The Wing

The moving van had left  
our clothes were packed and in the car.  
I stood the keys in my hand,  
bid farewell to a garden I would see no  
more,  
for we were transferred and the journey  
would be far.  
I threw a last handful of seeds upon the  
feeding tray  
for the birds who had delighted me  
and wondered would some other hands  
tend with loving care  
the flowers I had planted there.  
Then quietly they came, the first migra-  
tion of the fall,  
a flock of young birds with unsteady  
wings  
they lit upon the shrubs and trees about  
me  
so close I could have touched them.  
I looked about and not a bird was in my  
neighbours' gardens.  
For me alone they came as if they knew  
it was an hour when I needed  
more than human company could  
bestow.  
They hopped from branch to branch with  
sympathetic chirps.  
Their journey too would be far;  
the retreats they loved left behind.  
Then on the wing they rose as one and  
they were gone.  
I turned and walked away without a  
backward glance  
the keys in my hand.

- by Irene Craig Neil

## On The Other Side

The hunters  
are not there.

The fields are quiet  
in the waving sun.  
The hedgerows wind  
through  
all the hollows  
of sunlit grass.

The wind is by itself.

The grass is by itself.

Nothing separates everything  
On the other side of the poem.

- by Jim Derksen

# They paid the highest price

by Peter J. Hampton

The sun is already throwing its beams at  
the distant sky; the dew is still lingering  
on the grass; the birds are beginning to  
chatter; morning is fast approaching. Uncle  
Isaak has already hitched the three  
horses to the long harvest wagon loaded  
with provisions and clothing for the  
starving and needy folks back home. He  
is urging his father and mother and the  
young woman Anna traveling with them  
to hurry so they can get started on the  
last lap of their journey of mercy from  
Blisnitz to Warwarowka.

It had been a long journey. "How happy  
our friends will be," Jakob Neufeld,  
storekeeper and ministering angel to the  
villagers in Jasykovo, muses, "when we  
distribute the provisions and clothing we  
have purchased for our people with the  
largesse of our friends. There is flour  
and sugar, potatoes and coffee, beans  
and lard, smoked meat and dried fruits,  
and so many other good things to eat."  
The journey was grandfather's idea.  
When the Machno bandits passed  
through our villages they plundered and  
killed. In Dubowka, one of the villages  
making up the Jasykovo group, 73 men  
were killed. Many were shot; others were  
hacked to death with sabers. A village of  
widows and orphans could not look after  
itself. Help was desperately needed. And  
so grandfather, who was well known in  
Jasykovo, organized a mission of mercy.

He contacted influential Mennonites in  
the Kongratjekva area, where conditions  
were much better than in Jasykovo, and  
organized a food and clothing lift for the  
Dubowka villagers and others at home.  
The object of the trip was to bring the  
food and the clothing that had been pur-  
chased and collected in Kongratjekva  
back to Jasykovo for distribution.

At first grandfather planned on going  
by himself. But grandmother insisted on  
coming along, and grandfather finally  
relented. In Kongratjekva they were to  
meet their son Isaak who was coming  
home for a visit from medical school in  
Berdjansk. He was to help with the work  
of loading the food and clothing. He was  
also to help spell grandfather with the  
driving of the troyka back to War-  
warowka.

The trip from Warwarowka to Kongrat-  
jekva was fairly uneventful. It rained for a  
while when my grandparents neared  
Kongratjekva and so they stopped at a  
postoyalej dwor (a traveler's inn) until  
the rain stopped. They had traveled far  
enough to reach an area in the Ukraine  
where food was available for purchase.  
While the horses were fed and watered,  
grandfather and grandmother enjoyed a  
pot of tea and a sizeable piece of freshly  
baked bread covered with butter and  
apricot jam and a nice chunk of smoked  
pork sausage. "How good it feels to have  
something decent in your stomach  
again," grandfather exclaimed to grand-  
mother. She agreed.

As grandfather's long harvest wagon  
pulled out of Blisnitz, the village where  
they had spent the night with relatives  
on their way back home, each one of the  
travelers was lost in thought. My grand-  
father reflected upon the hard times that  
had befallen our people. As storekeeper  
of our village he had managed to hide  
some of the store's food supplies. But  
gradually the provisions ran out as  
grandfather and my dad distributed them  
bit by bit to the sick and the needy in our  
village - and this under the very eyes of  
the Russian bandits who raided and  
plundered our village sporadically. The  
thought of being able to distribute provi-  
sions and clothing to the needy widows

and children from Dubowka warmed grandfather's heart and lit up his eyes as he hummed a tune.

Grandmother was preoccupied in her thoughts with the prospect of seeing her daughter Mary Paetkau, my mother and the rest of our family in Dnepropetrovsk where my dad, Peter Paetkau ran a postoyalej dwor (a guest house for travelers). Grandfather's plan was to stay with our family overnight before they set out on the final leg of their journey to Warwarowka where my grandparents lived and where grandfather ran the village store.

Uncle Isaak was engrossed with the things he would tell his friends when he got home. He was in his last year of medical school, and he could hardly wait to tell his friends about his adventures in Berdansk where he was studying. He was also anxious to find a place in Warwarowka where he might set up a medical practice.

Anna, the young woman traveling with my grandparents had been visiting relatives. Her mind was occupied with her boy friend in Warwarowka who was home for the summer holidays from Chortitza where he was attending teacher's college.

Suddenly uncle Isaak broke into everybody's reverie. "There are several riders following us," he said, somewhat alarmed. "They could have overtaken us, but they're not. They seem to be hanging back. Why?" He let go with his whip and the horses quickened their pace. The riders also spurred forward. The women became anxious. Uncle Isaak turned to his father and asked, "Shall we try to outrun them?" "No use," grandfather said. "We can't do that with our heavy load. Let's slow down and see what they want." The wagon was nearing a crossroad, and all at once the riders, four of them, heavily armed, were along side of the wagon. "Turn left at the crossroad," the leader of the bandits bellowed at uncle Isaak. Uncle Isaak protested. "But that's not where we are going," he said while he continued to drive straight. Then two of the horsemen, one on each side of the troyka, grabbed the horses's reins and pulled them into the crossroad leading left away from the main road. "This is a shorter way," the leader of the bandits yelled out. "You'll get where you're going much sooner," another rider shouted with a sadistic grin on his face.

It was apparent now that my grandparents, uncle Isaak and Anna were in real danger. Grandfather realized this perhaps more than the others. Salesman that he was, he tried to bargain with the riders. He asked uncle Isaak to slow down the horses and then turned to the head rider and said in his best bargaining voice: "Say fellows we're carrying provisions for the poor and the sick in our village, but we're sure we can spare

some of the food for you. Why don't we stop and then you fellows can take what you need and we'll be on our way." "That's a good idea," the leader of the band intoned. "We're poor people too and we deserve food as much as your villagers. But why should we take only some when we can have it all," he broke out in raucous laughter with the other riders echoing him.

By now the wagon had reached a wooded area. All of a sudden the lead bandit yelled "Stop the wagon! Everybody get off! We're going to take a little walk into the woods." Grandfather and uncle Isaak got off the wagon. Grandmother hesitated for a moment. In a split second a gun butt was brought down on her head. She lost consciousness and fell off the wagon. With tears running down his face, grandfather quickly bent over his crumpled wife, lifted her up and was going to place her back in the wagon. But the bandits would not have it. "Leave the old woman be!" one of the bandits bellowed. But grandfather did not comply. Then a shot rang out and grandfather, with grandmother still in his arms, sank down and died. Now uncle Isaak, with deep pain distorting his face yelled out "You murderers!" and lunged at the bandit who had shot grandfather. He pulled him off his horse and began to beat him with his fists. Then another

shot rang out and uncle Isaak too sank down to the ground and died.

With grandfather and uncle Isaak dead, and grandmother lying hurt and unconscious on the ground, Anna, frozen in panic, remained sitting in the wagon. The lead bandit now yelled to her to get off the wagon. But she did not hear; she was in shock. One of the bandits grabbed her by her right arm and yanked her off the wagon, and then proceeded to tear the clothes off her body. Next she was laid out on the ground and assaulted. When the last bandit was finished with her, he readied his gun to shoot her and grandmother. But the lead bandit held him back. "Let the young one live," he said. "She has given us pleasure; let her live so she can give pleasure to others as well." "What about the old woman," one of the bandits queried. "Let her live too," he said. "But take the women's overcoats and dresses. Let them find their way home in their petticoats."

Quickly now the bandits grabbed grandfather and uncle Isaak's bodies and dumped them in a nearby dry well. Then one of the bandits tethered his horse to the back of the wagon, took the reins of the troyka, turned the wagon around, and with the other riders following drove back in the direction they had come.

For hours grandmother and Anna lay on the ground in the woods still as in death. Then a light rain began to fall. Grandmother regained consciousness and almost fainted again when she realized with horror what had happened. Both her husband and another son dead, dumped into a dry well, and Anna still lying on the ground with her clothes in tatters and her womanhood outraged. Grandmother cried deep tears. Her whole body convulsed in tragic pain. Minutes that seemed like hours passed.

Slowly grandmother finally raised herself from the ground, lifted Anna up, and with her arm around Anna's waist, the two women set out limping in the direction of our home in Dnepropetrovsk. The walk was a grueling nightmare. Late that evening, disheveled, dejected, in pain, and in sorrow, they arrived at our home. Sobbing grandmother told what had happened. Then all of us broke down in tears - my dad, my mother, my brother Jack, and I - we all shared in the tragedy.

Later I asked my father "Why did this have to happen? Why did uncle Isaak and grandfather have to die?" Dad pondered for a moment, and then with pain in his heart and sorrow still in his voice, he said: "Both your uncle Isaak and your grandfather were good men. God must have known that. But He wanted to use them for even greater goodness. Just as Jesus, God's son, gave up his life on the cross to save the world, so uncle Isaak and grandfather Neufeld gave up their lives to strengthen the cause of our people, the Mennonites. mm

#### Rural Lament - To My Father

We come here to die  
In churning wheels and  
Discs, drumming our  
Blood into an eternity of  
Broken beats and black grease, sliding  
The parts of our machine into  
A machine, twisting  
Tight the last bolt with steel  
Wrenches  
Fastened to metal sheets, we are  
Ready.  
And only now  
Do I long for the jagged sky,  
The torch god, smoke stacks  
And glass walls, to cut my  
Gracile factory prayer into  
Roaring peace. For him I  
Would fold furnace length sticks  
Of ore above the  
Knees of streets, and bow  
To the riveted world  
Below.  
Unclamp  
These sheets  
Twist these bolts  
And let me run barefoot to  
The sound of pumping  
Jackhammers. Ease my death into  
Black chiselled earth and  
Make my gravestones concrete  
Chunks torn  
From the heart of a living city.

- by Dick Peters

# Inside the devil's house

"We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand."

- Picasso

by Ralph Friesen

Philip lounges comfortably in the back seat of his parents' new '57 Ford, watching the yellowing grain fields on either side of the highway to Winnipeg. He is not really watching the fields - they are all unrelievedly flat, all the same - but having his eyes on them helps give him composure. Today he plans to see a movie.

He is 12 years old and has never been inside a theatre; the only movies he has seen are the ones at school where the projector is always breaking down, or the movie is about a bottling factory, or if it is an exciting show then the teacher puts his hand over the projector-lens just as the last of the Mohicans locks into a death struggle with his blood enemy.

The small Mennonite community where he lives once had a theatre but it was moved to a nearby French-Canadian village. The owner claimed that unjust taxation forced him to move, but Philip knows that an even stronger force must have been the social pressure exerted by the devout Mennonites for whom a theatre is a place of sin, encouraging evil imaginings and immorality. It is understood that a born-again Christian never goes to the theatre; of the many different Mennonite churches in the community most have constitutions forbidding their members to attend dances, play cards, smoke, drink, go to mixed bathing beaches - or to movies. Philip's Sunday School teacher once said that the theatre was just as much the devil's house as the church is God's house.

Philip watches the back of his father's

neck, which has a roll of fat that makes a crease in the skin. His father is devout; Philip can't imagine a more devout man. He was one of the leaders in the fight that forced the theatre out of town, and he probably helped make up the church constitution. Philip's arm pits begin to sweat a little as he tries to construct a plausible lie. He is accustomed to hiding his true mind from his parents but at the same time he hates to tell an outright lie and hasn't much talent or taste for the art.

Today it can't be avoided. The car makes its way down St. Anne's road toward the centre of Winnipeg; his mother asks him if he wants to come with her and his father while they do some business and visit some friends.

"No," he says.

"Well, what will you do then?" she says.

"Oh, I'll just walk around and look around." He pauses, feeling the need to say more. "I'll go to the museum." Immediately he is happy with this choice of falsehoods because he has been to the museum before and will be able to give some kind of account later if need be. His parents seem satisfied and drop him off at Memorial Boulevard, promising to pick him up a few hours later. Making sure the car has disappeared he turns around and walks toward Portage Avenue, apprehensive because his network of deceit is growing more complex, and because he is not sure if he can find a theatre. He remembers he has seen them in passing - the Odeon, the Lyceum, the Gaiety - and been enchanted by their names, but forgets their locations.

Walking down Portage Avenue in the direction of Eaton's he at last sees what he is looking for, although the name of this theatre, the Rialto, is unfamiliar to him and it seems rather small and seedy in comparison to the others. On the marquee in uneven black letters is spelled: UNDER THE REEF. It sounds good.

He stops outside, glancing at the coloured posters illustrating the next attraction, a dinosaur-like monster crashing through the streets of a city while the citizens flee. One of the people running away is a beautiful blonde woman whose torn dress reveals part of her bosom. Philip wishes he could look at the scene more closely but he moves quickly into the foyer, knowing that the longer he stands outside the more chance there is of someone he knows seeing him.

Inside there is a no-longer-young lady wearing a lot of make-up and an unnaturally blonde pile of hair, sitting behind a pane of glass with a hole in to speak through. Philip is not sure what to do; he has never bought a ticket to a movie before. Uncertainly he walks up to the red-lipped lady.

"Well, whaddaya want?" she says.

"I want to see the movie," he mumbles. She makes him repeat himself, and he wonders if he's ever going to get in.

"Where's your money?" she demands in a tone that to Philip's ears sounds derisive. "You gotta pay to get tickets, can't see the show without a ticket."

"How much is it?" he says.

"Price is right there on the sign," she says. "You over twelve?" He shakes his head. "That'll be twenty-five cents."

He pays and takes his ticket and starts to walk in but the usher at the door calls him back. "Where's your ticket, kid?" Philip gives the ticket to the usher who, surprisingly, tears it in half and hands back one of the halves. Then at last Philip passes through the third door and is enveloped by the mysterious darkness of the theatre proper which is lit only by the astonishingly big screen at the far end. He can't believe how big the screen is: it seems to cover a whole wall. As his eyes adjust to the darkness he sees there is hardly anyone in the place. He slides into the nearest of the cushioned seats and is soon lost in a world of coloured, flickering images, a world more intensely real than any he has ever experienced before. He feels safe; having overcome all the obstacles that God put in his way he is at home now in this terribly strange place.

When, far too soon, the words THE END flash onto the screen Philip does not leave; he doesn't believe it is the end, and sure enough his faith is rewarded, for the film begins again and runs up to the point where he came in. Even then he continues to watch as everything repeats itself exactly as before. But this is no longer so enjoyable, and anyway the clock on the wall reminds him he must go.

Back out on the street the world is overbright, discordant, unfocused. Philip knows he has been changed; he belongs to the perfect world inside the theatre and has become a stranger to the chaotic one to which he is now obliged to return. He wonders that the people who pass him on the sidewalk as he makes his way to the museum don't notice that he is different. He wonders if his parents will notice. He starts to run, arriving at the museum out of breath and almost panicky, thinking his parents are there already and can't find him. But as he walks through the displays (the stuffed bison in a glass case is his favorite) his composure comes back; he mentally collects details of what he sees that he can relate to his parents when they ask. He goes to the steps outside and waits; soon the car pulls up and Philip gets in. His parents are preoccupied with their own conversation and his mother only asks, "Wasn't the time too long for you?"

"No," Philip says, relieved that he doesn't have to lie. mm

# Daniel Fast and the Mennonite Czar

The novel in progress from which this story is taken is set in the former Mennonite colonies of Russia. Except for a few flashbacks like the following, the novel covers the period just before, during and after the Russian Revolution.

The year is 1852. The elderly Daniel Fast is sitting under his favorite acacia tree on the farm he built and passed on to his son in the Molotschna village of Blumenau. "Ohm Daun," as he is popularly known, is recalling his long life as a farmer and minister. After emigrating from Danzig as a young man, he had tried to establish a new, "pure" Mennonite church, but failed because his followers were fanatics who rejected him as being too moderate. It was at this low point in his life that he turned to the great Johann Cornies. But in retrospect, the disillusioned old man sees even the spectacular career of Cornies through somewhat jaundiced eyes. A conservative himself, "Ohm Daun" fears and distrusts the more liberal road taken by the Mennonites of Russia during Cornies' heyday in the 1830's and 40's.

Daniel Fast is an invented character and is not to be confused with any historical person. Johann Cornies, although an historical person, has been drawn in such a manner as to become, in the final analysis, a fictional character also.

by Al Reimer

Nah, yah, the year 1825. That was a year here in the Molotschna. In the winter we had terrible storms with the winds howling across the steppe like starving wolves and the snow piled up to the roof-trees. Many had to rip the straw from the roofs to feed their animals - if they could get through the drifts to the barns. When spring came at last the houses and barns looked like moulting chickens. More than one building had the roof-ribs sticking out bare. Many animals lay stiff behind the barns. Those still standing had the bones shining through their hides. Yah, that was a winter.

The summer wasn't much better. First wet, then a long dry spell, then wet again in fall. But in November there was

something exciting for our people. The Emperor Alexander made a tour of our villages. That day we didn't care about the rain. We all stood on the street as the great monarch drove slowly by in his fancy calash with its red wheels dripping mud and the gold-trimmed sides splattered all over. The horses were good; they looked like mennonite horses. Probably from up around Rueckenau.

Johann Cornies and other important men from our district rode ahead of the Emperor's carriage to show the way. The Emperor's men rode behind. All the riders were splashed with mud from head to foot. Only the czar in his bright uniform and cape was dry. The hood of his calash was raised just enough to cover him, but open enough so that we could see him. I remember how pale he looked - and sad behind his little smile. The Empress Elizabeth was not with him. They said she was sick and that the Emperor had taken her to Tagenrog on the Sea of Azov for her health. A few weeks later we got the word that the Emperor himself had died there. . . . Yah, such is this life, even for great kings of the world.

Soon after the Emperor's visit, I went to Ohrloff to see Johann Cornies on business. He told me in his plump Low German what had happened when the royal party stopped in Ohrloff to change the emperor's horses. We were sitting in the *summastov* which Cornies used as his office.

"Just remember, Fast, I don't want this story to get around," he began. "The people here have enough to *fleer* at already. . . . Well, we stopped at my place to change horses. What the cuckoo, I think to myself, there's just enough time to run in and change clothes. I'm soaked to the skin and mud all over. I run to the *summastov* here without stopping to explain to my *mumike*. Nah auba, just as I'm reaching for dry trousers I hear a man's voice in the *groutestov*. What, I think, has he come into the house? I pull on my trousers as fast as I can. Ach du Lieber. That would be something, to have the Emperor of Russia catch a man with his pants off in his own house. And

how is my *mumike* receiving the royal visitor? That's my next thought.

"I hurry into the *groutestov* just as my Agnes is stretching out her hand to the Emperor. She wants to shake hands with him, as a good Mennonite housewife should when she's welcoming guests! I stand and stare at them like a frozen sheep's head. The Emperor doesn't seem to notice anything wrong. He gives a little bow, takes my *mumike*'s honest red farm hand and raises it delicately to his lips. Agnes is so startled by this unexpected gesture that she staggers back and can't bring out a word. No one has ever done such a thing to her before.

"Quickly I step forward to the rescue. Agnes escapes to the kitchen, holding her hand as though she had burned it on the stove. The Emperor asks me about my place - why the house is bigger than the others in the village and how much it had cost to build. He says nice things about my tree plantings, but wants to know why there are no acacia trees in the colony. I take this as a hint that we should start planting acacias. He says some things about farming, but I have trouble paying attention. Do you know what, Fast? All the time the monarch is talking to me in his elegant clothes, I can think of only one thing. Did I remember to do up all the buttons on my trousers when I put them on in such a hurry? The moment he turns to go I check and thanks be to God my buttons are all in place."

Yah, Cornies could tell a story broad and dry, even when it was on himself.

The next spring everybody was planting acacias. Cornies saw to that. That's when I planted this old friend here. Such a mighty one now. Then, it was just a frail little sapling, like the others. I was the big one then. Now I'm dried up and shrunken and this tree is still growing and spreading. So many summers it has put on its white crown for me. . . . Yah, the queen of the steppe, we call the acacia. And we have the Emperor and Cornies to thank for her. Like so many other things.

Nah yah, Cornies. At that time he was a pleasant man to know. He wasn't so big

yet that people were afraid of him. Like his acacias he grew and spread out slowly at first, so that you didn't notice for a while. I was a lot older than he, but we got along well. He was so smart and knew so many things that I never felt older or wiser. We saw a lot of each other before he became the permanent president of the agricultural union and didn't have much time for just visiting and chatting anymore. He was always a very hard worker - that's why he was able to bring it to so much - but he knew when to close off the day and relax on the *shaffott* with a friend or two. People didn't think of him as the Mennonite Czar yet. That came later.

He knew that from the beginning people envied him because his flocks and herds seemed to spring up on the wild steppe like grass seeds. Everything he touched grew and almost everything he tried worked. Purebred sheep and horses and cattle. Even grape vines for wine. Only the silk-worms and the tobacco plants failed him in the long run. He was forever planning and trying out new things. A good farmer, he told me once, plans at least fifty years ahead. It was as if time and change whispered their secrets to Cornies. One evening, as we sat on the rough bench outside his office, he fixed his large, brown eyes on me and said earnestly:

"Ohm Daun, I'll tell you why I do better than others. I feel a deep urge to work as hard as I can while there's time. The night will come for me too. In the meantime, I rely on myself; I don't care one pig's hide if other people don't like my ideas or oppose them. I set my faith in God, and as long as I do that I'll never get lukewarm in my work or life."

Those words went right through me. I knew he meant them. Cornies had a will that was as hard and heavy as a threshing stone, and once it started to move it was not easily stopped. He was patient and threshed very fine. When he took over the new Agricultural Union - that was around 1830 - he showed us the difference between a ploughshare and a plate, as they say. He used the Union as a personal tool to control every part of our lives - not just agricultural matters, as had been intended. No, he started changing the whole Molotschna from top to bottom. The new villages at the western end of the settlement had to be laid out exactly to Cornies' plan, straight as pins, all of the *Hoefe* bordered with mulberry hedges just so, gardens and orchards and forests exactly alike, so that the whole string of villages looked like so many peas in a pod. Everything regulated and controlled by the will and wisdom of one man. A farmer could hardly visit his backhouse without Cornies' knowledge and approval.

Nothing escaped his sharp eyes and ears. He seemed to be everywhere at once. Barns, houses and fences had to

be properly maintained and painted regularly. He stuck his nose even into the women's kitchens. The yards had to be clean and neat. Even the manure piles had to be put in a certain place so they wouldn't be a fire hazard. He would walk around a place, shoulders hunched forward, poke with his walking stick, ask a few sharp questions and file everything into that strange brain for future use.

They said he never forgot and seldom forgave. He had offenders who broke his regulations flogged by the *Gebietsamt*. For all his patience, he would sometimes fly into a rage, or even give a beating himself, on the spot. He did that once to a man who was trying to make a fool of him. That was a certain Harms - I knew him a little - a lazy farmer but stubborn as an ox. Harms couldn't be bothered planting the tree seedlings he got from the Union. When Cornies came to inspect the garden next summer, Harms tried to play a game with him. He pretended to be looking for the seedlings among the thick weeds. With Cornies right behind him, Harms kept stooping and muttering. "They must be here somewhere. they can't have simply disappeared, *toam schinda*. I know I planted them somewhere in here."

Suddenly Cornies' stout stick whistled down on the man's exposed backside. As Harms sprang up with a startled roar, Cornies calmly said: "Nah yah, so you've found your trees."

The more the farmers rebelled against Cornies, the tighter he pulled the bit. Nobody could outfox or defy him for long. The more serious cases - and there weren't many - he dealt with in a ruthlessly efficient manner. Cornies always gave proper warnings, but if they were ignored the offender's farm was simply sold from under him by the Union and taken over by someone of good reputation.

Nah nay, I didn't like to see Cornies become such a mighty one, although I never hated him the way many people did. Some talked about sending him to Siberia: some of our ministers called him the forerunner of the Antichrist. Foolish, wicked talk! I never agreed with such people, God be praised. I had faith in Cornies' good intentions even when I didn't like his methods. He had his faults, but he did many great things for us. Like the system of black fallow and four-crop rotation of fields after we had that terrible drought and crop failure in '33. Who but Cornies could have come up with such a useful idea? Preserving the moisture and energy of the soil that way did more to improve our farming on the dry Molotschna steppe than anything else. And we have Cornies to thank for the way the government officials looked at us with special favor.

Hard Cornies could be, but he had a soft side too. Only a few people close to him knew how many poor people he

helped - often with cash out of his own pocket, or he found them jobs or set them up on farms. And he helped not only our own people but other groups too - Hutterites, Nogais, Molokaner, even the Jews.

One of the things I liked best about Cornies was that he wasn't proud or stuck-up. They say he refused all the honors and awards and promotions the government wanted to give him. He could have been the governor of a province at least and become a titled nobleman. Yah, old Cornies preferred to live in Ohrloff as a simple Mennonite *Wirt*, even though he had vast model estates at Jushanlee, Taschenak, and Verigen. And a beautiful, handtooled coach from Prussia standing in his *Schien*, but he never used it. He drove around on business in an old droshky without springs. Once, I remember, I found him relaxing in his office after hours. He was sitting in his big horsehide chair dressed in a house coat but still wearing his boots. When I asked him why he hadn't put on *schlorre* too, he gave his dry little smile and said he didn't own any slippers. That's the kind of man he was personally, even in the later years....

Yah, and now the good Lord has taken away Cornies too. Everything comes from God, as they say, the good and the bad. He's gone, the mighty man, dead before sixty - from overwork, many say. Well, large mountains cast large shadows. God alone must judge him and his works. . . . I sit here old and feeble. My life is used up too. Soon God will call me also. . . . But even an old man at death's door has to ask some hard questions about himself and the people in his life.

I often wondered what exactly drove Cornies to do all the things he did in his lifetime - more things than a dozen ordinary people could do? Was it simply a deep love for his people? Did God choose him as His special instrument to help our people here in Russia? Or was it perhaps, as his enemies claimed, just a big hunger for wealth and power? Was he, as some charged, a willing tool to make the government's land settlement policies look good? Everybody knew that he was the darling of the Guardians Committee for Foreign Colonists and that they gave him a free hand to run the affairs of the settlement. Can anyone but God answer such questions? Maybe what drove Cornies was all these things - and more.

In my long friendship with Cornies I saw a few things in him that I never told anyone. I could never get him to talk much about religion or his own faith, although he was a good church man. But once - that was in the later years already - he said something to me which I have never forgotten.

"Ohm Fast," he said, "I've read the Bi-

ble as much as the next man, and my favorite chapter in God's Word is still the first one and His first words: 'Let there be light.'

Something clicked in my head when Cornies said that. Yah, yah, I said to myself, you would like those words. You think of yourself as a creator too. You say, and it is. You say, let there be roads and hedges and forests in our colonies, and there are. You permit no interference, no opposition. You never raise your voice, but when you say something everyone listens - even the imperial court in Petersburg.

But it wasn't power that Cornies was hungering for. I never felt that in him. He didn't enjoy lording it over others. What drove him was something higher. He was in love with order. And progress. His desire for an orderly world where everything was in its place and everybody could be made to work fruitfully was so strong that he must have seen himself as God's agent for improving and perfecting His physical world. A Mennonite society here on the steppe that would be like an extension of his own clear mind and will. His brain would direct the settlers' hands as they transformed the wilderness into a lush garden.

Perhaps he went even beyond that. Perhaps in his inner-most vision he saw himself not as possessing the settlement but as being possessed by it - totally - so that he himself became the settlement. He was the thousands of acres of rich steppe land, the flocks of thick-fleeced sheep straining for the shears, the millions of trees taking root in precise, controlled patterns of growth. He was the neatly lotted, prosperous villages strung in neighborly rows, as well as the people working, worshipping, planning and building their kingdom on earth. In the end, his will and the land and its people would become one and the same thing.

That must have been Cornies' great dream, the dream that drove him beyond anything else. Juschanlee and his other estates were just the beginning, the rough drawings for the master plan. What he really wanted was to transform the whole Molotschna into one big efficient, progressive estate. His estate? No. He would have said that it all belonged to God. That it was only held in trust by men. He wanted only to create, to shape and control, not to own. That's why he rejected the honours and rewards from the government. He didn't need those baubles. They could only show that he was a servant. He knew that in his own Mennonite world his position was as absolute as the czar's in his world.

But the changes Cornies made were not all good. By changing the instruction in our schools, he was letting the world into the classroom. The Bible had always

been our book of instruction. Cornies brought in other books - worldly books - and geography, and what not. Yah, he wanted our farmers to be God-fearing and morally pure and obedient. But he also wanted them to learn things about the world that would make them better farmers. And that's where the danger came in. I tried to tell him that once, but he only looked past me and said that the church could not always control everything in this life. My hair rose up when I heard that. I knew then that Cornies wanted to change the whole direction of our people.

As always, he got his way - and not just in education either. In the 1830's and 40's there was that terrible fight between the elders and the officials of the Union and the *Gebietsamt* to see who would have the final authority in the settlement. The elders finally lost and I always suspected that Cornies had been working against them behind the wall, as they say, but I never had any proof and Cornies never talked to me about his part in the quarrel. Ach, that was a shabby business when Elder Warkentin was deposed and Elder Heinrich Wiens was banished from Russia. They were stiff-necked men, that's true, but they didn't deserve such harsh treatment. In the end the church's power was badly cracked and the officials were stronger than ever.

All in the name of progress. And what has all that progress done for us? Nah, yah, we were a backward people before Cornies came. We have better farms now, richer colonies, that can't be denied. But more and more our prosperity is drawing us into the world. I can feel it in my bones. I wanted to turn back the clock, to re-establish the pure Anabaptist church here in the Molotschna. I failed, and my failure has gnawed at me ever since. Did I fail because of my own weakness, or was God trying to teach me a lesson? Did He punish me because I had been following not His will but my own? I didn't want progress like Cornies. I wanted purity, but if progress leads to worldliness, then perhaps purity leads to spiritual isolation. Cornies and I both started out with the right intentions, but we must have taken a wrong turn somewhere. . . . Ach, there is so much in the past that keeps sliding out of reach just as your mind touches it.

How could I foresee that our little church group would be so savagely persecuted by our own brethren? And then, after all that suffering, my followers turned on me and made such a sad spectacle with their foolish, fanatical behaviour. That was the end of my dream. And now Cornies' Molotschna has become a spectacle for visiting lords and ladies from Petersburg and Moscow on their way down to the holiday spas of the Crimea. We are a sight to see - like the Kremlin, or a famous waterfall. We are like Potemkin

villages, but real ones this time. Was that really all Cornies had in mind, to make the Molotschna into a pretty showplace for the world to admire? I can't believe that! If that's all he wanted then he was following not God's will but the vanities of this world.

No, I was not the saviour of our people I wanted to be. But was Cornies? I failed because I was weak and self-willed. Cornies was strong and self-willed. But what will the future show about him? I wanted to build a quiet path to God. Cornies has built a highway to the world for us.

Yah, we Mennonites began by building special little worlds for ourselves - first in Holland, then in Danzig and now, in an even more ambitious way, here in Russia. Perhaps our big mistake right from the start was to think that we could live in our little world like ducks on a pond, without ever letting the fox get near us. But the fox knows how to coax the ducks to the shore. Our Anabaptist forefathers - Menno, the brothers Phillip, Marpeck, Grebel and the others - stayed in their tight little circle because they expected Christ to come back soon to claim his bride the Church. And so they kept themselves pure for Him. But Christ did not come then. He has still not come, after all these years. We are still waiting for Him, but perhaps with only one eye and ear now. Our other eye and ear are on the world.

The world, ach yah, the world, Satan's kingdom, it sits there all around us. Waiting. . . . But doesn't it also protect us? Could we have even set up our separate church, kept alive our suffering *Gemeinde* without the protection of kings and governments? Ach, that is hard to understand for us simple men. No, I can't believe like some that the whole world exists for the sake of our tiny brotherhood. . . . If only You had come sooner, dear Lord, and saved us from our pride. Our little pond isn't enough for us anymore. The fox is calling oh so sweetly from the banks, and we are listening. We think we'll always be able to come back to the safety of our pond. But it won't work. We separated ourselves from the world so that we could live for Him, not so that we could build bigger *Wirtschaften* and richer estates.

Ach, Lord God, I am too old and weak to hold in my grief . . . to carry the burden of guilt You, in Your wisdom, have tied to me. I can no longer bear it. . . . Like Job, my harp is turned to mourning. Give me release. From memory. From earthly life. I leave behind no monuments, no records to mark the course I followed. Like Cornies. His works will be remembered. His highway stands. My path has already vanished into grass. If only I could have. . . .

Ach, Heavenly Father, Thy terrible, loving will be done. mm

# our word . . .

## MULTI-CULTURALISM - A POOR WORD BUT A RICH IDEA

A few years ago a young Mennonite musician remarked to me that his piano teacher had questioned him about his attendance at a private Mennonite school and his interest in learning the German language. "I should think that by now you would have dropped all those things and become good Canadians" was her closing comment after a lesson. She was criticizing not only him but all those Mennonites who insist on retaining values that are not shared by other Canadians.

Such comments are not as prevalent as they were 20 or 30 years ago, but this incident shows that they have by no means died out. Canadians often pride themselves on not having followed the American example of the "melting pot," in which new immigrants are encouraged to give up their heritage as quickly as possible, but many of the French and English settlers of this country have shown little appreciation of the language and customs of other immigrants. Partly because of this, some of these "other" immigrants have become ashamed of those things that make them unique and have tried to melt into the general Canadian scene.

In recent years there has been a very definite reaction against this melting process, and there are signs that a large number of Canadians are proud of the cultural diversity of this country. The annual Ukrainian festival in Dauphin, the Icelandic days in Gimli, the Mennonite-oriented festivals in Steinbach, Altona, Winkler, and Morden, and the Folklorama festival in Winnipeg are drawing large audiences made up of people who often have no direct connection with the group sponsoring the event but are simply curious to know more about the customs of their neighbours.

There has also been a tremendous upsurge in interest in learning languages other than English and French, especially in the early 1970's, according to reports passed on to us by Karl Fast, who is a curriculum consultant for second languages for the Manitoba Department of Education, and has spearheaded much of the work in this area.

Some 10,034 pupils were studying German in Manitoba schools in 1976-77 and 4,094 were studying Ukrainian. What is perhaps most significant is that this year more than half of those studying German (5,723) are doing so at the Kindergarten to Grade VI level.

We had the privilege last year of observing several grade one classes in public schools in Edmonton in which almost all of the school work is taught in Ukrainian. The pupils in these classes had not learned Ukrainian at home. Some had come to Edmonton with their parents from as far away as Trinidad. The parents had decided that while in Edmonton the children should learn the language that was unique to that area. After a year of immersion the children seem to read and speak simple Ukrainian fluently and were enthusiastic about their work. Tests had shown that their grasp of the English language had not fallen behind those students who were enrolled in the English part of the school. If anything, they did better in English than those who were not involved in the Ukrainian program.

Ventures like this are now being supported by public funds, most of it from the provincial departments of education. Since 1971 the federal government has also sought actively to promote the language and culture of minority groups in Canada through an official "multiculturalism" programme.

"Multiculturalism," unfortunately, is a word like "verbalize"

or "prognostication" which puts a formal, bureaucratic cloak on an otherwise very basic human activity. The idea behind "multiculturalism," however, is a good and simple one. What it says is: in a democracy like ours it should be the right of any individual or group to speak, believe, and act as it chooses. National unity demands that there also be common or "official" languages, but it does not require common beliefs or customs, and the learning of the official languages does not have to exclude the learning of other languages.

In other words, by supporting a broader range of language and cultural activities than in the past our governments have sought to increase the democratic rights of their citizens. There are cynics who suggest that what has really happened is that governments have had to give greater support to the French people in order to keep them in confederation, and the "multiculturalism" programme is simply an additional government effort to satisfy other groups who might be hurt by the attention given to the French. Let us assume, for a moment, that this is true. Should we be too hard on governments for acting in this way? When governments do not respond to the wishes of the voters we criticize them for being arrogant and insensitive. When they do respond we say that they are being opportunistic. They get it in the neck both ways. Surely it is one of the main purposes of government to use tax funds to enable citizens to do what they really want. It is undoubtedly true that they are also hoping to get more votes in the process, but voters are citizens and satisfying citizens is one of the legitimate functions of government.

Questions can be raised, of course, about the importance of this particular programme for the country, and how much governments ought to spend on it. In answering this question it is good to remember that much of the real multicultural work being done in this country has little to do with governments. The festivals already referred to are strong evidence of this. Where government has stepped in, and where in Canada it has traditionally had an important role, is in language education and in media support. There may be people in our midst (possibly the editor of the Carillon News) who feel that government should do as little as possible even in these fields. We personally have considerable sympathy for that position. However, it is difficult to imagine our governments lessening their role in education and even lessening their support of such institutions as the CBC. Given this fact we should encourage our governments to support the language aspirations of as many citizens as possible. We should be grateful that our governments have finally declared that the Ukrainians and Germans, to name a few, have as much right to government support for their culture as the French and English have for theirs. There is undoubtedly a limit to the amount of cultural and linguistic diversity that any country can tolerate, but within those limits we should encourage as much uniqueness of expression as possible.

Our young people today are not in danger of being too different from the average Canadian around them. The real danger is that they will assume that it is good enough to know only one language and to be steeped in the traditions of only one culture. The spiritual and intellectual poverty that is implied in such an attitude is something that we should not accept willingly. We should be grateful that through various multicultural programmes our governments have finally decided that such poverty is not appropriate for Canada. R.V.

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