

mennonite mirror

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volume 10 / number 6
february 1981



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Due to the late delivery of the January issue both the January and February winners will be announced in the March issue. The deadline for the January issue was extended two weeks. The deadline for this month's mix-up is Feb. 19.

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A Brush with Royalty in Denmark



by Mary M. Enns

All alone I strolled in the midst of throngs of people. Some were idling as I was, some rushing, their gaze straight ahead, obviously intent upon their own affairs, in this large Raphuspladsen of Copenhagen. As city squares go this is a wonderful one. There seems always to be something happening here.

This morning it was a visiting Austrian band with its accompanying group of dancers. The day was young, the sun was shining and the musicians seemed determined to put every ounce of energy, morning fresh, into their performance. Presently I looked for escape and began to calculate just how far I might need to wander without leaving the square. for the oompah-pah was beginning to get to me. Its roll and rumble, its resonance and strength hits your

consciousness first, coursing along your scalp to your epidermis, your dermis, your sinews and finally with a clash, your bones. And then if you're not careful it will penetrate the very marrow of your bones—all the while somehow bypassing the heart.

I found myself on the fringes of the square on a park bench warmed by the sun and facing the magnificent Town Hall. Immediately I was occupied with my favorite past-time—people watching. I know you don't have to go to Copenhagen to watch the world go by, but, let me say, its a wonderful place to do it if you're in the vicinity.

My head still spinning with images of Hans Christian Andersen, whose memorial we had earlier visited, I noticed that someone had joined me on my bench. I turned my head in order to say either Good Morning or Guten Morgen, Bon Jour or Gode Dag, whichever language I might feel at the moment could be the correct one. The lady who quietly returned my greeting in an accented but beautifully modulated English was, to say the least, astonishing to look at. Clearly, the first flush of her youth was a thing of the past. I looked at her finely chiseled face, at the tiara on her too long, blonde hair, at the very old, once splendid evening gown, at the miserably worn out silver dancing slippers. A lady of the evening? But no, she just did not seem that sort. There was a quiet sophistication, even nobility that completely belied her appearance.

As we talked I ventured to ask if she were a dancer. "No, I am an artist." When I enquired about seeing her paintings she smiled sadly: "Oh no. I live extremely simply now because I have very little money. My family and I lived once in a "grace and favour" apartment in the Amalienborg Palace not too far from this square." My surprise must have showed and I asked her name. This time the smile was proud. "I am Helene, Countess of Holdenstern and distant cousin to Margethe, Queen of Denmark. Since my parents are no longer living I have had to leave and make my own way. My only brother now lives in San Francisco. No, I am afraid I never have guests now as I did in Amalienborg. My small flat is much too poor." I wondered if she had any contact now with the Queen. "No, not very often." I thought she was fighting back tears. "But when the Crown Prince was born I sent a silver spoon as a christening gift. I received a most gracious letter of thanks. But, no, I am not in touch. Those days are gone."

Semi-royalty, an artist, loneliness, deep sadness. But that still did not explain the tiara, the chiffon gown, the silver slippers in morning sunlight.

mm



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inside

volume 10 / number 6
february 1981

Mirror Mix-up / 3

Russian trip: A land we won't understand / 6

School days... / 10

Looking at life from both sides / 11

View from the pew: Westwood MB / 12

Review: Berlin was once in Ontario / 13

Manitoba News / 14, 15

Review: The outcast / 16

Die Liebe ist langmütig / 18

Der Brunnen / 20

Gedanken über Literatur und Wahrheit / 21

Our word / 22

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The Mennonite Mirror is normally published 10 times each year from September to June for the Mennonite community of Manitoba by the Mennonite Literary Society, Inc.

All business and editorial correspondence should be addressed to 203-818 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, R3G 0N4, telephone 786-2289. The Mennonite Mirror observes the following part-time office hours: Monday 1 to 4 p.m., Tuesday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday 1 to 4 p.m.

Subscriptions \$7 for one year; \$12 for two years; and no charge for those on pension.

Second class mail registration 2658

Russia trip IV

Russia is a land we will never understand

Fourth and final article in a series of articles on a recent visit to the Soviet Union.

by Roy Vogt

"Russia is a stern land with a harsh climate, but few travelers can forget its deep appeal, and no Russian ever finds peace in his soul anywhere else on earth."

(Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great*, p. 17).

So far in this series we have journeyed into the past — into the Mennonite past. In this last article I would like to take us into the present — into the modern Russia that one experiences in cities like Moscow and Leningrad. Modern Russia is a land that none of us will ever really understand. We who took part in this trip could not pretend to understand it, because our stay was far too short. We were travellers lured by Russia's deep appeal — some of us for the second or third time — but we never forgot that we were strangers. But even those Mennonites who grew up in this land admit that they never really understood it. They loved their Russian villages and farms, but it can be argued that few ever identified deeply with the Russian soil, and certainly not with the soul of the Russian masses. The Mennonites are pilgrims who find or make their peace wherever they are driven. A true Russian, as Massie observes, never finds peace anywhere except in Russia. The Mennonites in Russia, as everywhere else, sought to improve their position by aggressively using the soil and the human resources at their disposal. The Russian peasant, as the late brilliant Russian historian Amalrik showed, feels most at home in a static, collective society in which no one can get ahead of him. The Mennonites loved their homes in

Russia, but they were never at home there.

But if Russia is a land that we will never understand, it is worth knowing at least something about its traditions and its people. During our stay in Leningrad and Moscow we had a number of unusual opportunities to improve our knowledge. Rather than giving you a day-to-day description of our activities I would like to relate some personal experiences, which are like a few pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, merely hinting at the colours and dimensions of the whole.

One of our finest evenings in Russia was spent at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow where the Latvian Ballet from Riga put on a dazzling production of *Gayane*, by the famous Russian-Armenian composer Khachaturian. I am not a great lover of dance, but the electrifying performance of such pieces as the sabre dance in this beautiful, historic opera house, made the evening memor-



Olga, tour guide

able for all of us. Olga was also very glad to be with us. She had previously spent several months in Moscow, preparing to be a guide, but this was her first visit to the Bolshoi. It is almost impossible for Soviet citizens on their own to get tickets; hard currency from the West is the key to entry. During the intermission we toasted our guide in what we hoped was typical Russian fashion. It was on one occasion like this that she said to us: "My dear friends from Canada. You have made me very happy. I have never laughed so hard in my life, and I am afraid that I will never laugh so hard again."

Another occasion didn't make her so happy. She accompanied us to Lenin's mausoleum where, with thousands of other visitors, we had to line up for several hours to catch a glimpse of what is purported to be the real body of Lenin (until recently foreign tourists were allowed to go ahead of native Russians in the line up. Apparently there was such a protest from Soviet citizens that foreigners are now required to wait their turn with everyone else — which seems only fair). As we approached the marble tomb, guards inspected us very carefully, checking not only for weapons but for proper attire. We felt as though we were on Sunday school parade. Coats had to be straightened and properly buttoned, out of respect for the deceased. Inside the tomb everyone walked reverently around the body. We had the feeling that one false move would have resulted in a hail of bullets. Each person had about a 10-second glimpse of the body. As we remerged in the sunlight I turned to Olga and asked her whether she had been moved by the experience. "Very much", she said, "weren't you?" "Well, not exactly", I replied carefully. Olga was genuinely shocked. "What moved you?" I asked, trying to help her



Bolshoi Theatre

to overcome her surprise. "Well," she said, "it isn't every nation that can claim to have had a leader who never made any mistakes!" Now it was my turn to be shocked. "How can you say something like that?" I asked her incredulously. "Because I believe it," she replied, "don't you?" "No!" "Why not?" "Well," I said, "without getting into any particulars about Lenin's actions before and after the revolution, the fact is that Lenin was a human being, and human beings make mistakes." "I don't think he did", she retorted. For some reason this annoyed me. "Olga", I said, looking directly at her, "a little more than a week ago we went through the catacombs in Kiev where you and the rest of us were all astonished at the reverence shown to the dead bodies there. We all agreed that no human beings — dead or alive — were worthy of such worshipful homage. But now you and your people are doing exactly the same thing to Lenin. You are trying to

make a saint out of him, while at the same time you claim that you have cast off the superstitions of the old religions." Olga turned and walked away, saying not another word. She was quiet during the whole journey back to the hotel. It was impossible to know whether she was angry, dumbfounded, or genuinely shaken by this encounter. She was an extremely honest person. She had shared a sincere belief with us and I think she was shocked to discover that not everyone agreed with her. In his book on *Peter the Great*, Robert Massie observes that "from infancy Russians have been taught to regard their ruler as an almost god-like creature... The sovereign is the father, the earth, the mother." We discovered later that such reverence is not necessarily shown to individual leaders like Khrushchev or Brezhnev, but it is shown to the state as such and to crucial figures like Lenin.

Another personal experience will linger long in my memory. During the

past few years our oldest daughter, who was a member of Canada's national speedskating team, had become friends with a number of speedskaters from the Soviet Union. She had agreed to correspond with one of them, but on his return to Moscow this skater had been told to break off all contacts with "that blond Canadian." A few years later she heard from other Soviet skaters, at the Lake Placid Olympics, that this fellow had married another Russian speedskater, whom she also knew, and that they had just had a little daughter whom they named Kathy (Katya). When I left for the Soviet Union our daughter gave me a gift for this child, to be delivered to their home in Moscow. In Moscow I discovered that they had no telephone. One evening my cousin Edgar Penner and I took a taxi to the apartment of this couple, which was at least ten miles from our hotel. Imagine the surprise on Andrei's face when, on his opening the door to our knock, I announced to him that I was Kathy Vogt's father from Winnipeg, Canada! I asked him immediately whether it would embarrass them if we came in. They said, "of course not", and welcomed us eagerly. Another Russian couple — also speedskaters — happened to be visiting them. Extra champagne and wine was brought out and for over an hour — until we felt that we had to get back to the hotel — we were able to have an open discussion with them. The apartment was extremely small — one room that served as a living, bed, and dining room, plus a small kitchen. They lived in a large complex, housing mostly athletes who had taken part in international competitions. Andrei was now a speedskating coach, and his wife worked as a secretary. They said that things were difficult economically. They were very sorry about the western boycott of the Moscow Olympics, because it had made meat and other food



Olga, third from left, and her Canadians.

supplies much scarcer than before. We talked frankly about the reasons for the boycott. At one point Andrei observed: "We do not have an easy life. But we have both seen the West and we prefer to live here in our native city. This is still the best place in the world!" People like this do not give blind allegiance to their current government or to the Communist party, but they are extremely loyal and committed to their native land. As we said goodbye Andrei looked around for a gift to give us. A Russian is never satisfied until he has returned a favour shown to him. On impulse he reached into the baby's crib and handed me the baby's round, plastic untipplable doll, to give to our daughter (this is a popular doll in Russia called Vanjka Vstanjka — "will never lie down."). The doll had a rattle in it and when Edgar and I later joined our friends for supper at the hotel I could not help but come rattling in with it. Olga smiled, enjoying one more of our whimsical moments — but not asking any questions.

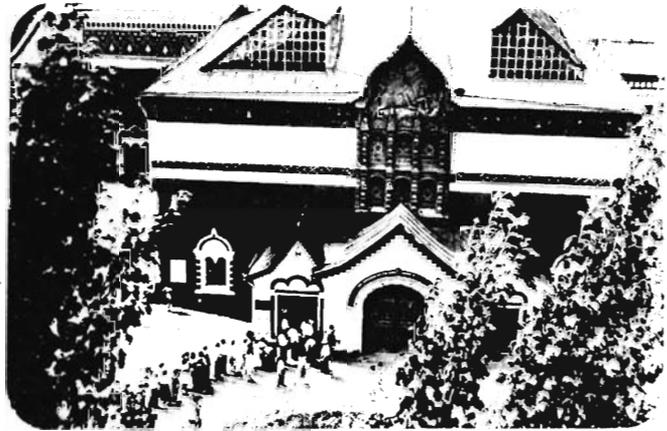
During our stay in Moscow we also visited the Kremlin, the Exhibition for Economic Achievements (which has a beautiful park), the Pushkin Art Gallery, the Moscow Circus, Moscow University, and many other fairly standard tourist attractions. I was most impressed with a visit to the Tretyakov Gallery, which features only Russian art. I had heard of painters like Repin and Kiprensky, whose works were displayed here, but none of us, I think, was prepared for the hundreds of other masterly pieces by painters like Alexander Ivanov (with a huge canvas on *Christ Appearing Before the People*) or Ivan Kramskol with his portrait of Tolstoy.

Our special Moscow guide, Valentinya, who assisted Olga on this part of our trip, was particularly fond of the many ancient icons in the gallery. She paused before a 12th century icon called *The Virgin of Vladimir* and said that was her favorite portrayal of the baby Jesus and his mother. Having said that she added an even more remarkable comment. "You will notice", she said, "that the Mother Mary looks so sad in this picture. I have often wondered why that is so. It must be because she realizes that she holds in her hand a child that will some day die for the sins of the world." That is what she said, and having said it she turned quickly and led us on to other pictures. A detached artistic statement or a subtle hint of faith? Who knows?

We were so impressed with the paintings in this gallery that we asked our guide to take us to a small shop outside where books with the paintings could be purchased. Here something unbelievable happened. As we approached the shop we noticed that the window was closed, even though it was far from clos-

ing time. Then we noticed that behind the window a young girl was sitting, with her back to us, on the lap of a soldier. She was obviously the sales clerk, but she was giving her undivided, very romantic attention to the soldier. He looked over her shoulder at us and gave us a baleful glance, as though to say, "why can't you people go away. Can't you see that there are more important things than the pictures you want to purchase?" By this time other tourists had arrived and wanted service. Two older German ladies began to pound on the window, demanding that it

be opened for business. Our Moscow guide was furious. She shouted at the clerk to open the window. Then she turned to us and said, "I may not like your system in the west, but at least in your country you could fire a girl like that." Slowly the sales clerk rose from the soldier's lap, turned around very deliberately, stroking her fingers through his hair as languorously as possible, implying: "All right you stupid people. I will serve you, but I will certainly take my time about it!" To us this experience was a symbol of many others, demonstrating in one incredible moment the



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tremendous warmth and romance of many Russian people in their personal relations, and their almost complete indifference to the public.

In Leningrad we spent a number of interesting days visiting the famous Winter Palace, St. Isaac's Cathedral, and many other buildings dating back to Peter and Catharine the Great. What is etched most deeply in my memory is an evening stroll down the Nevsky Prospekt (Leningrad's Portage Avenue), trying to hunt down the location of an old restaurant which Al Reimer wants to describe in his novel. We had the name of the restaurant but not the address. After some fruitless searching we stopped a young woman and asked for directions. To our amazement she spoke a good English. To our relief she also knew the location of the restaurant and offered to take us there. As we walked and talked she discovered that we were from Canada and she informed us that she was married to an American who had returned to the United States. She said she would like to get a letter to him but she didn't want to mail it through the regular channels. We agreed to mail it in the west for her. But when would she write it, and how would she get it to us? We knew that we would be at the opera the next evening,

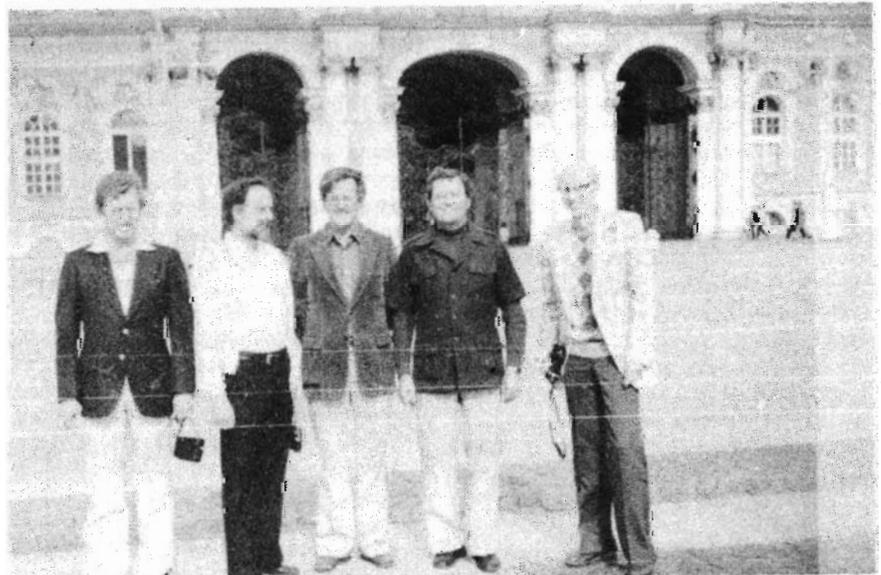
so we suggested that she meet us outside the opera after the performance. To our surprise she was there the following evening. As we came out of the opera house she slipped the letter into one of our hands and disappeared. On the whole we were cautious with such things on the trip — but the course of true love is never smooth and we thought it was our duty to make it as smooth as possible for this star-crossed couple.

Finally, after three weeks it was time to leave. We arrived at the Moscow airport in time to enjoy a last breakfast with Olga. She would leave that same afternoon for Zaporozhye. We would travel via Warsaw and Amsterdam to Winnipeg. By evening we would be more than 6,000 miles apart. We were extremely grateful to her for all of her help. Some people we know feel that the prime duty of Russian tourist guides is to spy

on tourists. I don't know. What I do know is that the guides we had were uniformly courteous, helpful, and honest with us. I can't think of a better way to travel through a strange country. Our Olga (we called her Olga Frieze von Schönwiese) was special. After a nervous start she had laughed, cried, and changed insults with us. Any future group going to the Mennonite colonies that will have her as guide can consider itself lucky. We all had tears in our eyes as we said goodbye. Some of us were saying goodbye to a part of us that we had discovered in Zaporozhye. All of us said goodbye to people who, while they are tragically separated from us through ideology and the decades-long trumpeting of hostility — showed us a warm and generous spirit which we will never forget. There must be millions such people in Russia. We were fortunate to get to know a few of them. mm



Roy Vogt, Valentinya, our Moscow guide, Louisa Loeb, and Edgar Penner in Moscow.



Group in front of the Winter Palace in Leningrad.

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School days...

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Last month, as I sat with my December article in front of me, I thought, "Boy, this is silly, wishy-washy, over-optimistic stuff. This isn't me, and it's not what's happening." I wondered if I could possibly have meant that when I wrote it.

It seemed everything I had so much faith in had fallen through, including God. (I have been struggling lately with the practical application of my religion to my unique life. I guess the term is "backsliding").

Everyone has had the experience of backsliding. You know you are sinning, but you don't stop. How can you deal with this? You are defying the very principles that you want to uphold. You struggle with the situation, but the sin is always there. You ask, "Oh God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Obeying you used to be so easy and so good. Why are you failing me?" This is where I stood as I reread my December article. I thought, "How do I deal with the way I'm living? . . . I . . . Did I say 'I'?"

Then I understood. Since I had been having problems with religion in my life, I automatically, subconsciously, and wrongly assumed that God was at fault.

So what was the real cause for my problem? By laying the blame on God, I had dodged any real thinking about the problem, but now I had to face facts.

Looking back, I realized that it was only my own actions and attitudes that had made me unhappy. I was the cause of my own problem. I was expecting God to save me from myself. Faced with a choice between joy with God and despair in sin, I had been choosing sin.

So, after a few months of vainly trying to fit God into what I was doing, I finally started trying to change what I was doing to fit in with God. Maybe none will even notice. The difference isn't that great. (I never have come across as "preachy" in day-to-day life.) But I'm trying.

by Garry Fehr

If you were an M.B.C.I. student at one time then you can relate to this. If, on the other hand, you've never had the privilege of walking our hallowed halls, then this is your opportunity to live the life of a typical student for just a few hours.

As the 8:55 bell rings, our typical grade 11 student Siegfried Zacharias (alias Zig Zac) makes his way to room 105, the famed Don Peters bible class. He artfully dodges the Multi-Purpose room and choir-master Braun, who was not blessed with the Zig's presence in the 8:10 concert choir practice this morning. Unfortunately for Zig Zac, he slept in. Fortunately he was saved from the subarctic temperatures of the MP room.

With choir thoughts behind him, he must now change the ever-changing clime of the Bible room — will he be met by a gust of frigid ice or a blast of Sahara heat? This definitely is a problem unique to Don Peter's Bible class room.

The 9:40 bell rings as Mr. Peters says good-bye to Constantine and church-state relations for another day. The students, including Zig Zac, walk stiffly into the hall (and heat), the bluish tint they acquired during class slowly leaving their skin.

Zig Zac proceeds up two flights of stairs for home room chapel, only to discover that today is Tuesday, and senior chapel is in the gym. Down the stairs he goes and into the gym, late of course, but then it's better than not being there at all. Sitting on the bleachers, he listens to today's chapel on the warmth of friends. Next comes a well-deserved (and much-needed) break, before it's back to the battle of the school heating (or not heating) system.

When the 10:10 bell rings Zig Zac slowly rises and collects his books. Before going to B3, he sheds all unnecessary articles of clothing and sticks them into his locker. As usual, the temperature greeting him as he enters his English class is somewhere between Africa during a mid-summer day and Hawaii in mid-March.

His next class is physics, which taxes his intelligence as well as his body temperature. Before heading upstairs, he detours to his locker in order to retrieve his defences (extra clothes of course). Leaving the three flights of stairs behind him he walks into the room, a wide grin slowly spreading across his face. Although the majority of

his colleagues will freeze in the 14°C classroom, his mind will not be hindered, for he has his trusty down-filled parka and ski touque.

If education is the process of learning to adapt to different conditions, then M.B.C.I. students are really getting their money's worth! mm

AILING LEG

Old Man: Doctor, can you do something for my bad leg?

Physician: Bad leg, eh! - How old are you anyway Mr. Smith?

Old Man: Eighty-three and a half.

Physician: Well, now, Mr. Smith, at your age you must learn to accept a few infirmities, after all, that leg has been around a long time.

Old Man: Yes, I agree—but my other leg is fine, and it's been around for eighty-three years too!

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Looking at life from both sides and finding no easy answers

by David Bergen

It is a rare thing to find a person who willingly steps out of a static box, who reaches beyond his own circle of responsibility and knowledge and attempts to see things as they really are. In whatever field one belongs in our society there is a status quo, a certain mindset, which governs thinking and seeing. University students espouse idealisms and live by pedantic sayings. Professionals, including doctors, lawyers and professors, cling to their ivory tower specialties while MCC workers often purport simple living yet fail to admit to their parasitic existence—who supports their simple life? Meanwhile businessmen speak of profit and overhead as they read books on positive thinking.

Though these disparaging stereotypes are generalized, this picture is sadly, too correct. There is a noticeable hesitancy to step beyond ourselves, our small world, and experience life in its larger context as both-and not just either-or.

In many ways David DeFehr is an atypical businessman for he sees things as both-and. DeFehr is part owner, along with brothers Frank and Art and father Albert Abram DeFehr, of Palliser Furniture Ltd., which till 1980, was called A.A. DeFehr Manufacturing Ltd. David, the youngest son and general manager of the manufacturing plant says he has spent time in areas other than business.

"I attended the University of Manitoba for two years," he says, "and then decided to try Goshen College. I feel this was a turning point because the motto of Goshen at that time was 'Culture For Service' and it influenced me a great deal. I spent two more years at Goshen



seminary, married Esther, and in 1969 we joined MCC teachers abroad program and went to Nigeria."

DeFehr says his reasons for going to Nigeria were to do some sort of service before he joined the business and to find out if he enjoyed teaching. "The years in Nigeria were the best three years of our lives," he says. Laughing he qualifies the "our". "My wife may say differently."

He adds: "Our sense of reality is sharper because we lived in Nigeria. It was essentially primitive and we learned to live simply out of necessity. We made our own entertainment. Overall I think it helped set up a barrier. Our family has succeeded in eluding the hectic pace of Canadian life. Materialism fragments your life to the point where you have no time for anyone else. For myself I prefer to curl up and read or spend time with my family."

Having spent time in a developing country and then joining the business in 1972 DeFehr realizes the potential for losing the insight on how he should live. Recently a friend recommended he read *The Upside Down Kingdom* by Kraybill and *Rich Christians in a Hungry World* by Snider. Having read them he feels application of these books is a more difficult task.

"In many ways I agree with *The Upside Down Kingdom* that there must be equality," he says thoughtfully. "Yet I am not sure Westernization is the answer. In Nigeria rural people were content and yet you see the urban people, who are westernized and had much the same as we have, and they were no happier."

He adds: "There is a point to be made about exploitation in developing coun-

tries. Central America for example. The natives are exploited and the result is inequality and injustice. In rural Nigeria no one was taken advantage of. People subsisted yet they were content because they were not being exploited."

DeFehr says relating his experiences and reading to his business is a more intricate undertaking than merely theorizing. "When I first joined the business I was green," he says. "I've had to learn and have tried to encourage cooperation between management and employees. Too often there is the adversary approach, labour versus management."

He explains that Palliser has begun a profit sharing program with its employees which operates as a 50-50 sharing on a percentage over and above a decided profit for the company. "The bonus this year can be as high as 15% of the annual wage for the workers," he says. "Of course there is another problem. What profit level is necessary for the company before you can share it with the workers?"

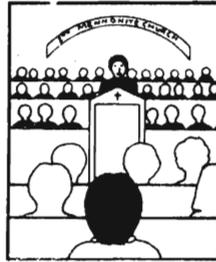
That conundrum produces a dilemma and DeFehr realizes the public's feelings toward the word profit. "The whole idea of profit. . ." his sentence dangles and he shrugs. "It's a four letter word. Yet it's necessary in terms of investment. A business must grow."

When trouble brews between management and labour DeFehr says to look to the management first. They are to blame. "Our company is not unionized," he says. "But I feel unions came about because of poor management. It's a shortsighted view on the part of the management to see how little they can pay employees."

Using the Galbraithian theory of countervailing power DeFehr says, "Unions had to come into being. They were a response to an irresponsible management." This is quite possibly a basic statement which reflects the influence of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's saying: "Justice in a technical society requires that the centralization of power inherent in the industrial process be matched by collective social power."

Proper treatment of labour is crucial for DeFehr if he hopes to maintain a good relationship between management and workers and he feels this is his goal.

The rarity mentioned earlier of persons who go beyond preconceived ideas and willingly experience both-and life may not entirely fit David DeFehr. Only because that way of living does not fit the norm. Reading Sider and Kraybill does not make one 'right', for there is a difference between reading and 'reading'. Yet DeFehr comes across as a person living justly. He is a man trying to 'see'. mm



The observers find Westwood MB warm

VIEW FROM THE PEW

With the proper directions we found the Westwood Community Church, after a fruitless search the previous Sunday. Services are held in the basement of an elementary school at 250 Bedson in St. James. Although we were early I was surprised by the number of cars already in the parking lot. Obviously, many people come not only for the worship service at 11 but also an hour earlier for Sunday School.

We were greeted warmly at the door and by various members of the congregation while we made the way to our seats. The atmosphere was warm and people were friendly to us as visitors to their church.

The congregational singing was enthusiastic and the "ministry of song" performed by a duet was quite enjoyable. One thing that really impressed me about the "celebration" as the service was titled, was the large amount of participation by the congregation. Different members stood up and shared with the rest of us scripture readings that were meaningful to them, and then contributed during a following prayer. This seemed to emphasize the peoples' enthusiasm for their own church.

After another congregational song, and a second number by the duet, Travis Reimer spoke on "Self-made men Beware!" using Genesis 28:10-22 as a text. The points were brought out clearly in the twenty minutes Pastor Reimer had left to speak in. His time-conscious-

ness was evidenced by him placing his watch at his side, and the service was over by 12:00.

After the service, we were again greeted by many people, including Rev. Reimer; everyone seemed to go out of the way to make newcomers feel at ease. All in all, I enjoyed the worship "celebration" at the Westwood Church. In the hour I spent there, there truly seemed to be Christian fellowship and joyfulness in worshipping the Lord.

— A younger observer

The Westwood Community Church is a Mennonite Brethren group which holds its services in the auditorium of Bedson Elementary School at 250 Bedson in Westwood (don't be fooled, as I was, by the address given in the phone book—that is for the church office). The congregation is about 150-strong, enough to fill all but the first three rows of chairs set up on the morning I attended. There were many families but few older people.

I attended the 11:00 a.m. service on January 18. Settling into my seat I quickly scanned the unusual surroundings. The basketball hoops and other trappings of the school gym confused somewhat the church atmosphere created by a modest pulpit and replicas of stained-glass windows hung on the wall.

But once the service began I had no doubt about what I had come for.

The Westwood Church is one of the most friendly I have attended. Everybody I passed on the way in and out of the school said hello, and no less than half a dozen people introduced themselves to me. After the service coffee was supplied, and few members showed any intention of leaving.

This congregational spirit extended into the service. Time was set aside in the middle of it so that members who were engaged in independent bible studies might share passages that they had found personally significant. Several prayers were delivered by members of the congregation after this, and later on the closing prayer was delivered by a visiting minister.

There was no choir, but the Church is fortunate in counting among its members John Martens, a tenor who is very well known inside and outside the Mennonite community. Martens sang beautifully in one solo selection and in several duets with a guest soprano.

The sermon was presented in an informal, relaxed style. The minister used the Genesis story of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau to illustrate several points: that men can never claim to be "self-made"; that God's grace is extended even to those who sin against him; and that through Jesus the link is established between heaven and earth (as by Jacob's ladder). On the backs of the programs provided there was a space where members were instructed to take notes under the headings "Truths that I Heard" and "Applications to my Life." Most of the members that I could see were dutifully jotting down their thoughts during the sermon.

I must balance my very positive impression of the Westwood Church with one word of caution. A visitor will find that the school building is not so warm as the welcome received there. Thermostats in schools are turned down over weekends so women, who don't have the warmth of suit jackets, would be well-advised to bring their coats into the service with them.

— Another younger observer



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BERLIN, CANADA — A SELF-PORTRAIT OF KITCHENER, ONTARIO, BEFORE WORLD WAR ONE. Edited and with an Introduction by Paul Tiessen. St. Jacobs, Ontario: Sand Hills Books, Inc., 1979, 232 pp. of text and pictures and approximately 82 pp. of "Introduction" and "Directories."

A review by Harry Loewen

This well prepared and beautifully bound volume is a reprint of *Berlin: Celebration of Cityhood*, issued in 1912 by authority of Berlin (now Kitchener, Ontario) and published by the German Printing and Publishing Co. of Berlin. Sand Hills, a small Canadian publisher headed by Paul and Hildegard Tiessen, both teaching in the English department of Wilfrid Laurier University, has produced other books: *People Apart: Portrait of a Mennonite World in Waterloo County, Ontario; Mennonite Country Drawings* by Peter Etril Snyder; and *Rebecca's Nancy: A Story of a Little Mennonite Girl*.

Berlin, Ontario, in pre-World War I days was bursting at its economic and social seams. The book tells the story of Berlin eloquently and with a sense of pride and optimism. As the city fathers stated, Berlin had to "blow its own horn" because no one else would do it for them. And the predominantly German population of Berlin had many reasons for boasting. In many ways they were No. 1 "between Toronto and Winnipeg." In manufacturing and business they surged ahead. The well-to-do businessmen lived in some of the most beautiful spacious houses of Canada. In fact, 70 percent of Berlin's population lived in their own homes, as the book keeps stressing. In agriculture the Pennsylvania-German Mennonites contributed to progress in farming and horticulture. Today's Kitchener's famous farmers' market goes back to the early years of Berlin.

Before World War I it was no secret that Berlin's enterprise and prosperity were somehow linked to the industry and resourcefulness of the German people in Waterloo County. The *London Free Press* wrote in 1912: "The citizens of the new city are largely of German descent. In many ways they set a worthy example to their Anglo-Saxon fellow Canadians." In 1897 the city had erected a *Friedens-Denkmal* in honor of Kaiser Wilhelm I, and then a decade later they placed a statue of Queen Victoria not far from the German Kaiser!

Then came the war with its anti-German sentiments among Anglo-Saxon Canadians. Berlin in 1916 was renamed Kitchener after Lord Kitchener, the popular British Secretary of War who died at sea before Berliners decided on another name for their city. Torn between his Germanness and the changed mood of the country, W. H. Breithaupt, a prominent citizen of Berlin, wrote in an open letter: "Berlin, Canada, is, by long association, well on to a hundred years, a Canadian name, not German . . . Though of German descent we are not Germans nor are we German-Canadians or any variety of Germans or part Germans . . . we are Canadians . . ." His pleas for retaining the old name were unsuccessful. Berlin became Kitchener.

The Pennsylvania-Mennonites in Berlin and Waterloo County found themselves between two fires during Berlin's celebration of cityhood and the period prior to World War I: the Germans and the English. While an article in the book acknowledges the contributions of the Mennonites to Waterloo County, Benjamin Eby, who was actually the founder of Berlin, is hardly mentioned in *Berlin: Celebration of Cityhood*. In 1912, Gordon Eby, a descendent of Benjamin, "was most conscious of the British winds blowing in the Berlin of 1912," as Paul Tiessen writes. "Here and there shaking off remnants of his Mennonite past, he turned less to German than to English fashions, English models, of the time. And when the war came he expressed strong anti-German sentiments."

The hundreds of beautifully reproduced pictures in this volume, many in color, speak thousands of words. Most of all, they tell us what values Berliners in 1912 prized above all things. The pictures and articles stress industry, business, banking, manufacturing, retailing, farming, and the good and comfortable life in general. Only five pages are devoted to Berlin's several churches with their pastors, with no accompanying text about the spiritual life of Berliners. Two pages, pictures and text, sketch the story of Berlin's educational efforts. Throughout the book there is hardly any mention about Berlin's culture and efforts at promoting art, drama and music. That the Lutherans were at the time endeavoring to establish a theological seminary did not receive the attention of a materialistically-inclined populace.

Sand Hills Books and Paul Tiessen are to be congratulated on producing a unique and important book. It should be seen on the coffee tables of all Kitchener-Waterloo residents. Mennonites and German-speaking Canadians elsewhere will also find the volume interesting and informative. mm

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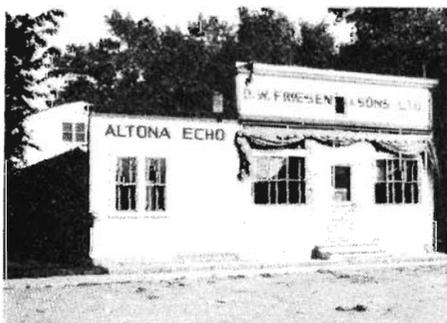
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• WE TAKE THE TIME. •

manitoba news

"Constituency contributions to Mennonite Central Committee have levelled off during the past three years and remained stagnant in 1980 as well," noted J.M. Klassen, MCC (Canada) executive secretary, as the Executive Committee met December 12 and 13 to consider 1981 annual projections and plans. The executive committee was torn over what a proper response should be. Larry Kehler challenged the committee saying, "The church needs to be called to respond to human need. We need to be too concerned about going into a deficit situation." The committee treasurer, Albert DeFehr, however, suggested restraint with the current economic slump and commented further that MCC income has in reality dropped 30 percent in the past three years, considering the impact of inflation. In preparation for the executive committee meeting, MCC (Canada) staff had cut \$90,000 from the Canadian program budget. This primarily affected voluntary service, Native concerns gardening projects, and peace and social concerns. The annual MCC (Canada) board meeting in Abbotsford in January 1981 will need to consider the impact of budget cuts on the total ministry of MCC.

The Red River Valley Echo celebrated its fortieth year of publication on January 15, 1981. Then as now the publishers of the Echo were D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd. The founding editor was D.K. Friesen. The paper is today managed and edited by Vic Penner.



Both Steinbach and Altona reported significant declines in construction activity in 1980. In Steinbach, construction values hit the lowest levels in a decade. In 1980, the town council issued 115 permits worth \$1.2 million; in 1979, 202 permits worth \$8.6 million were issued. In Altona, building permit values declined by some 45 percent, falling from \$3.7 million to just over \$2 million.

A history of Blumenort from its founding by Mennonites in 1874 to the present is a 1981 project for two area teachers, Roy Loewen and Betty Plett. The pair will be assisted by the Blumenort Historical Society. Blumenort was begun as a pioneer village in 1874, broke up in 1910 as settlers moved onto their own farms, and regrouped during the Depression in a different location.

Twenty General Conference Mennonite ministers, employed either by Winnipeg's 13 GC congregations or by church institutions or conferences in Winnipeg, met November 25 to form a new General Conference Pastors' Fellowship for Winnipeg. Jake Harms, convener of the group, said he felt a need for General Conference ministers to share with each other for inspiration, challenge, recreation and study.

A Rosenfeld family was away January 2 when their one-and-a-half-storey home caught fire. Only its shell is left standing. Left homeless in the blaze was the Jake Wall family. The fire was first noticed by youngsters at the skating rink.

Henry Brucks, who has worked the past six years for the board of evangelism of the Canadian MB Conference, has resigned his position. He will take the pastorate of the Elmwood MB

Church in Winnipeg. Among Brucks' wide range of responsibilities was overseeing the growing MB witness in Quebec and Nova Scotia, including the founding of the Institut Biblique Laval, now in its fourth year.

Two guest teachers for the January 1981 intersession at Steinbach Bible College were J.J. Toews of Neuwied, West Germany, and Dan Kelly of Quesnel, B.C. Toews, formerly on the faculty of Columbia Bible Institute, Clearbrook, B.C., is currently pastor of the Neuwied MB Church. Kelly is executive director of Intermissionary Co-operative Outreach, Quesnel.

Mennonite Central Committee volunteers in Bolivia are benefiting from the resources of a couple with long-time experience in peace and social concerns with MCC (Canada), Dan and Elaine Zehr of Winnipeg. As "Faith and Life Coordinators," a new kind of MCC assignment, they hope to help MCCers integrate the ministries of "word" and "deed." The Zehrs are also providing a pastoral ministry to the more than 50 volunteers in Bolivia.

COMING EVENTS

The Continuing Education Division of the University of Manitoba announces that a non-credit course in German Conversation will be offered for ten weeks beginning the week of February 9. For information, contact the Continuing Education Division, 474-9921.

Richard J. Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipleship: The Path of Spiritual Growth*, will be the major resource person at the Institute for Ministers and Laymen in 1981. The institute, an annual event at the Men-

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nonite Brethren Bible College, will be held March 2 — 6 on the college campus. The theme will be "Nurturing a Growing Church."

The next in the series of "Concerts for the Christian Family" sponsored by the Steinbach Bible College will take place March 14 at 8 p.m. The San Francisco Guitar Quartet will entertain with classical guitar music from the 16th to the 20th century.

A National Workshop on Program Implementation of Mediation Services is being planned for April 10-12 in Saskatoon. The workshop, sponsored jointly by MCC (Canada) and the solicitor general of Canada, is designed to provide practical assistance to persons involved in planning and operating pre-trial dispute mediation programs.

A symposium on "Devalued Persons and the Church" will be held on the Goshen College campus April 23-25. This major event highlighting the International Year of Disabled Persons is being sponsored by Mennonite Mental Health Services in cooperation with the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries and Goshen College Center for Discipleship. Wolf Wolfensberger will conduct the symposium. He is director of the Training Institute for Human Service Planning Leadership and Change Agency at Syracuse University, where he also serves as professor in the Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation.

An afternoon with Manitoba poet Pat Friesen on Sunday, February 8th, at 3:00 p.m., in Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, 86 West Gate. Admission: \$1.50 adults, students and senior citizens free. Coffee and dainties will be served.

PARAGUAY PREMIERE

Heimat für Heimatlose and *50 Jahre Fernheim*, German language films, will be premiered across Canada this winter. Both films were commissioned by the Fernheim Colony and produced by Dueck Film Productions of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Peter Klassen of Philadelphia, Paraguay, was the script writer. Dave Dueck, of Winnipeg, was the producer and director.

The 80-minute film *Heimat für Heimatlose* deals with the settlement of the Mennonites in the Fernheim Colony and their gradual adjustment to, and development of, the Gran Chaco. Some scenes of the settlements' beginnings are dramatized.

The 40-minute film *50 Jahre Fernheim* documents the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Colony. Speeches and music of the three-day event are highlighted. As well, scenes from the historical play *Ich Sende Euch* by Willy Jantz are included in the film.

Individuals are being asked to bring "Tereré" (cold tea) to the Winnipeg Centennial Concert Hall for the Friday, February 13 showing of the German language film *Heimat für Heimatlose*. During the intermission, individuals are being asked to set up "Tereré groups" so that people not familiar with the Paraguayan national drink may sample it. The drink is called *Matté* when it is served hot. Water will be provided.

Following the intermission, the film *50 Jahre Fernheim* will be shown. The show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at the door, ATO, or Klassen Travel.

your word

Sirs:

From the address on my latest number of MM, I see that my subscription runs out on Jan. 1, 1981. Therefore, please find enclosed my check for \$12 for another two years of your excellent paper. I enjoy all of it — including the "commercials". The advertising often reminds me of places and times that might otherwise be entirely forgotten, and bring back pleasant memories of days when the publisher and the editor both were little kids in Steinbach, and sometimes turned up at my children's meeting, at 7 o'clock Friday nights in the EMB Church. It has been a long time since then, but to me the memories are pleasant.

Your paper fills a real need in my life here, away from all of my people. I appreciate the Plautdietsch and German pieces, and also the occasional poetry.

Sincerely,
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A new book of poetry by Patrick Friesen

The Outcast

Patrick Friesen, *THE SHUNNING*,
Turnstone Press, Winnipeg, 105 pages,
\$7.00.

A review by Peter Pauls

The author has wisely given his readers a few explicit instructions as to what this "long poem" is all about and how it is to be read. In telling us that the characters are fictional he is telling us much. This is the hint that some readers quite possibly need—the poem operates on a mythical as well as on a literal level. What happens in *The Shunning* has happened not just once but happens again and again and is, therefore, timeless. Also, what happens is both simple and complex, factual and symbolic, and so must be viewed from many vantage points. Hence we have numerous voices, all commenting on essentially the same events but not all of them equally enlightened or enlightening.

The story is indeed about two brothers, as the poet informs us in the preface. And it is, on the surface, about Peter's suicide and Johann's natural death. But it is also about the death of innocence or childhood. Ultimately, it is not even so much about death as it is about the renewed life which paradoxically and miraculously springs from death—Peter's sensitivity, compassion and poetic vision are reborn in all who mourn his passing:

the creek still flows every spring
though cattails have spread
and now as summer settles like dust
the water stands green and thick
slumbers through a memory of war
days flow too
and I wade downstream
ten years to the day
when I kneeled here
praying rushes to hold Peter
rock him tender until the sky opens
when I raised him pale as angels
and carried him home
here the spirit left flesh behind and
ascended

here there is no forgetting
before he became a broken man
the boy with yellow hair clothed in
seasons
and here the blackbird
rising from a cattail
still bleeds

It was Peter who, as a child, had awakened the poetic instincts in other children. Peter, it is recalled, saw the creek as "a silver S/ a brand placed on the earth by God." Swallows' nests, to him, were "purses holding gold coins/ to pay the hawk as rent," and red-winged blackbirds "were his favorite bird/ they bleed but never die he said." We're told "he knew a lot about stars and what shapes you could find at night." "We were two boys/ swaying in a *tsouka boum* (maple tree) Johann remembers.

but I almost forget forgetting
that you were God's own
the kind of child that dies before
he's grown

Throughout the work, the significant observations are made not by those who record facts in diaries but rather by those who respond more spontaneously, less rationally, to the world around them. Those who wearily report the deaths and births in the community, the local doctor and the midwife for example, are not at all like those who celebrate life. Those who truly live are more like Peter. He cannot dispute with his accusers and, because of his very innocence, is quite defenceless in a legalistic, judgmental society which always finds it easier to believe in hell than in heaven. Such individuals, such poets, who refuse to grow up (or down as Cummings would say) are always shunned or cast out.

The book is well designed and the material, on the whole, attractively arranged. Some of the photographs, too, are quite effective. The one which adorns the back cover captures something of that hazy country we remember as our

childhood, but the face which stares at us from the front cover is more perplexing than inspiring. It is too stark, too real, to suggest *der blaue Engel* (the blue angel), which is Johann's poetic description of Peter.

The reader may wonder why the author did not develop more fully some of his various personas. Peter's wife, for one, is divided in her loyalties to husband and to church but we do not really witness much of the inner conflict she must have experienced. More could possibly have been made of her betrayal of Peter. It would also have been interesting to hear more from some of Peter's self-righteous accusers.

But these are minor quibbles. *The Shunning* is daring and experimental, the author's longest and most sustained effort to date. Many of the poems which make up *the Shunning* rank with his very best. The language is often brilliantly vivid and always concise. Recurrent blood imagery, for example, powerfully reinforces the basic theme of suffering and redemption. The larger poem which results from the skillful arrangement of individual, shorter statements transcends the particular locale, the ethnic community which provides the setting. It speaks forcefully to anyone who has ever mourned the death of his own innocence. mm

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To Wallace Stevers

His terrain: a landscape of self
Traced in the activity of
Floridian imaginings
Songs of self in quest of sense
Memories of Key West at dusk
A veritable verdant forest
Enframed by the dews of blue Junes

And summers by waters
Where words swim naked

His instrument: a metronome of self
Which measures the pleasing cadence
Of human words ascending in crescendo
On paths that dance through the land
Singing in June's summer tunes

And then the nights
Going home to
New Haven

Helmut-Harry Loewen

A box of sardines

The first time
my mother ate out
it was at the Chinaman's
with a nickle from her mother
for a box of sardines.

She knew they'd laugh
so she went to the Chinaman's
and asked please
would he get her
a box of sardines
and open them
and could she eat them there.

He knew what she was about
and after she finished
the sardines he brought her
a free piece of pie.
She never went back.

Tonight she gave her two carnations
to me forgiven again.

Oranges

I see
my father stop
in the sugar beet field
peel an orange
in the heat
waiting for me

He hands me my orange
and throwing my head back
I suck sweet citrus
down my throat

I watch him
peel his orange
like a magician
in one piece

He palms the orange
into his mouth
and looks at me
wide-eyed
his mouth
bulging
with the fruit
surprised
I laugh
for one moment
frozen
in the sun

by Victor Enns



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Die Liebe ist langmütig

Von Leonhard Froese

Wir legen als Text für die folgende Betrachtung den 1. Korintherbrief, Kapitel 13, das von der Liebe handelt, zugrunde.

Die deutsche Sprache, eine Sprache der Dichter und Denker, kennt für die Variationsbreite und -tiefe dessen, was man unter Liebe verstehen oder auch missverstehen mag, im Grunde nur ein Wort. Deshalb muessen wir frei nach Faust oder besser Goethe sagen: "Ich kann das Wort so hoch nicht schätzen, ich muss es anders uebersetzen." Im griechischen Urtext der Schrift steht an dieser Stelle das Wort: *Agape*. Die *Agape*-Liebe ist rein altruistisch; sie ist auch frei von jeder Art Erotik. Sie kennt keine Eigenliebe im Sinne des Eigeninteresses, sondern lebt in der Zuwendung und Hingabe fuer den Andern. Sie ist mit einem Wort das, was im christlichen Verstaendnis Martin Luther mit Naechstenliebe uebersetzt hat.

Hoeren wir, wie der Apostel Paulus im vorliegenden Brief den Korinthern diese Bedeutung der Liebe nahezubringen sucht. Es ist ein Hohelied auf die christliche Liebe, wie es schoener wohl nie gesungen, tiefer wohl nie erfasst und klarer wohl nie ausgedrueckt worden ist. Nach dem Text sagt der Apostel gleich im ersten Vers dieses Kapitels: "Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engelzungen redete, und haette der Liebe nicht, so waere ich ein toenend Erz oder eine klingende Schelle." Hier wird also gleich eingangs der Akkord angeschlagen, und es ist ein kraeftiger, anspruchsvoller, herausfordernder Akkord. Er besagt in voller Deulichkeit und Schaerfe dies: Waere ich auch ein noch so begabter, ja genialer Redner, der nicht nur mit des Menschen, sondern der Zunge eines ausserirdischen, himmlischen Wesens spricht, waere doch alles, was ich sage, wie es im Englischen heißt: "for nothing", waere ich nicht von der Liebe ergriffen. Im naechsten Satz verschaeft Paulus diese Bedingung, indem er sagt:

"Und wenn ich weissagen koennte und wuesste alle Geheimnisse und alle Erkenntnis und haette allen Glauben, also daß ich Berge versetzte, und haette der Liebe nicht, so waere ich nichts."

Das heißt nun schon: Nicht nur das Talent, auch das Wissen, nicht nur die Erkenntnis und Voraussicht, sondern selbst der Glaube, der Uebermenschliches zustandebringt, reichen nicht aus, den Andern etwas zu vermitteln, hat man die Liebe nicht. Im dritten Vers geht der Lehrmeister der Korinther noch einen Schritt weiter, indem er feststellt: "Und wenn ich alle meine Habe den Armen gaebe und liesse meinen Leib brennen, und haette der Liebe nicht, so waere mir's nichts nuetze." Hier wird der Anspruch absolut: Nichts aber auch gar nichts von und in dieser Welt, auch nicht das soziale Engagement fuer diejenigen, die in Not sind, nein, nicht einmal das persoenele Opfer von Leib und Leben reichen fuer die Glaubwuerdigkeit christlichen Glaubens und Handelns aus — hat man die Liebe nicht. Dann ist alles "nichts nütze", und man selber ist ein Nichts.

Sprach der Apostel Paulus bisher von den notwendigen Bedingungen der Verkuendigung, d.h. von den Voraussetzungen, ohne die diese mit seinen Worten "nichts nuetze" ist, nennt er in den folgenden Abschnitten die moegliche Bedingung, d.h. die existentielle Grundvoraussetzung des rechten Umgangs mit dem Wort, soll es nicht Schall und Rauch sein. "Denn unser Wissen ist Stueckwerk, und unser Weissagen ist Stueckwerk", lesen wir in Vers 9. "Wenn aber kommen wird das Vollkommene, wird das Stueckwerk aufhoeren", heißt es in Vers 10. Das bedeutet die radikale Infragestellung aller menschlichen Aussagen, so gut sie auch durchdacht, formuliert und gemeint sein moegen, ueber die Verkuendigung Jesu. Erst, wenn ich von der Liebe uebermaechtigt und ihrer maechtig geworden bin,

wird das "dunkle Wort" erhellt werden. Und was ich jetzt nur "stückweise" erkenne, werde ich dann vollends erkennen und weitergeben koennen (Vers 12).

Was aber ist diese Liebe, die hier als entscheidendes Merkmal für christliches Erkennen, Glauben und Tun ins Feld gefuert wird? Paulus nennt in Vers 4 bis 8 die Einzelkriterien der Liebe in diesem seinen Verstaendnis:

1. *Die Liebe ist langmütig.* Langmütig ist hier wohl zu verstehen als tolerant, verständnisvoll, geduldig. Ihr Gegenteil ist das unchristliche, unter Christen jedoch keineswegs unübliche Eifern, Bedrängen, Nachtragen usw. Denn "die Liebe eifert nicht, die Liebe treibt nicht Mutwillen, sie blähet sich nicht auf", erläutert Paulus.

2. *Die Liebe ist freundlich.* Ist sie nicht unfreundlich, darf sie folglich auch nichts Böses an sich haben, aber auch nicht ausdrücken. Keine Liebe hat und unchristlich handelt folglich, wer dem Bruder zürnt, ihn schilt, bedrängt, belastet usf.; denn die Liebe stellt sich nicht ungebärdig, sie sucht nicht das ihre, sie läßt sich nicht erbittern, sie rechnet das Böse nicht zu", begründet der Apostel.

3. *Die Liebe ist wahrhaftig.* Da die Liebe "sich nicht der Ungerechtigkeit" freuet, vielmehr diese zu bekaempfen sucht, kann sie auch nicht unwahrhaftig sein. Sie sucht vielmehr überall und bei jedem die Wahrheit, eingedenk des Jesu-Wortes: "Die Wahrheit aber wird euch freimachen."

Hier wird der Anspruch des Jesus-Jüngers in qualitativer Hinsicht total; denn die Forderung "Die Wahrheit und nichts als die Wahrheit!" — in Wissenschaft, Justiz, Politik usw. immer wieder erhoben und nur zuoft verfehlt — ist so ernst gemeint, daß man sagen kann: Wer gegen dieses Postulat verstößt, ist der Liebe und folglich der richtigen Wort-Erkentnis nicht fähig.

4. *Die Liebe ist zeitlos.* Die Liebe ist

nicht beschränkt auf diese oder jene Zeitspanne, auf dieses oder jenes Ereignis, auf diesen oder jenen Entwicklungsschritt eines Menschen—sie ist entweder nimmer da oder sie "höret nimmer auf". Diese quantitative Dimension der Liebe ist nicht minder wichtig als die soeben erwähnt qualitative. Sie ist nur, im Bilde gesprochen, die andere Seite der Medaille. Das will sagen: Eine noch so "liebe Liebe", bezogen nur auf bestimmte Gegebenheiten von kürzerer oder längerer Dauer, taugt nichts oder ist mit Pauli Worten "nichts nütze", überdauern sie diese nicht. Praktisch gesprochen: Eine Liebe, die sich nur an der Gegenliebe des oder der Anderen orientiert, eine Liebe, die sich nur dem zuwendet, dem man sich gerade zuwenden will, eine Liebe, die nur liebt, solange es ihr liebenswert erscheint, ist keine wahre Liebe.

5. Zusammenfassend: *Die Liebe "verträgt alles, sie glaubet alles, sie hoffet alles, sie duldet alles."* (Vers 7).

"Sie hoffet alles", das heisst: sie hat Vertrauen in die Zukunft, in die Entwicklung z.B. eines jungen Menschen, der gefehlt hat; "sie glaubet alles", das bedeutet: sie glaubet an den Sieg der Wahrheit, ist mithin nicht misstrauisch gegen jedermann, sondern glaubet, wie wir hoerten, dass die Wahrheit euch "freimachen" wird; "sie duldet alles" und "vertraegt alles", das will sagen: die Liebe ist duldsam, sie ist, wie es auf anderer Stelle hiess, "langmuetig", und das heisst doch wohl: sie ist offen fuer die andere Art des Anderen, mit enderen Worten: sie hadert und eifert nicht, sondern bemueht sich das Andersartige zu verstehen; mit einem Wort: sie verurteilt nicht, und das besagt: erleidet lieber etwas, und sei es Ungerechtigkeit an sich selber, als dass sie dem Andern weh tut.

"Nun aber bleibet Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe—diese drei; aber die Liebe ist die groesste unter ihnen" lesen wir abschliessend in Vers 13 von Kapitel 13. Aberglauebische Menschen lieben diese sogenannte magische Zahl 13 nicht. Doch hier geht es nicht um Aberglaube, sondern um Glaube, nicht um Hoffnungslosigkeit, sondern um Hoffnung, nicht um Hass, sondern Liebe. Ordnet man die Liebe in diese fundamentale Trias des christlichen Verstaendnisses und Bekenntnisses ein und setzt man sie, wie es Paulus hier tut, vom Ende an den Anfang oder im Bilde: an die Spitze des Dreiecks, so werden dem, der Augen hat zu sehen, die Schuppen von diesen Augen genommen. Und er kann dann durch die mehr als magische Kraft der Liebe "Blinde" sehen machen und Hoffnungslosigkeit, in Hoffnung, Aberglaube in Glaube, ja selbst Hass in Liebe verwandeln. Ist der Verkuendiger jedoch selbst auf einem oder gar auf

beiden Augen blind, d.h. fehlt es ihm an Liebe oder ist er nicht ganz von dieser "Agape-Liebe" im christlichen Sinne durchdrungen, so muss er wohl oder uebel seinen Auftrag verfehlen. Und dort wo nicht "Glaube, Liebe und Hoffnung" gesaet werden, kann auch nur das Gegenteil, also Hoffnungslosigkeit, Aber-oder Unglaube und Hass geerntet werden! Das ist dann kein Fuehrer, sondern ein Verfuierer, kein Lehrer, sondern ein Irrlehrer der Gemeinde.

Was Wunder, wenn eine solche Gemeinde mit der Zeit zum Gegenteil von dem wird, was sie im Vater-unser betet: "Dein Reich komme!" Nein, es ist nicht "Das Reich Gottes auf Erden", wie es die urspruenglichen Taufgesinnten noch ernsthaft verwirklichen wollten; es sind "Reiche" dieser Welt, die hier errichtet werden, und es herrschen in diesen deren Gesetze. Eine solche Gemeinde ist dann keine Gemeinschaft mehr, sondern eine Gesellschaft mit all ihren Gegensetzen und Unterschieden, Spannungen und Konflikten. Eine Art "christlicher Club" also dessen Verhaltensformen eine Reihe von Parallelen zu einem beliebiger anderen Club aufweisen. Waehrend im weltlichen Club die Mitglieder jedoch durch eindeutig bestimmte und zu befolgende Zwecke gegeneuber dem vorgegebenen hoeheren Ziel, eine christliche

Lebensgemeinschaft zu sein. Demgegenueber erweisen sich die bedeutsamen sozialen Leistungen der christlichen Gemeinden weithin als Kompensation— fuer das in praxi—nicht gefuehrte christliche Leben!

Wir kennen das Wort Jesu, wer ohne Suende sei, koenne den ersten Stein heben. Nicht um anzuklagen, wurde der vorliegende Text gewaehlt, sondern um auf das Problem der inneren Verfassung vieler christlicher Gemeinden hinzuweisen. Es besteht in der Kluft zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit, die unueberbrueckbar erscheint. Wir verstehen nur zu gut die Mehrheit der Gemeindeglieder in ihrem Verhalten, denn sie versuchen aus der Not eine Tugend zu machen. Eine andere Frage ist es, wie die Verantwortlichen der Gemeinden sich mit dieser ihrer Situation "abfinden".

Ich glaube, dass der "Geist Gottes, der da wehet, wo er will", bei dem in Predigten oft zitierten "Muetterlein"— in ihrer Beziehung zu ihren Naechsten— eher seine Heimstaette findet als in der kuehlen Atmosphaere solcher Gemeinden. Denn bei ihr ist das Wort der Schrift, wahr geworden: "Die Liebe wird Euch freimachen!"

Wir sind Herrn Froese fuer diesen Beitrag, der hier Raum halber etwas gekuerzt wurde, herzlich dankbar. (Ed.)



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Der Brunnen

Von Hedi Knoop

Es war einst ein uralter Brunnen, darin rauschte und gurgelte es so, daß jeder einen großen Bogen um ihn machte. In dem Brunnen aber wohnte ein greulicher alter Mann, der hatte vorstehende grüne Augen wie ein Frosch, und quaken konnte er auch. Jeden Abend sprang er aus der Tiefe herauf auf den Brunnenrand und stimmte sein Liedchen an: Quaaaak quak quak quak brrrrrecks kecks kecks krrrr. Das war schauerlich anzuhören.

Eines Tages verirrte sich ein Mädchen und geriet spätabends in die Nähe des Brunnens. Platsch, da sprang plötzlich der greuliche Mann hervor und sang: Quaaaak quak quak brrrrrecks kecks kecks krrrrr.

Das Mädchen glaubte, es müsse auf der Stelle tot umfallen so sehr erschrak es. Es wollte davonlaufen, doch der Mann war mit einem Satz an seiner Seite und packte es mit seinen nassen Fingern.

Das Mädchen schrie und jammerte, aber es half nichts, es mußte mit dem Alten hinunter in die schwarze Tiefe des Brunnens. Dort waren nur Schlamm und Schleim und ein wenig Moos, und wenn es Hunger hatte, sollte es Froscheier essen.

Das Jammern hilft jetzt nichts, dachte das Mädchen, du mußt schon etwas anderes tun, um hinauszugelangen.

Als der Alte am nächsten Abend auf dem Brunnenrand sein Liedchen anstimmte, da klatschte das Mädchen in die Hände und fing an, in dem tiefen Loche zu jubeln: "Oh wie wunderschön du singen kannst", rief es, "noch nie habe ich so etwas gehört!"

Da schwoll dem Alten die Brust, und er sang noch lauter als zuvor. "Ach", schmeichelte die Gefangene im Brunnen, "wie wundervoll muß dein Lied erst dort oben anzuhören sein! Hol mich doch herauf in deine Nähe."

Wirklich, der Mann holte sie herauf, aber sie mußte sich dicht neben ihn stellen, damit sie ihm nicht entfliehe. Nun blies er sich auf und sang, und das Mädchen rief "Weiter, weiter!" und klatschte in die Hände.

Als er sich so stark aufgeblasen hatte, daß er rund wie eine Kugel war, da gab ihm das Mädchen einen Stoß, und platsch! stürzte er in den Brunnen und zerplatzte.

Das Mädchen aber lief, was es nur konnte, bis es zu Hause war. mm

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Gedanken über Literatur und Wahrheit

von Harry Loewen

Die Mennoniten haben von je her die Literatur ziemlich kritisch angesehen. Was immer nicht "wahr" ist, und was immer nicht frommt und zum geistlichen Leben beiträgt, wurde nicht allzu ernst genommen. Somit wurden Romane, Gedichte und Erzählungen nicht nur nicht gelesen, sondern auch als schädliche "Gelehrtenstücke" verworfen.

Obwohl diese negative Einstellung der Literatur gegenüber auch heute noch bei manchen Mennoniten zu finden ist, liest man doch schon die Werke großer Dichter und Schriftsteller, und die Mennoniten haben in letzter Zeit angefangen selbst Romane und Gedichte zu schreiben und zu übersetzen.

In den letzten paar Jahren ist es in mennonitischen Schulen zur Debatte geworden, ob gewisse Schriftsteller für die studierende Jugend schädlich seien und ob andere nützlicher wären. Diese Debatte ist nicht ohne Bedeutung. Man hat mit Recht erkannt, daß das literarische Wort eine gewisse Macht auf den Leser, besonders auf das jugendliche Gemüt, ausübt und eine Wahrheit enthält, die nicht ohne Einfluß bleibt.

Nach dem russischen Schriftsteller Solschenizyn, ist die Literatur nicht nur dazu da, um den Leser zu unterhalten und ihm einige gemütliche Stunden zu bereiten, sondern um der Welt zu helfen und die menschliche Gesellschaft zu heben und zu verbessern. Die Literatur, insbesondere große Literatur, hat diese Macht, weil sie wahr ist und somit als Wahrheit gegen die Lüge in der Welt kämpft.

In seiner Nobelpreis-Rede (1970) hob Solschenizyn hervor, daß "die Weltliteratur [die Kraft hat], der Menschheit in dieser bedrohlichen Zeit zu helfen, sich selbst wahrhaft zu erkennen, entgegen dem, was ihr von voreingenommenen

Menschen und Parteien eingeredet wird."

Dieses gefährliche Einreden auf den Menschen geschieht auf mancherlei Weise. Durch Propaganda auf politischen, gesellschaftlichen, und auch religiösen Gebieten wird dem Menschen oft eingeredet, so und nicht anders zu denken und zu handeln. Solschenizyn nennt dieses gewaltsame Einreden und diesen widermenschlichen Einfluß von außen, die den Menschen nicht Mensch sein lassen, eine Lüge, die den einzelnen und die menschliche Gemeinschaft zu zerstören sucht.

Nach Solschenizyn muß die Literatur es sich zur Aufgabe machen, dieser Lüge die Wahrheit entgegenzusetzen und somit die Lüge zerstören. Dem Schriftsteller, mein Solschenizyn, ist viel erreichbar: "der Sieg über die Lüge. Schon immer hat die Kunst im Kampf mit der Lüge gesiegt, und sie wird immer siegen."

In diesem Solschenizyn-Wort ist eine große Wahrheit enthalten. Die Literatur kann allgemein mehr erreichen, als ein Zeitungsbericht, Aufsatz, eine philosophische Abhandlung, ein historischer Bericht, oder auch eine Moralpredigt. Der Grund dafür liegt in der Natur und Sache der Literatur. Die Literatur spiegelt in ihrer Form und Inhalt das menschliche Leben wieder und appelliert somit mit ihrer Lebenswahrheit und -weisheit an das Herz und den Verstand des Menschen. In den Werken der großen Dichter und Autoren bekommt der Leser sich selbst zu sehen. Und sobald der Mensch sich selbst zu sehen bekommt, wird er an seinen Ursprung erinnert und aufgefordert, wahrer Mensch inmitten von Unmenschlichkeit und weltweiter Verderbtheit zu sein. Wenn der Leser mit großen menschlichen Werten (wie Liebe, Wahrheit,

Güte, Gerechtigkeit) konfrontiert wird, weiß er bald, was er ist und was er sein soll, und er wird sich dann weigern, sich irgend einer Gewalt zu unterwerfen, die ihm das wahre Menschsein rauben will.

Wenn man die Aufgabe der Literatur im Sinne von Solschenizyn versteht, ist es erklärlich, warum Diktaturen, Tyrannen und sonstige Gewaltherrscher, die Dichter und Schriftsteller aus ihrer Mitte verbannen und sich vor ihren Werken fürchten. Das ist schon immer so gewesen. Der freie Schriftsteller ist einem Zwangsstaat höchst gefährlich.

Daß Mennoniten angefangen haben Literatur zu lesen, zu schreiben, und sich mit dem allgemeinen Wert der Literatur in den Schulen zu befassen, ist bestimmt von großer Bedeutung. Mennonitische Schriftsteller spiegeln nicht nur in ihren Schriften mennonitisches Leben und Wahrheit wieder, sondern sie erinnern ihre mennonitischen und nicht-mennonitischen Leser, daß die herkömmlichen mennonitischen Werte im Kampf gegen Zwang, Unfreiheit und Lüge von großer Wichtigkeit sind. Es ist auch nicht von ungefähr, daß der literarische Aufschwung unter den Mennoniten mit erneutem Sinn und großem Interesse für mennonitische Geschichte, Werte und Glauben zusammenfällt. Es besteht wohl kein Zweifel, daß mennonitische Dichter, Schriftsteller, und Übersetzer viel dazu beitragen, daß das Mennonitenbewußtsein in unserer Zeit erheblich zur Geltung kommt. Auch trägt die junge mennonitische Literatur dazu bei, daß das Gute und Wahre, wofür die Mennoniten durch die Jahrhunderte gekämpft und gelitten haben, der Jugend und Zukunft erhalten bleibt.

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our word

CHRISTIANS, POLITICS, AND REAGAN: LOSING SIGHT OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Many conservatively-minded Christians are delighted at the election of Ronald Reagan as president of the United States. These people are pleased because they believe that their prayers and political activism during the campaign have been vindicated. Now they are waiting to see what Reagan will do and are quite prepared to resume their political activism to make sure that he delivers appropriate legislation against abortion, homosexuality, welfare, the equal rights amendment concerning women, and other immoral things. While no one denies that conservative fundamental Christians were vocal during the election campaign, the assessment of their impact varies: some enthusiastic observers give them virtually all the credit for winning the election, while others say the conservative Christians were more vocal than voting.

Whether these conservative Christians were an electoral force or not is beside the point of this editorial. What is worthy of commentary is the way they mixed politics and Christianity. What is also clear is that these conservative Christian activists lost sight of what it means to live as a Christian.

The first mistake of the Christian conservative activists is their assumption that God must be on their side. Although the scriptures clearly appear to come out against most of the things the Christian conservatives are against, it does not, however, follow that God condones what they are doing. Most of the Christian conservative spokesmen have clearly stated what they were against; none has articulated any vision of the kind of society they wanted to create. As well, the conservatives somehow believe that God has specifically blessed America and that He wants the nation to be great again, to the extent that they tend to see Americans as the new chosen people. The New Testament nowhere links success with God's blessing; what is discussed is the attitude of the heart toward God.

The second mistake of the conservative Christian political activists is their idea that they can impose their view of morality on society by re-writing the laws. This, at the very least, is treating the symptom and not the cause. Immorality and sin arise from the heart and soul, as do purity and righteousness. The only way to make Americans more moral is to change the attitudes of their hearts and souls, not the laws concerning abortion, women's rights, welfare, etc.

While it is true that the presence of a significant number of Christians in society will affect that society's corporate moral stance, there is nothing in the scriptures to suggest that Christians become politically active in achieving moral purity. Christ's Great Commission instructed his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; He didn't tell them to seek public office in order to proclaim his message. The call of every one of God's prophets and messengers was a call to repentance, not political reform.

It is one thing to become politically active in your community because you feel you have a responsibility as a citizen; it is quite another thing to decide to seek political office because you want to make your community more "moral" or more "Christian." The latter is roughly the same as the attitude of certain Jews who thought that when the Messiah would come, he would come politically triumphant. The scriptures, however, always emphasize that the King-

dom of God is not of this world; to use political power to impose a standard of Christian morality is to try to create the Kingdom of God on earth. The Christian in public office will not hide his Christian commitment, and will support policies that are consistent with his ethical principles, but he should not use his public office or political power to enforce a standard of Christian morality on people who have not chosen to be Christian.

Thirdly, the Christian conservatives made a mistake in the way they evaluated the politicians they deemed worthy of support; if a candidate was against abortion, against the equal rights amendment for women, favored cutbacks in social welfare support, and favored increased military armament, and so on, then he was counted worthy of Christian conservative support — and by extension was also on the side of God. What the Christian conservatives did not do was evaluate the quality of a candidate's Christian commitment. This led to some rather ludicrous endorsements of congressional candidates whose personal integrity left a lot to be desired (at least one had been convicted of corruption), but who supported the Christian conservative platform. This focus on specific issues made it possible for all three presidential candidates to claim they were "born again." At no point did the Christian conservative publicly attempt to make sure the presidential candidates were, in fact, "born again" Christians. Surely, this is important to people who believe that a spiritual re-birth is necessary in order to claim Christianity.

Fourth, there was a remarkable silence from the conservative camp of any expression of support for the poor or for civil rights. One Black community spokesman noted that while the Bible contains several hundred references relating to social responsibility, conservative Christians made few, if any, public statements on such issues. To the successful Christian conservative it is inconceivable that a person can be poor through no fault of his own; so it is quite logical then that their solution to poverty and unemployment is to reduce social assistance enough to force people to find a job. At the same time it never occurs to these Christian conservatives that if this is their approach, then they have a responsibility to create those jobs, even if it cuts their profits.

What the Christian conservatives have forgotten is that they will not be evaluated on the success of their political activism, but that they will be evaluated by the way they as individuals and groups respond to real human need. Matthew 25:35, 36 come to mind: "For when I was hungry, you gave me food; when thirsty, you gave me drink; when I was a stranger you took me into your home, when naked you clothed me; when I was ill you came to my help, when in prison you visited me." In the following verses the righteous reply by asking when they did these things, and the answer comes: "Anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me."

When Christians learn to be generous in these simple things as they are needed by the most humble of people, they discover then the joy of helping Jesus Christ himself. This kind of generosity is a way of expressing what it means to be Christian that is not in any way concerned with political power, but which nevertheless has the power to change society.

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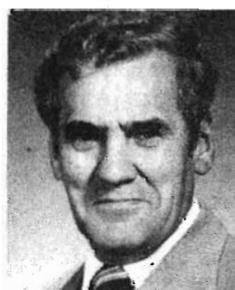
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- to help children and youth cultivate Christlike care for others and commitment to their biblical and Anabaptist heritage
- to find ways to free family, friends or self to share faith and skills through church service programs

Mennonite Central Committee
21 South 12th Street
Akron, PA 17501
or
201-1483 Pembina Highway
Winnipeg, Man. R3T 2C8

