

# *Mennonite* MIRROR

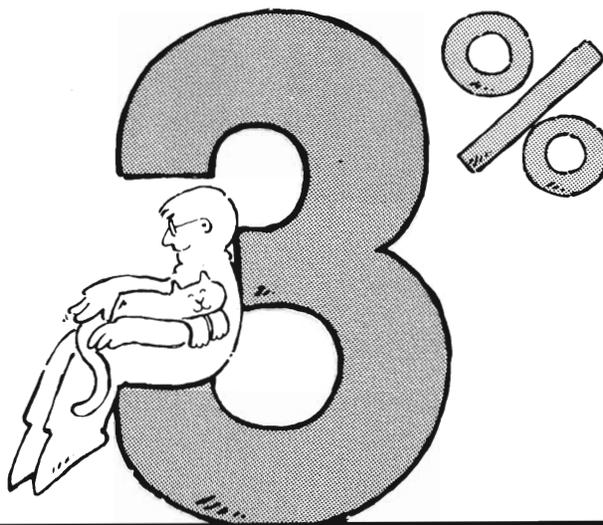
volume 17/number 6/february 1988



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**Manitoba  
Housing  
Muriel Smith,  
Minister**



## FOREWORD

This month's edition opens with a "preview" and that is the publication of a chapter of the forthcoming book, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889*. This is a major historical study of a hundred years of Mennonite life in Russia by James Urry. Dr. Urry is a British scholar currently resident in New Zealand who initially examined Mennonite history in a doctoral thesis and then continued his interest in the field in his professional career. Dr. Urry's book is being published this spring by the Hyperion Press with the co-sponsorship of the Mennonite Literary Society. Because of the length of the chapter chosen for this preview, it is being published in two parts.

In the second article, Kay Reimer describes her life in the northern Manitoba community of Rocky Lake, 30 miles north of The Pas. She and her husband moved north, planning to stay not more than five years, but likely just two. Now, 17 years later, the family is still there. She describes living there as a state of mind. While some would say life in a northern community is "slow," Mrs. Reimer rejects that label by explaining that the priorities are different and that there are qualitative differences between "north" and "south" worth noting in their own right.

Rena and George Kroeker left Canada to teach English for a term in China and in their "letter home" make a series of comparisons that underline the differences and some similarities. In general, their letter confirms the observation that the best way to learn about another culture is by living in it day to day.

Helmut Huebert, a Winnipeg physician, from time to time leaves his work in this city and takes his professional knowledge to another country where he shares it with physicians attached to mission hospitals or at clinics providing a medical service related to his specialty. Late in 1987 he spent about a month in two South American countries. He describes his experience in this edition.

There are several "poet's words" in this edition. Making a debut is John Weier, a writer with a special interest in religion, religious history, and the crafting of acoustic instruments. Returning to these pages are Elmer Suderman and Tim Wiebe.

The Cossack is a short story comparing child and adult views of a Cossack resident of a Mennonite village. Where the children find something mysterious and something to delight in, the adults see only someone to endure.

In the 1920s several groups of Mennonites left Manitoba for Mexico where they hoped to be able to preserve their conservative and unique life. In Mexico they attempted to shut out the world by shutting themselves into colonies. But change has a way of winning, and the Mexican Mennonite cocoon is showing some signs of breaking. In an interview with H. L. Sawatzky, who has followed Mennonites in Mexico, writer Byron Burkholder provides an insight into present events.

Roy Vogt has recovered from his break last month and provided this issue with another *Observed Along the Way*.

Other features, such as personal glimpses into the year-long undertaking of Dr. Jake Dyck as president of the Canadian Medical Association, and into the life of the late P. J. B. Reimer, are also part of this issue.

**The Cover:** Photo by Steve Penner

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P R I N T I N G

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# This centenary was also a pivotal year in the Russian experience

by James Urry

1889

Year of Celebration

As 1889 approached Mennonites prepared to celebrate the centenary of their first settlement in Russia. The Centenary provided them with an opportunity to examine their past, to reflect upon their current position and to reaffirm their faith; to reassert their sense of community and to express their feelings towards the land their forefathers had settled in. 1889 was a good year for contemplation and reflection.

In 1888 the former school teacher, Peter Neufeld, published in Halbstadt Peter Hildebrand's account of the first Mennonite migration to Khortitza. It was one of the earliest books to be produced by the first Mennonite-owned publishing house established in Russia which Neufeld had founded the previous year. In December 1888 David Epp, son of the elder of the Khortitza congregation, himself a minister, school teacher and member of the first generation of Mennonite intelligentsia, put the finishing touches to his book on the history of the Khortitza settlement. Published in Odessa early in 1889, the book was widely distributed among Russian colonists and Russian Mennonite migrants in Canada and the United States. Epp said nothing about the origins of the Mennonite faith and a large section of the book was devoted to the negotiations with the Russians and early settlement. Brief chapters emphasized the development of the colony, its institutions and contributions to the country in which Epp continuously stressed Mennonite loyalty to the state and the Tsar. The book was favourably received even

though Epp's discussion of the treatment of the first deputies, Höppner and Bartsch, resulted in an acerbic exchange of letters in the *Odessaer Zeitung*.

The Khortitza community also erected a large obelisk in the centre of Khortitza and smaller monuments at the grave sites of the two delegates, Höppner and Bartsch. The major public celebration of the centenary, however, occurred on

October 1st in Khortitza. Two vivid accounts of that day have survived. One, published in the major Prussian Mennonite journal, emphasized the religious nature of the ceremonies while the report in the Russian German-language paper, *Odessaer Zeitung*, gave greater coverage to the secular speeches in Russian presented once the religious services had ended. If the publication of the historical accounts and the erection of monuments looked backwards, the festivities of October 1st celebrated Mennonite achievements and looked forward towards an even better future. The town of Khortitza was decorated with flags and banners, people filled the streets until late into the evening and lanterns illuminated the darkness. Guests from near and far, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, joined the Khortitza colonists in their celebrations. Russian officials were afforded a special prominence in the ceremonies and the governor general of New Russia, as well as other officials in government ministries, sent letters and telegrams of congratulation.

Two religious services were held, the major service in the afternoon. The elder of the main Khortitza congregation, Heinrich Epp, preached on 1 Samuel 7 (12) stressing the verse 'For so far the Lord has helped us.' Sermons were given by other ministers from Khortitza and Molochnaia, all stressing the sense of communal thanksgiving for God's blessings and His promise of salvation. Verses from the Psalms seemed to match the mood of joyous celebration. Elder Epp then

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**The Mennonite Mirror is pleased to present the concluding chapter (in two installments) of James Urry's important new history of the Russian Mennonites, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889*. Not since P. M. Friesen's *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* has anyone written such a comprehensive and thoroughly researched history of Mennonite Russia. Dr. Urry is professor of anthropology at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. He is a British scholar who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the Mennonites of Russia and has since become one of our foremost historians in that field.**

**Dr. Urry's book is being published this spring by Hyperion Press for the Mennonite Literary Society. This concluding chapter describes the high point of Russian Mennonite life and culture just before the First World War and the Revolution brought the Mennonite Commonwealth down in ruins.**

addressed the assembly in Russian, noting how Mennonites always had received the protection of the Tsar and the government which had permitted them to live according to their 'confession of faith and to fulfil our duty as loyal subjects of the Tsar and Fatherland.' The school teachers in their speeches given in Russian, after the religious service had ended, also emphasized the theme of loyalty to Tsar and country. P. Riediger of the Khor-titza secondary school argued that expressions such as 'our Tsar, and our Fatherland' were not just idle phrases, coined merely for the festivities, but for Mennonites arose from the 'deepest hearts and joyous feelings as members of the association of Russian peoples.' In no other country on earth, he suggested, had Mennonites achieved such security and prosperity as in Russia. The village school teacher, Peter Penner, emphasized the importance of learning Russian, for in language the 'spirit of the people' (*Geist des Volkes*) was to be found, and Mennonites needed to become more aware of the genius of the Russian people. It was the duty of Mennonites, 'before God, the Tsar and the Russian people . . . to instruct our children in solid Christian ideals and love of Tsar and Fatherland'. The values expressed in the October day celebrations echoed those promoted by David Epp in the final chapter of his book: religion as the means to material and moral improvement, the continued need to support educational institutions and loyalty to Tsar and Fatherland.

How much did these sentiments reflect the views of the average Mennonite colonist in 1889, rather than just the opinion of the cultured elite? Even if for many, especially older Mennonites, such ideas were still seen as alien and 'wordly,' the very fact that they were expressed so openly in the community on a public occasion, is a clear indication of the degree of change that had occurred since Mennonites first settled in Russia a century before. And the cultured elite, now firmly in control of the pulpit and the classroom, was free to develop these sentiments, inculcating them in the hearts and minds of the next generation. A closer examination of the reports of the celebrations of other discussions of the centennial which appeared in the press at this time, clearly indicate the degree of the transformation of Mennonite life in Russia which had occurred since first settlement.

Elder Epp noted that the centennial celebration was not for Khoritza Mennonites alone, but commemorated the foundation of the entire Mennonite com-

munity in Russia.' His reference to the larger commonwealth of Mennonites in Russia was clear and the fact that he could speak for all Mennonites, rather than as the leader of a single congregation, is significant. While separate congregations still existed, their role in community life was far less embracing than it had been a century before. The Molochnaia colonists sent ministers to the celebration not as representatives of individual congregations but as spokesmen for the elders of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld administrative districts. The once proud congregations were subordinated to regional government areas. This is a clear reflection of the fact that by 1889 Mennonites identified with a number of community groups and institutions: a local parish associated with a particular congregation, a village community, a district area, a colony or settlement and finally other Russian Mennonite communities and groups. The sense of 'being' Mennonite and 'belonging' to a Mennonite community had changed dramatically since the early days of settlement when primary identification had been with immediate kin and a localized, distinct congregation, separated from other Mennonites and the wider 'world.'

By 1889 many Mennonites were more aware than earlier generations of their own history. Biblical and church history were taught in the secondary schools and knowledge of such subjects filtered down to village schools via the teachers who had been trained in the secondary institutions. Mennonite newspapers, particularly the *Mennonitische Blätter*, contained articles on Mennonite history from the Reformation period onwards. A number of historical monographs on early Mennonite history, some written by Mennonites, were now available to Mennonites in Russia. For most Mennonites, however, it was the increased communication with fellow religious brethren outside Russia, mostly Mennonite, which gave them a broader sense of being Mennonite and of belonging to a wider community. Besides the long established links with Prussian groups (links which had cooled somewhat when the Prussian congregations abandoned the principle of non-resistance), Russian Mennonites were also in contact with other German Mennonite groups, Dutch Mennonites (especially with regard to mission work in the Dutch East Indies) and, perhaps closest of all for many Mennonites in 1889, with the groups in North America and Russia existed by the 1880s, and individuals visited each other in both countries. Some of the letters received from

Russia appeared regularly in the American Mennonite newspapers, especially the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. Russian Mennonites subscribed to many of the American papers; the *Rundschau* for instance had almost 400 listed subscribers in Russia in 1885 and undoubtedly many more read the papers, borrowing copies from friends and relatives. For a period during the 1880s a special fortnightly edition of the *Rundschau* was

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The reading of non-Mennonite books and periodicals, once severely restricted if not forbidden outright, was now commonplace. The days had passed when the Bible and the few books of the tradition were the only approved texts Mennonites could own and read. Schools, especially the secondary schools, possessed libraries with 'edificatory' readings although in 1887 one teacher warned against allowing the young to read accounts of 'horrific scenes of robbery, hair-raising chronicles of murder and trashy romantic affairs.' Mennonites could buy popular books in German from book sellers in Russia and a number of stories and novels by German, Russian, and other authors were serialized in the *Odessaer Zeitung*. But Mennonites still showed a fondness for religious literature and purchased many religious texts, especially the sermon collections of German and English evangelical preachers. Again little opposition was placed in the way of Mennonites owning or reading such works, indeed many ministers encouraged the practice. In the same spirit individuals were also free to study at seminaries and mission houses of non-Mennonite religious bodies. Mennonites now accepted not only other Mennonites but also other Christian groups as 'Christian,' although they preferred contacts with various evangelical and non-conformist groups to the established denominations of western Europe. Mennonites now saw themselves as belonging to a broader community of Christian peoples, witnessing to the world, standing fast against reactionary forces and the tide of irreligion. Like other groups they were engaged in saving the souls of the heathen in distant lands. Mission festivals were now regular occurrences and the reports of Russian Mennonite missionaries in India and the Dutch East Indies were read eagerly; not a murmur of disapproval was heard in Mennonite congregations concerning such activities.

The widening of Mennonite religious horizons and closer links with other Christian groups was reflected in changes to congregational activities. It was no accident that nearly all the ministers who spoke on the occasion of the centennial in Khortitza were, or had once been, school teachers and were called 'preachers' (*Prediger*) rather than 'minister-teachers' (*Lehrer*) as in the old days. Although the tradition of electing farmers to the ministry continued for many years, the number of educated, theologically sophisticated 'preachers' steadily in-

creased. Ministers no longer read the sermons of their forefathers, written in an archaic language and lovingly handed down from generation to generation, but preached freely in elegant High German imitating the sermons of western European evangelicals whose sermons they would occasionally read in place of their own. But while the Mennonite 'clergy' may have become more professional, preachers continued to be unpaid, lay people, in spite of the onerous duties they were called upon to perform in their congregations and in wider community affairs.

The change in the ministry and in the style of preaching was not the only innovation in forms of worship. The teaching of singing in schools and the influence of Franz's *Choral Book* began to have an impact on the quality of music in religious services. Although the use of musical instruments was still not allowed during services, choirs began to replace the old lead-singers. For the centennial celebrations in Khortitza the Men's Choral Society sang at both religious services and provided a stirring rendition of the Russian anthem *Slavica* afterwards. In a society where the creative and performing arts were still restricted, music, both religious and secular, became the major focus of artistic endeavour and received widespread community approval. Choir groups flourished along with the study of music. And although the baptism of adults was still strictly adhered to, children were increasingly involved in the religious life of the community. Teachers encouraged the circulation of children's religious literature and in 1881 the religious leaders discussed the possibility of introducing Sunday Schools. Such concerns would have been unthinkable just 50 years earlier. **Concluded next month**

## YOUR WORD

### TOO COMMERCIAL

As a regular reader of the Mennonite Mirror I would like to express my disappointment at the nature of the article, "With Jake Klassen, quality is built in", in your December issue. I, as well as a number of people I spoke to, found the article to sound like an advertisement for the Kitchen Gallery. I have no problem accepting the quality of the Kitchen Gallery product, but there is a time and a place for discussing kitchens, as opposed to presenting the life story of a member of the Mennonite community.

Darryl Barg,  
Winnipeg

## 1988 Departures

### Palm Springs Holiday

An ideal place to escape the prairie winter winds with two weeks at the Palm Springs Golf and Tennis Club.

February 20

### Lisbon/Madiera

Dr. David Riesen is taking his fourth tour to Portugal because Lisbon and Madiera are such incredibly beautiful places to visit. There's a lot to see, a lot to do, and it's not too expensive to stay in a five star hotel.

March 27 to April 1.

### Caribbean Cruise

Here's another chance to sail the blue waters of the warm Caribbean. A real "school break" that leaves.

March 25.

### Middle East: Holy Land

Four nights in Cairo, Egypt, followed by six nights in Jerusalem, Israel, and ample time to tour sites of historical and Christian significance. Henry Visch, host.

April 30.

### Australia and Expo '88

A month-long excursion "down under" to Sydney, Melbourne, Alice Springs, Ayers Rock, and Brisbane with its Expo '88. New Zealand cities of Auckland, Queenstown, Christchurch and others are also included. Bernie Wiebe, host.

July 10

### Soviet Union

Leningrad, Moscow, Karaganda, Alma Ata, Frunze, Zaporozhe, Amsterdam. Menno Wiebe, host.

July 11th to August 1st.

### Poland and Soviet Union

From Warsaw and Gdansk in Poland, to Moscow, Karaganda, Alma Ata, Frunze, Kiev, Zaporozhie, and Leningrad, in the Soviet Union. Lawrence Klippenstein, host.

May 11.

### Europe — Church History

Rome, Florence, Venice, Innsbruck, Zurich, Worms, Cologne, Pinguim, Witmarsum, Amsterdam, Hamburg, with special emphasis on Mennonite historical sites. George Epp, host.

July 6

### Japan, China, Hong Kong

Tokyo and Kyoto, in Japan, Shanghai, Suzhou, Beijing, Ki'an, Guilin, and Guangzhou, in China, concluding with a final two days in Hong Kong. John H. Neufeld, host.

August 1

### Soviet Union

A unique tour of special interest to those with an interest in Mennonite history with tour leaders Al Reimer and James Urry.

August 4.

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# Living in the North is a state of mind

*Where things are done intensely and by choice*

by Kay Reimer

**T**he first sign of the lake freezing over is the sluggish, egg white consistency at its outer edges. A few hours later the lapping water has succumbed to the freezing temperature and a glaze of transparent ice covers all but the deepest parts of the lake. Almost in defiance the water breaks through the glaze causing great rifts. With the constant motion and refreezing, the tinkling of ice breaking, surfacing and piling layer upon layer, there is a music in the air which slowly fades, then dies away to be stilled for many months. Winter has subdued the elements. Stillness reigns — for a short time — until the ice is thick enough to support man and his machine.

Peaceful. An apt word to describe the setting I live in at Rocky Lake, Manitoba, thirty miles north of The Pas and about 430 miles north of Winnipeg. However, any lake setting, especially this time of year, can and would be thought peaceful and serene, as well as all the other adjectives depicting nature's winter scenes.

To live in the north means more than that. I am convinced it is a state of mind. A state one arrives at unawares. It is probably happenstance that brings people to

the north but it is mostly by choice that they stay. So it was for us.

A job brought us to The Pas out of Winnipeg where my husband Henry and I spent our school years; where we met and married and had our children. I'll never forget the day he came home from an interview and said 'How would you like to live in The Pas?' And I retorted 'What's that?'

The north is remote, distant, and cold; until you live there. One man upon hearing we were moving to The Pas warned me not to stay longer than five years. When I asked him why, he replied that the slow pace of northern living makes it difficult to adjust and cope with the fast pace of city living again. I wasn't worried. We had no intentions of staying longer than five years, probably only two.

Now 17 years later I understand a little of what this man was trying to say. What he labelled fast and slow lifestyles, I would label choosing priorities.

The lifestyle in the north can be just as hectic and frenzied as that of the south; the people are just as busy and just as involved, depending on the individual, but

everything is done on a large empty playing field rather than on a micro-dot. We are busy encompassing a large geographical area rather than avoiding contact with our next-door neighbour.

For example, the first major surprise I had after moving to The Pas in May 1970, was the exodus that took place in the middle of June. People with perfectly good homes packed up the car, their pets and kids, and moved 15 miles north to their summer cottages on Clearwater Lake, one of the clearest lakes in the world. Living 15 minutes away from the lakeshore is not enough when you can live right on it.

This is part of the northern attitude. Things are done intensely by choice, not necessity. Because the lake is so close, why stay in town for the grandest time of year? A cottage is the only answer, and entertaining friends and relatives from southern cities, the less privileged, is the activity of the summer.

Eventually we too were caught up into this way of thinking and now we live on the shore of Rocky Lake; not as clear as Clearwater, but clear enough, full of fish

(Henry caught two master anglers last winter), and more remote. We went one better. We became year-round residents.

There are about 25 year-round residents on our shore. In many cases both partners go to jobs in town leaving all this space to me. It is a fantastic feeling of remoteness, isolation, and individuality. One needs to come to terms with oneself to spend so much time alone. I take the necessary precautions, skiing on the open lake rather than the bush trails, the premise being that I'll be spotted much sooner in the open should something untoward happen.

For the same reason I walk the lake road or shoreline on my daily walks. One day last summer my friend and I had just done the routine jaunt from one end of the lake road to the other when she turned and whispered 'There's a bear.' Sure enough not 15 yards away sat a full-grown black bear. We had walked right by him without seeing him, but he was watching us. Quite loudly I said 'Speak loudly, don't run, but walk as fast as you can.'

There are quite a few bears in the area, some making a nuisance of themselves getting into trailers or garages looking for food or garbage, but to this day no one has been hurt.

We have thinned out the trees on our lot for a better view of the lake but on the whole we've left it natural. I have taken quite a delight in finding and identifying the various wild flowers that grow in profusion in our area. There are at least 40 species right in our yard from spring to fall.

The birds too are more numerous now that the trees are thinned out. How delighted we were last spring when a bald eagle came to share the fishermen's leftovers that were showing all over the ice in the spring thaw. We were amused to see this huge predator patiently waiting for the crows and ravens (Thompson turkeys) to finish their repast before he would hop-skittle towards them and take the leftovers. He always tried to fly his meal a few paces away as though not wishing to be caught in another's feeding area.

After about 10 days of watching this magnificent bird feeding in front of our house (Henry would deliberately leave jackfish and marlins out to lure him back) we were overwhelmed when not one but two eagles appeared one day. It was easily apparent that the newcomer was the female of the species. She flew right up to the ever-present crows and ravens as if to say 'Here I am — what are you going to do about it?' There was a lot of

shrieking and flapping of black wings but the smaller birds gave in to the eagle and moved to remoter areas leaving the major meal to her.

The funny thing was that the male as usual sat four or five feet away and waited his turn. Only after the female had had her fill did he venture forth with that half hop — half sideways shuffle and attend to the leftovers. While he was feeding she sat aloof a few feet away without glancing in his direction, as if to say 'I'm ready, let's go.'

We never saw them again. I couldn't help but wonder if his offer of a free meal hadn't been disdained and belittled to the point where it was forever spoiled for him as well.

Distances for us in the north become not a barrier but a means of connections. In our case connections to far-away friends and family — mostly in Winnipeg. For youngsters in the north a university education means leaving home after high school. All three of ours are now Winnipeg residents and we make the 800-plus mile round trip six or seven times a year and think nothing of it, just as we thought nothing of driving to Flin Flon (100 miles north of The Pas) every three weeks to the orthodontist for teeth straightening, during that period in our family life.

A few weeks ago a friend offered her services when I was without a vehicle. She and her husband were willing to drive 30 miles out of their way twice to take me to town. When I protested she said 'We are going anyway.'

The youngsters around here have grown up with this attitude. When friends of our daughter's from Flin Flon dropped in for a visit, it was decided that they would all attend a function in The Pas. The young people from Flin Flon found it no trouble at all to go back home to change. The proper attire was worth the trip to them.

Now the distance between our house and Flin Flon (60 miles) connects Henry to his job and he drives it twice a day, five days a week. My nearest corner store is 10 miles away. Needless to say I try to maintain my staple of foodstuffs when shopping in The Pas.

Of course some might feel that being so far away from a major centre is a disadvantage. In speaking to a five-year resident of Flin Flon recently she voiced her concern of the disadvantages to her daughters living their teen years in the north. Again it is a matter of priorities, but I feel that any disadvantages there might have been for our own daughters have been amply made up by advantages their

southern cousins did not have. Our girls have had private music lessons, played in high school bands and dramas, have taken French at school and German through correspondence. They had opportunities to participate in figure skating, dancing, sports, choirs, young peoples, community organizations and church functions. All taught Sunday school and took the opportunities available for travel. Two of our daughters were accepted as exchange students, and we in turn housed numerous visitors from around the globe, from members of the Munich boys choir to exchange students from the Maritimes.

The atlas reveals The Pas to be almost in the exact center of Canada — not in the north at all. But because the majority of the Manitoba population is found south of the 50th parallel, we feel and act as northerners.

How do northerners feel? Certainly not as second-class citizens. We are proud of who we are. Our uniqueness lies not in what we lack but in what we have in abundance — fresh clean air, clear lakes, natural settings for the wild-life that still abounds, and space. Space for the individual and for the group and also for the visitors; the tourists who flock north every year.

These are our assets, unique to every region whether it be farmlands, forest, fish or mines. This is what gives us identity and gives us the pride to stand up and be counted even in our minority.

Truly, living in the north is a state of mind. mm

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## Dyck's term ends as "chief" physician

Dr. Jacob Dyck completed his one year term as president of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) this past August. Dr. Jake, as most of us know him, has been practicing medicine in Winnipeg since 1960. He is a graduate of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine in 1955. Alice, his wife, is a registered nurse.

As members at Bethel Mennonite Church, both Jake and Alice have been actively involved in various ways in giving leadership to the church. So it was of interest to many when Dr. Jake became president of CMA in August 1986. The following report was written after an interview concerning his experiences in this position.

When asked what qualified him to become president of such a prestigious organization, Jake referred to his previous four years of experience on this federal body. He had served three years on CMA's council on health care and one year on the board of directors as president-elect. But it also helps to have people who know you and speak for you when the elections come, Jake explained. "I am also one who is politically inclined, and always have been," Jake adds as he admits that this really helps.

How does a Mennonite doctor with a rural background feel being at the head of CMA? To this question Jake answers that he enjoyed it and never felt out of place. Giving leadership was not new to him, having been youth leader at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon and at university. All this had helped him gain confidence in himself and work with others.

But Dr. Jake admits his real experience with the world, other than church and university, came when he served for 14 months in the Canadian Armed Forces as a Conscientious Objector during World War II. "It was here that I learned not to fear taking a stand in groups or in public." He adds that as president of CMA he followed the same policy, declaring himself openly as a Christian and as member of the Mennonite church. This meant holding positions that were unpopular at times when it came to many issues facing the medical profession.

During the time of this campaign for president it was well known that he was of Mennonite persuasion and always respected for it. He testified to his belief in adult baptism and pacifism freely and at his request a prayer was spoken at his inauguration ceremony. The present president of CMA, Dr. Athol Roberts, of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, who is a Baptist, spoke the prayer.

For Jake Dyck, the presidency of CMA meant being away from his practice for 110 days in one year. As a doctor in a medical group or partnership it required the understanding and help of his partners. It also meant that during that year he simply worked harder. Alice accompanied him on his travels to various provincial conventions and other meetings. They enjoyed this time together and learning to know many new people.

In terms of "what is there in it for you?" or "why would you want to do such a strenuous task?," Dr. Jake points to the making of new friends across the country

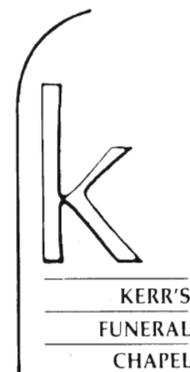
and abroad as the most rewarding. "This is a long-term benefit" he says, "in many settings we could not identify totally with all doctors and associates, but we always found those with whom we were akin in faith and purpose. Worshipping with acquaintances in the various denominations on Sundays proved very enjoyable. Once again, we found people most respectful of our Anabaptist convictions and faith."

Were there any particular challenges or problems which he encountered as president? Jake observed that his year was a relatively quiet one in terms of controversy. Also much of the actual work for CMA is done through the three councils: health care, economics, and education. In his executive role Jake says he was more involved in co-ordination of resolutions for the annual meeting and the like. No difficult problems were encountered here.

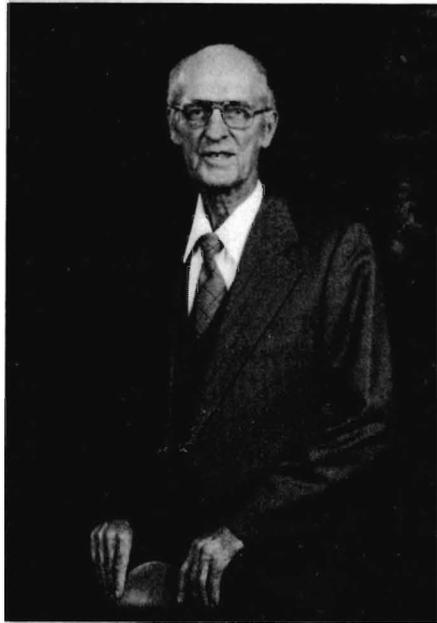
Dr. Jake claims that doctors are very tolerant people and while they represent a wide range of opinions and convictions on many morally controversial issues of our day, doctors are very accepting and respectful of each other. This makes the work of CMA and its executive possible and enjoyable.

— by Jake Pauls

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*P. J. B. Reimer*

## A tribute to P. J. B. Reimer

by Roy Vogt

**T**he news came as a tremendous shock. A telephone message from the children of P. J. B. Reimer, Guy and Nita Hogue, who live in Hawaii, to our Honolulu apartment: "Father passed away Monday night, January 11th."

What made the message especially shocking was the fact that we had spoken briefly with Mr. Reimer several times on the trip to Hawaii less than a week earlier. We had hoped to visit with the family during our stay here. Now that opportunity is gone. But with it come many thoughts. He himself evoked some of these during our plane trip. He paid tribute to my late mother and mentioned that he had enjoyed working with her (they were cousins) and with my father in a grocery store in Steinbach in the 1920s. She had left the *Kleine Gemeinde* upon marriage, but he had remained in that church and had tried to serve it all his days.

He mentioned several disappointments in his church work. He was often considered too liberal or modern and therefore didn't always enjoy the confidence of the members. He was aware of that. However, he had learned to accept this and was glad now that he had stayed the course. "I love my *Kleine Gemeinde* very much," were, I believe, his last words to us. After he returned to his seat, the man next to me leaned over and whispered,

"That old gentleman must be well educated; he speaks so well."

That evoked other memories. P. J. B. Reimer was, above everything else, a teacher, and he was my teacher too, in Grade VII. He was not the kind of teacher with whom you become friends, but his knowledge and interest in the subjects he taught gained our respect. Above all I remember his respect for language. He himself used words carefully and he expected us, in our oral and written performances (of which there were many in those days) to do likewise. This sometimes had humorous consequences. For example, he made it a goal during our school year to begin each day with a lengthy reading from the Old Testament. I believe he wanted to read most or all of it during the year (I can't remember which, but he stuck to a very rigid schedule). As we got into the Books of Kings during the course of that winter some of us who occasionally read ahead, or had more of a prurient interest in such things than we should have had, wondered whether he would omit certain words and scenes which were considered shocking in those days. We waited with anticipation. However, when Mr. Reimer came to such places he would pause briefly, and explain that in a book like this everything must be read in order to understand the writer. He would then boldly read the passage, ignoring

our snickering. I am sure that he did this partly out of a literal devotion to the Bible, but partly also out of a more general respect for the integrity of what people write. Certainly he wasn't about to be cowed by us.

He was stern—as almost all teachers were those days—but never devoid of humour or of practical human understanding. When I surprised him with a good performance in a math test he commented out loud, "Well, now when you serve me in your store I can at least rely on you to give me the right change." He knew what mathematics was for.

He did very much for his community, serving on numerous boards and societies and contributing financially as well. In the last decade and more he was especially devoted to the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, and he was deservedly honoured for his work at a special fund-raising dinner a few years ago. He and his wife were mainly responsible for the location and restoration of a pioneer school on the museum grounds.

Our communities do not grow by accident. They are the result of men like Mr. P. J. B. Reimer (and women), who work tirelessly to promote what is worthwhile and lasting in them. His voice is now stilled, but we do well to remember him and to honour him. **mm**

# Canadians find teaching English in China hard but rewarding

It's hard to believe this was a Christmas letter, for the flowers are blooming, the trees are green and this morning I saw a bird much like our oriole. We are told the birds are migrating and just passing through. After the tropical heat that greeted us on arrival, we've had about six weeks of pleasant weather, but now winter is approaching and we've received dire warnings. We've already had a number of days when the north wind has had a sharp bite. This with steady rain, has a bone chilling effect. So far we're into longjohns, undershirt, two pairs of socks, three sweaters and a jacket — unless the rain stops and the sun shines, then we peel off a sweater or two.

All the buildings on the campus face north/south which, I suppose, is intended to catch cool summer breezes (there weren't any) but the many rows of windows catch cold north winds in winter. The other day the window repair man decided this was the day to repair that particular room and the fact that a class was in progress didn't phase him or me. Occasionally he stopped to listen while I also watched with interest how he "mended" the window panes. He cut out the ragged section, making the break straight, and then fit another piece of glass against it. The buildings are all cement, drab and gray with doors and windows fitting where they happen to touch. Ceilings are high with poor lighting which may be partly responsible for the many students who either wear glasses or should. There are spectacle stores downtown where you can buy yourself a pair and students will lend each other glasses as though they were pencils. On dull rainy days I would like to put on the lights, but the electricity is turned off to save energy.

We are quite at home in our rural surroundings, and, for the most part, happy to be out of the city. Behind us is a row of low mountains or high hills, and from our window we see trees and a pond where we can watch peasants doing laundry, water-buffalo slumbering and, in summer, students swimming.

Our apartment is quite roomy and identical to the others allocated to married teachers. On arriving, we were asked

repeatedly if there was anything we needed, so we asked for a functioning typewriter and a small desk for it. I described it, I thought "so high" — just a board on legs. Two months later the *Weiban* (External Affairs) told us excitedly that our desks were here — and they brought in three new desks (we already had two) one of which was a typing desk. He was so pleased with the correct height that I didn't have the heart to point out that the central drawer, with reinforcement, is so low that it is impossible to put your legs under the desk. Someone else pointed it out to him but he said it would have to be presented to the provincial external affairs department, and he looked grave. Oh well, the surfaces are useful, and they make the living room more liveable which, prior to this, contained only a very small table and a fridge. We would dearly love to exchange two desks for some kind of sofa or easy chair, but we won't say anything because they mean so well. So now we have two

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*There is a lot of basic goodness here, and in some ways, life is "safer."*

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desks in the study, two in the living room and one in a somewhat crowded bedroom. In the meantime we have been told there is no money for a new typewriter and the one that was here has collapsed completely, so we can stop worrying about the typing desk.

When we first arrived we asked to eat in the student dining room for a while, but we were told that would not be possible, rather our food would be brought to our apartment the first week, after which we would do our own cooking. The dining room has no eating facilities, nor is there any way of keeping food warm while it is being served. Students came to class in the mornings with their enameled dishes which they take to the dining room to be filled at noon. You see them eating while they walk, or, when it's cold, sitting on the

bunks in their dormitory. One single faculty member complained to me of constant stomach pain from eating only cold food.

After watching the set-up, we're grateful for our kitchen and two-burner gas stove. We shop at the kitchen for vegetables that are in season, and pork, of which we use about one kilogram a week, and shop for the remaining necessities in Nanchang on Saturdays. I've watched the butchers here cut up a pig — nose, ears, hide, everything is chopped fine and put into a pot. It's not that people have poorly developed taste buds, but rather that food and resources generally are in short supply. According to official reports, no one is starving in China, but people are poor and nothing is wasted. People here would be appalled at what goes into our garbage cans at home. Fruit is plentiful at the market with supplies of bananas, apples, pears and, lately, mandarin oranges and persimmons. External affairs has also made provision that every foreign teaching couple gets 450 gr of powdered milk every two weeks, which is much appreciated. We do our own laundry with a little machine that is great for socks and tea towels but it stops dead on a bath towel or sheet. However, when we compare our situation with the peasants at the pond or students at outside wash boards, we're grateful. We have only cold water, but it is soft and with some "elbow grease" we manage.

Accommodation is a problem at the college and by what we read, in all of China. Four to eight students share a room where they often sit on their bunk beds to study rather than go to a classroom in the evening. Many workers here, including secretaries, sleep in their offices. The typewriter sits between the beds, the duplicating machine (an inked roller) is at the foot of the beds. There is no closet or table. They, like the students, get their meals from the dining room, use a public scrub board for laundry, and use the public washroom. They have paper across their windows and if the door is closed any time during the day you had better knock and wait because they may be having a nap.

The first few weeks here we weren't able to find a church but there is one, and only one, in Nanchang which we have been attending regularly for some time. Service begins at 8 a.m. but it is wise to be there at 7:30, though even then the church is already filled. The building holds about 500 including aisles and people standing at the back, with another 100 to 200 hundred straining at the open windows and sitting outside listening to loudspeakers on either side of the church. In October they had baptismal services when more than 200 joined the church. They took two Sundays for this, the candidates had to line up outside because there wasn't room inside; and they practiced sprinkling or immersion, depending on the wishes of the individual. All of them had completed a full year's instruction in Bible and Christian life. Evidently a large instruction class is in progress again. The church also has a service at 2 p.m. on Sundays and a Bible study during the week. Pastor Tsai, the leading minister, is 87 years old, but tall and vigorous with some knowledge of English. He had surgery this past summer but has recovered enough to be able to continue his par-

ticipation in provincial tennis competitions. There are several assistant pastors who preach and one who leads the singing. The same bench is always reserved for us, and with us sits Mr. Niu who speaks a good English. He told us "the singing here is terrible but we sing so good in our hearts." They usually sing only two songs each Sunday but repeat them several times for practice. My mentor translates the words into Putonghua (phonetic Chinese) for us, and since most of them are old familiar Gospel songs, we can soon join in.

George and I have each been assigned a "teacher" from the English department to serve as our "mentor." In addition, a young lady from external affairs looks after our physical needs which is mostly helping us with shopping. Both of them have also come to church to help us translate. One appeared to lose interest a bit, but is still attentive because the other day she asked George the following: "they said in church if we are bad and we ask Jesus to make us well, he will do it. Is that true?" The other one, a teacher, is taking a keen interest. She has borrowed one of our Bibles and asked to keep it longer

because she hasn't finished reading it yet! We wish we had more wisdom to answer her questions. However, we've introduced her to the young youth leader, a graduate of Nanchang seminary, and they have made tentative plans to get together. Several times in class a student has asked if we are Christians. I always say, yes, of course, "but why do you ask?" Each time it has been a grandparent who has seen us in church. One of the student's grandfather is a "church worker" who visits house churches but is also part of the pastoral team.

Evidently the government has a policy of returning the church buildings that were confiscated during the cultural revolution (1966-1976) back to congregations as they are needed. We have been told that Nanchang is hoping for another building soon so that they can renovate it during the winter and have it ready for spring. One Sunday the driver was two hours late picking us up so we visited with a number of people. One woman, a chemical engineer with good English, had come 20 kilometers by public bus. Because of the distance and her shift-work, she can seldom come, but she is a

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member of a church committee and regularly has a group of her co-workers meet in her home for Bible study. She told us that most church members here were peasants and that "intellectuals," remembering the upheavals of the cultural revolution, are afraid to jeopardize their safety by becoming involved with Christianity.

We are working hard. We are assigned 14 teaching hours per week, but because we do our own housekeeping, George kindly took one of my two-hour classes. We both must write our own course material, so a lot of preparation is needed. We have an office where we spend two hours every afternoon helping students when we are not teaching. Many avail themselves of this help. Now we are asked to add a course for teachers (two hours per week for each of us). Since all Chinese teachers teach a maximum of six hours per week and never help students after hours, no wonder we've been told that we do the work of three or four Chinese each. What they fail to realize is that it doesn't come without effort. The students, too, have an unrealistic attitude. Friday afternoon, during sports day we were approached by the editor of the college paper to write a 1,000 word essay comparing English, Canadian, American and Chinese education systems and could it be ready the following afternoon? George gave her a report he had written of an outing we had several weeks ago, and I think they were happy with that.

But one can't fault them. They have been taught to memorize and they are good at that, but they have little incentive to question or think. After reading a story or essay they readily answer questions of "what, when, where" but are puzzled by "why." They are kind, good natured, and very idealistic though somewhat naive.

They love stories about heroism, unselfishness and kindness. There is a lot of basic goodness here, and in some ways, life is "safer." One young female teacher likes to spend her evenings studying in the language lab which is on the fourth floor of a usually dark building at the far end of the campus. I asked her if she wasn't afraid, to which she replied with complete innocence "afraid of what?" and it was I who felt foolish for asking a silly question. **mm**

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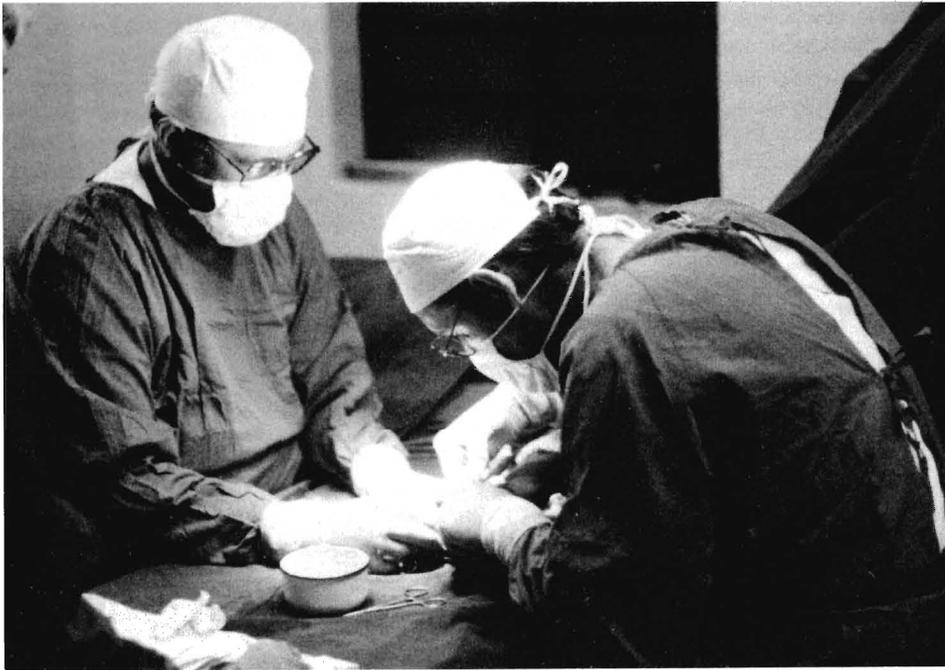
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*Dr. Frank Duerksen and Dr. Alwin Stahl operating at Kilometer 81.*

## Leprosy and Mennonites: A surgeon sees both in South America

by Helmut Huebert

**M**y Varig flight was approaching the Sao Paulo airport and from my window I could see the city disappearing into the horizon in every direction. I was glad arrangements were made to pick me up at the terminal — fighting traffic in a city of 15 million people is not the best way to establish first impressions of South America.

Dr. Frank Duerksen, a Winnipeg orthopaedic surgeon, met me as planned. He travels to South America three times a year for leprosy training programs and surgery — both in Brazil and Paraguay. He and another surgeon picked me up for the 350 kilometer drive to Bauru, which is one of Brazil's primary leprosy training centres. On the way we stopped for a typical South American meal — salad and vegetables, and as much barbecued meat as you could hold!

I arrived in time for the last week of a two-week training program. The 24 participants included plastic surgeons, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and community health workers from South America and Africa. There were lectures, demonstrations, discussions, and operations in a tightly packed schedule. Dr. Duerksen and Dr. Marcos Virmond, a plastic surgeon from Porto Alegre, were the principal lecturers. Because I understand so little Portuguese, it helped that

many of the illustrative slides were in English.

There are likely at least 500,000 people in Brazil who have leprosy (more politely referred to as Hansen's disease — this name does not carry all the stigmata of "leprosy"). Officially government hospitals and doctors treat them all, but in matter of fact the pay is so poor that few doctors are interested in giving these

patients the kind of medical attention they need. Therefore missions such as the American Leprosy Mission provide much of the initiative for active treatment. Besides its many training programs, the hospital in Bauru also treats patients and does research. Armadillos are used for this research since they are the only animal which contracts Hansen's disease in much the same way as humans. Surgery for Hansen's disease includes freeing affected nerves, tendon transfers particularly in the hands, repair of nose defects (which are absolutely typical and therefore a stigma of Hansen's disease), and foot repair operations to fuse the joints in a more acceptable position.

From Bauru I went on to Asuncion, capital of Paraguay. It is an ancient city (founded in 1537), a historic city (originally the centre from which the Spaniards explored the surrounding area), a curious blend of the modern (tall office buildings) and third world (outdoor markets and shoe repair shops), and surprisingly an ocean seaport (via the Parana and Paraguay rivers).

There are about 625 Mennonites now living in Asuncion. The Mennonite Brethren and General Conference share a beautiful new church in the "Mennonite complex" which also houses a German primary and high school, a playground



*The magnificent Iguazu Falls.*

and a gymnasium. Across town are a Mennonite-run Spanish primary and high school, a Bible school, and recording studios. "Mennoheim" in downtown Asuncion serves as a home away from home for the colony people doing business in the big city. It is also the ubiquitous Box 166 where many Mennonites pick up their mail. The beds are clean and the food is good — and you can meet people from everywhere in the pleasant courtyard. Gerhard Ratzlaff, Bible school teacher, archivist and now also moderator of the MB conference kindly showed me many of these facilities.

Just off a spanking new highway, 81 kilometers east of Asuncion, is a hospital run by the Mennonite colonies not inappropriately named "Kilometer 81." General medical and surgical patients (a maximum of 60 per doctor per day) as well as patients with Hansen's disease are treated. They arrive by all imaginable means — from bus to oxcart. The hospital is in charge of follow-up and public health for Hansen's disease in a large section of east Paraguay. Obviously, the hospital is well respected because the health department of the government has assigned it an even larger area.

Together with Dr. Alwin Stahl, one of the permanent staff at Kilometer 81, we toured the hospital and reviewed some problem cases. Signs on the walls dramatically illustrated the measures that patients with Hansen's disease must take to prevent injury to their insensitive hands and feet. A cartoon reminds them to prevent burns of their hands when they cook meals, while another shows the damage an unexpected nail can do to the sole of their feet. An excellent shoe shop makes shoes to fit any foot, no matter how grotesque the deformity.

Dr. Duerksen conducted an orthopedic and plastic surgery out-patient clinic — which to me demonstrated the great need the hospital is meeting. We saw 12-15 kids with hare lip and cleft palate deformities. There were also 12-15 children and adults with club feet (young children are easily treatable with casts, but adults need quite difficult corrective surgery), a number had severe deforming burns, and others had a wide variety of other deforming conditions. The next day and a half were devoted to surgery — correcting many of the deformities. Even at Kilometer 81 there is a waiting list, and some of the patients we saw as out-patients will not have their operations until well into 1988.

On our return to Asuncion Dr. Duerksen and Dr. Virmond conducted a symposium on conditions and surgery of the hand under the auspices of Professor

Segovia at the University of Asuncion. I found I didn't understand Spanish any better than Portuguese — but the English slides again helped. When Professor Segovia heard of my special interest in bone tumors he arranged for me to lecture at a new cancer treatment hospital 30 kilometers outside of Asuncion. A translator was provided, although a fair number of the doctors know a little English.

It would be neglect of an inexcusable degree to go to Paraguay and not visit the Chaco. About half of the 22,500 Mennonites of Paraguay live in the three Chaco colonies — Fernheim, Menno, and Neuland. The long Paraguay River bridge is in working order, and the Trans Chaco Highway is paved almost the whole way, so the horror stories of being mired in mud for days on the way are now history. The 470 km drive was most delightful — the bird life, especially in the southern swampy areas, is enough to make an ornithologist drool.

Life in the colonies has certainly improved over the years. While there are still problems, the colonists are facing the future with enthusiasm, vim and vigour. The Trans Chaco Highway allows easy access to wider markets; the Menno Colony has 22 truck units to haul supplies in and out. A chain of microwave towers now connects Filadelfia with Asuncion, and they are in the process of connecting this to the internal telephone system. Hoffnungsheim is a beautifully laid out and well operated psychiatric facility with both in-patient and out-patient services, staffed by a psychiatrist and psychologist. The creamery in Loma Plata is a marvel, producing a one litre carton of milk per second — 47,000 per working day! Radio station ZP-30 in Filadelfia broadcasts the news, but also a fair number of outreach programs. A bookstore, office for the *Mennoblat*, and the Fernheim archives are in a nice new building. When I asked what I could buy at the co-operative I was told "anything from vegetables to tractors." That was an understatement. The co-operatives are the economic nerve centres of the colonies — and perhaps the reason for the prosperity which the Mennonite colonists have fashioned (with some outside help) from the severe conditions of the Chaco.

Being a surgeon, I of course visited the hospitals in Filadelfia, Loma Plata, and Neu-Halbstadt. Dr. Hans Epp kindly arranged a meeting of the Central Chaco Medical Association where I expounded on another of my hobby horses — total hip replacements. For supper we had pizza and ice-cream. A pizzeria has just opened in Filadelfia, and according to my taste it

should do very well.

The Chaco is not only birds, buildings and weather — it is people. The Hans Epps were my delightful hosts in Filadelfia, and Dr. Wilhelm Kaethler and Dr. Abraham Toews showed me around areas of the colonies. Such hospitality made my time more meaningful.

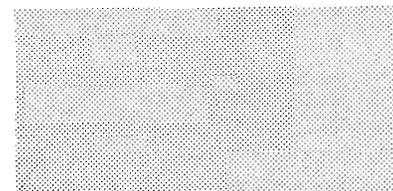
South America's most famous tourist attraction certainly lives up to its reputation. The Iguazu Falls are nothing short of spectacular. The two kilometer walk along the falls was awe-inspiring. They were a suitable inclusion to a very action-packed and interesting three-week trip to South America.

*A South American Medical Fund has been established at the Portage Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church to provide funds for special projects. Current proposals are to purchase needle drivers for Kilometer 81, a projector for Bauru, and a pair of loops (magnifying glasses) for the plastic surgeon Dr. Marcos Virmond, who is active in the leprosy program. Anyone interested may donate toward this fund and will receive donation receipts.*

*Helmut Huebert is a Winnipeg physician and surgeon who has maintained a career interest in medical missions.*

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THE SECOND

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**Judy Siebert, piano      Rose Vanderhooft, soprano**

**The University Singers, Henry Engbrecht, conductor**

**Peter Wiens, baritone      Irma Epp, as MC**

**Ticket price: \$10**

**Tickets may be purchased at:** Fehrway Tours, Crosstown Credit Union, The Fellowship Book Stores, Assiniboine Travel, Friesen's Book Store, and Derksen Printers.

*This is a fund-raising event for the Mennonite Literary Society, Inc.,  
207-1317A Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 0V3, telephone  
786-2289.*

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# POET'S WORD

— John Weier

*John Weier is a Winnipeg poet who is interested in religion, religious history, and crafting acoustic instruments.*

## this birthright

when i was born, father was a blacksmith. every day he worked at the anvil, the bellows. passing his hands through the flames, hair on his arms barely singed. he didn't fear the fire. he would heat, hammer, heat again. he was shaping iron.

•

in russia, when father was young, he was told to prepare for the trip to canada. the voyage, by sea, would be long and difficult. hard on a boy's stomach. there was a swing hanging from the willow tree. the best thing he could do they said, was to spend as much time swinging as possible. he did. and wasn't seasick once.

•

driving from winnipeg to regina. it is raining, raining. i think of my father and the farm. dad, where are you? we left early this morning hoping to catch you.

•

after the movie, the car takes us down higgins past the old canadian pacific station. if dad was here, he would tell us that this was where he last saw his father. that was in 1943 when grandfather moved to ontario. we drive past acklands where dad used to buy supplies for blacksmithing. then, up streets, across bridges, and past the st. boniface hospital where my children were born.

•

father, at seventy six, wakes every morning in ontario. eats his breakfast. then walks from one end of the village in russia to the other. past the janzens, the wiebes, the driedgers. sits on his father's lap, tugging at his mustache. rides vangka down the street for the first time, sliding into the mud just as the big horse turns up the lane. watches the peasants singing and dancing round the fire after the threshing is done on his father's farm. goes off to school with his friends nick and isbrandt. they are laughing. those were the best years of his life.

•

he used to keep a bag of peanuts on the hot air-duct in our basement when i was a child. they were his. still, he always looked a little awkward when we found him there with his hand in the bag, as though he wished he hadn't been caught.

father and i have hardly spoken since mother died and i gave up my marriage.

did you know? the peanut is a brazilian herb, a member of the pea family. it has yellow flowers.

•

out driving this morning, i see swallows. tanned bellies, dark back and wings shining in the sun. pocket nests perched against concrete.

years ago, on the russian steppes, the swallows lived in grandfather's barn. my father, still a boy, waited for them in spring. the first swallow meant he could leave his shoes behind for summer, let his toes wallow in the dust. he watched them gather mud to build their nests. saw the hungry little mouths, awkward wingbeat turn to adult flight. then, missed them, suddenly gone in fall.

our old barn in niagara had plenty of openings big enough for nesting swallows to enter. but when we built the new one, doors had to be left open all spring and summer. if the season was dry i had to carry water, make mud for their nests.

this morning, crossing the misericordia bridge, they still hover near their young, slide through air filled with chattering song. my son and daughter wonder what they're called.

•

at midday, a dark sky. the wind stops. it is raining. large drops parachute to earth. i am eleven, stand at the open door of the barn, my father beside me. we have no time, no need for work now. only the rain, watching the rain, watching it fall, large drops, straight to the earth. no wind. no time to think of danger to the crops, those thoughts have fled, hold no meaning. only the rain, my father and i, the rain smell, only watching the pleasure of the rain, father and i in our cocoon, he stands beside me, the air around us is safe and warm. rain touches the earth. it is enough.

•

today, the second time in a week i got out of the tub to smell my father. that clean saturday evening smell of thirty years ago.

•

in spring, father seventy two, washes his car, packs some clothes, sausage and bread, mother, they are going north. up there, land is cheap, you can still homestead. he is thinking of starting over.

•

dad visiting from ontario. breakfast at nick's inn. we talk and talk. there are things we can't agree on.

back at the apartment, i read him a poem about childhood and russia. when i look up there is sorrow in his face. outside i can hear jesus weeping.

in the afternoon, the morris stampede. the cows and horses of my youth. and his.

driving home, he touches my shoulder. we've had a good day. he says this may be the last time.

# OBSERVED ALONG THE WAY



by Roy Vogt

## Aloha!

• It is January and somehow I can't get used to the fact that I am sitting outside on a balcony, in T-shirt and shorts, with the sun shining warm overhead and the palm trees waving gently below me. This is not what a Manitoban ought to be experiencing in mid January. Just a few weeks ago I was walking home from the university against a bitter-cold wind. It hurt just to breathe. The very next day my wife and I were strolling comfortably down Ala Moana Boulevard in Hawaii, on the way to buy groceries for our apartment. What a difference a day makes, with the miracle of modern travel! (I use the word "miracle" sincerely, since I still marvel at the ability of fully-loaded 747s to get off the ground at all, let alone travel from Winnipeg to Hawaii — from one planet to another — in less than eight hours.)

• It feels good to leave Winnipeg on a very cold day. It adds to the joy of anticipation and to what the Germans call *Schadenfreude* (joy in the misery of others). People who travel to places like Hawaii are paying rather dearly for mainly one thing: a difference in temperature. If such a trip costs, let's say, \$2,500 and the average temperature in Winnipeg is 0 degrees and in Hawaii it is 25 degrees, the traveller is getting 25 degrees of difference. Each degree costs \$100. If, on the other hand, the average temperature in Winnipeg is -25 degrees, and in Hawaii it remains at +25 degrees, the traveller is getting 50 degrees of difference at only \$50 per degree. Judging from the weather reports, we are getting our degrees of difference quite cheaply this January.

• Unfortunately, the extreme cold in Winnipeg delays our departure for an hour. The 747 is literally stuck to the tarmac and Wardair, with great embarrassment, has to request larger moving equipment from Air Canada to get the plane to the runway. The pilot loses his cool over this, using the intercom to blast the inadequate facilities in Winnipeg. This causes some of the passengers to worry that the flight is in real trouble. It strikes me again how, even in small crises, the person in charge must remain calm above

everything else. The pilot's vocal frustration adds to the fears that many people already have when they fly. I am reminded at this moment of an incident years ago when a plane carrying a large contingent of Mennonites to a world conference in Europe developed engine trouble over the Atlantic. The pilot assured the passengers in a composed manner that they had nothing to fear, since planes can easily operate on one or two engines once they are up in the air. However, a Mennonite minister on board reportedly tried to reinforce this expression of assurance by asking everyone to sing "Nearer My God to Thee." Far from being calmed, many of the passengers, and the pilot, became extremely upset, because they remembered that this was the song which the passengers on the Titanic allegedly sang as that ill-fated ship was going down. Fortunately no one sings "Nearer My God to Thee" on this flight and we proceed to Hawaii without further incident.

• We are told that there are 456 passengers on this flight. My wife and I note with satisfaction that for a change we are among the youngest on board. The plane is crawling with Mennonites. We soon meet the Penners of Steinbach, the Derksens of Winnipeg, and the Reimers of Rosenort. Low German and Yiddish seem to be the languages spoken most frequently. Shortly before we arrive some passengers even younger than we change into shorts and Hawaiian shirts. I still can't believe that it will actually be warm enough for that, but when we disembark we can hardly wait to change into similar summer outfits. It really is warm. We pass quickly through customs but at the baggage carousel our bags are numbers 899 and 900 of the 900 bags coming down the ramp.

• We are a little worried about the place we have chosen to stay. It is an apartment suite with kitchen, combined living and dining room, a separate bedroom, and a balcony overlooking the Ala Wai canal — recommended by Arthur Frommer in one of his economy travel books, but ordered sight unseen. However, we are very pleased with it, and at \$30 per day we can't grumble. We love

the location, near several good beaches and the Hilton Hawaiian Village, where each evening we can watch the sunset while listening, free of charge, to a talented Hawaiian singer. (One afternoon at the same place we run into Burt Reynolds, Carol Burnett and Loni Anderson who are filming some kind of game show, and are, of course, happy to meet us. They all look smaller than they do in pictures.)

• Some of you may be interested in knowing how much a month's vacation for two in Hawaii actually costs. With airfare at about \$1,600, accommodation \$1,400 Cdn. (\$1,000 U.S.), and food, etc., at about \$1,000, we find it quite easy to enjoy ourselves at somewhat less than \$4,000 (in our case this was reduced by a generous Christmas gift from family members. For those who worry about such things, none of this is coming out of taxpayers' pockets). Since living costs at home, for items like food, car expenses, etc., would be almost \$1,000 for a month, the **net** cost of the trip is actually a little more than \$3,000. This may seem shockingly high to some, and surprisingly low to others. We are not splurging much, but are enjoying ourselves immensely.

• This is supposed to be a "busman's" holiday, combining work with pleasure. I am catching up with my writing and Ruth with her reading and after a few weeks we are pleased with the progress of both. We find that it helps to establish a certain routine, even here. After breakfast in our apartment and a morning at the desk (or on the balcony) we walk over to the Ala Moana shopping centre for a nutritious meal, which costs about \$3 each. We then spend an hour or more swimming and sunning at an ocean beach in a nearby park, with the rest of the afternoon devoted to work in the apartment. After a light supper here we walk to the Hilton beach for the sunset and music, and then it is back home for reading, writing, and a little T.V. (The screen is filled almost every evening with winter storms on the "mainland.") This routine is broken occasionally by a game of tennis, a movie (we have really enjoyed *Broadcast News* and are looking forward to *The Last Emperor*) and a special meal at a neighborhood restaurant. We are getting through most of

the books that we received for Christmas.

• We marvel constantly at the freedom and informality of this place. Even the most beautiful and expensive hotels permit you to enjoy many of their facilities without cost, and dress is so informal that no one notices our simple southern Manitoba outfits. On one or two occasions I have even felt I might boast that I am not the worst-dressed person in the area. Al Reimer please take note.

• One of these days we want to saunter down to Waikiki Beach, hopefully to encounter some of the people that we met on the plane. Before we return to Winnipeg we plan a one-day visit to the island of Maui, which many of our friends prefer to the island of Oahu where we are staying.

• In the meantime, we cannot get over the beauty and comfort of this place. Though clouds always hang over the mountains north of us, we have had only a few drops of rain. Temperatures vary daily from the high 60s at night to the low 80s, with no mosquitoes to bother us in the balmy evenings. The purest, sweetest pleasure of all is to float on one's back in the bouyant ocean water, admiring the skyline and thinking of the snow back home. We hope that you too have been enjoying yourselves in this new year. Aloha. mm

### TWO NEW BOOKS TELL OF PARAGUAY SETTLEMENT

Two new books about the Mennonite colony experience in Paraguay are off the press, according to reports in *Mennoblatt*, a Paraguayan Mennonite periodical published at Filadelfia, Fernheim Colony, Paraguay.

*Atlas der Menno Colony* (Atlas of Menno Colony), is a 166-page volume prepared by the school administration of Menno Colony. As its title implies, the work is a book of maps.

Included are maps of the expeditions carried out by explorers prior to the founding of the oldest Chaco colony, maps of the migration and settlement of the Chaco, and maps of the current situation. Many pages are devoted to maps of individual Menno Colony villages.

*Auf den Spuren der Vaeter* (In the Steps of the Fathers) is a 50-year history of Friesland Colony in East Paraguay, a settlement founded in 1937 by Fernheim Colony residents who felt they had no future in the Chaco.

### EUROPEANS TAKE FRESH LOOK AT 16TH CENTURY CONDEMNATIONS

At the second session of the Baptist-Lutheran Dialogue Commission, held in late 1987 at Wildbad, West Germany, the question of the Lutheran condemnations of 16th century Anabaptists was again discussed in light of Baptist-Lutheran relations today.

The problem stems from the Augsburg Confession of 1530, which is still considered a valid and authoritative document for Lutherans. In several of the confession's articles, Anabaptists and Anabaptist practices and beliefs are condemned.

Over the centuries these articles have been used against the Anabaptists and their descendants, the Mennonites, and also against Baptists. This has sometimes meant discrimination against them in predominantly Lutheran lands.

Lutheran team leader Marc Lienhard of France and Baptist consultant Wayne Pipkin of Switzerland were asked to bring a further statement on the issue to the commission in 1988.

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# The Cossack

by Melitopol

"Aiee," Tina drew in her breath quickly. Hot borscht splattered on her leg.

With arms stiff in front of her she tried to balance the small pot evenly as she hurried down the village street. Over her arm hung a cloth bag in which she carried a jar of hot coffee and half a loaf of dark bread.

This evening it was her family's turn to feed the Cossack. Each family in the village took turns providing the old man with an evening meal. It was part of his pay and part of each villager's responsibility.

The Cossack was one of the few non-Mennonites in this small village on the steppes of the Ukraine. Many years ago, as Tina's father told the story, the Cossack had appeared in the village requesting work. At that time a village guard had been needed. Since the Cossack carried a sword he had been employed for a few kopecks, food and lodging.

Not that there was that much for him to do. Occasional thievery was the worst criminal activity the village suffered. But the presence of a guard, armed with a sword, trained for battle, reassured the pacifist Mennonites that they were well protected.

That was many years ago. The Cossack had been rather spritely then. But as the years went by he became gaunt and steadily grew weaker. He still made his rounds of the village, both day and night, but in actual fact he no longer was a match for any adult, not even a young boy.

But the Cossack belonged to the village. He was like a familiar piece of furniture in a house. Useful, though almost unnoticed. No one could imagine what the village would be like without him. He was completely faithful, he never left the village, and his presence was reassuring.

For the children of the village the Cossack represented far more. He was not just a village watchman. He was their friend, their confidant, an elderly com-

panion who had time for each one of them. In his eyes each child was special and he treated them so.

It was he who took them on trips to far-off places with his many stories. They went to battles they had never heard of, to meet people they had only read about in school. The Cossack was their journeyman. With him they soared in their imaginations far from the steppes of Russia and the closed church community.

Tina kept her steady pace to the end of the village and walked through the gate of a small yard surrounding a one-room hut. To the children it was not a poor hut. It was an exotic journey into another world. When they walked up the small rocky path to the hut their village seemed far, far away.

As Tina approached the door she stamped her foot several times on the wooden step. She cleared her throat.

A grunt was audible; some noise indicated movement inside the hut. The door opened slowly and the Cossack gave a slight dignified bow to the small girl.

Tina walked in quickly and set the pot on one of the only pieces of furniture in the hut, a small low table next to a low pilgrim's cot. She took the jar of coffee and bread from her bag. She neatly arranged both beside the plate and spoon which were setting on the table.

"There," she said, "all ready for supper."

The Cossack closed the door and edged himself behind the table and sat down heavily on the cot. His bed served as the only chair in the hut.

His quick darting eyes showed an intensity far beyond the slow, pained movements of his body. He smiled at Tina. Proudly she smiled back into his friendly, worn face.

"I brought Mama's best borscht today."

The Cossack's eyes took in the sight of the young well-scrubbed girl in front of him. He had never had the fortune of

seeing any children he might have sired. His life had been a military life. He looked her over from head to toe. An audible groan escaped him, "Oh, Oh!" With another grunt he heaved his body upright again. He turned and knelt beside the cot. From under it he pulled a small chest. He opened it. Rummaging quickly through some very old clothes he finally settled on a sash from an old military uniform.

Struggling to his feet he came to Tina. Once again he fell to his knees. With trembling hands he carefully wiped the spilled borscht from her leg.

"Oh, I had quite forgotten about that."

"Such trouble an old Cossack makes for you," he muttered.

"Ho, you're no trouble. You're always helping us. Why, our village is the nicest place to live because you are here."

The Cossack smiled. He got to his feet and placed the sash beside the small brick stove. Returning to his seat on the cot behind the table he sat down with a sigh.

"Come, sit beside me for a minute Tina," he said.

"I've only a minute. Mama has borscht waiting for us as well."

"Tell her how good it is."

"You haven't even tasted it," she giggled.

The Cossack rolled back his head. He laughed silently. Though his body shook with each silent chuckle.

"You're a clever one."

He lifted the lid from the small pot. Steam rose from the dark red beet borscht.

"See," Tina said delightedly, "Mama made Russian beet borscht for you, not cabbage borscht." Her eyes sought his face eagerly for his response.

The Cossack crossed himself and looked up. "May the Lord God bless his child Mrs. Reimer," he looked at Tina and added, "and her good daughter Tina."

Tina jumped up from the cot with delight. "I knew you would like it. I

begged and begged Mama to make it for you. I told her you liked beet borscht much better than the cabbage borscht."

A slight pained look crossed the Cossack's face.

Tina went to the door. She opened it, and turning back she waved to the Cossack and then closed the door and ran down the path.

The Cossack smiled; he bowed his head and after crossing himself again he began to eat.

\*

It couldn't be. It just couldn't be true. It was late at night and she was lying in bed listening to a conversation her father was having with the village minister in the dining room. He had first come that morning with news that the Cossack was dying.

Her father, being the village *Shulze*, was in charge of village affairs. Therefore, the minister had come to discuss what should be done.

The minister had decided to visit the Cossack that morning when news had come to him that it was obvious the end was near. First he had come to the Reimer home to inform her father. It was now late in the evening and he was reporting on his visit.

He told how he had gone to the hut to see the old man. A dirty and filthy hut he called it. The old man couldn't even get up to open the door so the minister had to open it himself.

"Have you even been in that hut?" he asked her father. "I'm sure vermin is crawling all around. To think we let our blessed children bring him his food all these years. We should have been more careful."

"His hut is all pasted on the inside walls with wrappers from that evil tobacco he uses. It smells like it too. A dirty cot, an unwashed table, and he lies there on his cot in his old ragged uniform. I never knew he still had it. Stiff as a board he lies."

"But, what was awful, heaven spare him, is that he won't confess. I asked him if he was ready to meet his maker. He smiled and nodded. I asked him if he had anything he wanted to clear up before he went to his reward. He whispered, 'no.' I told him I was a minister of the Gospel and he needed Christ. He blasphemed me. He blasphemed me as a minister and said he was completely in God's care."

"Reimer, that man can't read a word. He's dumb. He's ignorant. He's a Cossack. He doesn't realize he's bound for hell. All he does is lie there like a board and grip his old sword. Reimer, that man as much as damned me and this Christian village

by his unwillingness to confess his sin and his need for Christ."

Tina stuffed her head in her pillow. Tears flowed uncontrollably. She couldn't believe her ears. God would not really send the Cossack to hell, just because he wouldn't talk to the minister. He was her friend. He was everyone's friend. He had totally dedicated himself to the people of the village for years. God would reward him, not damn him for such service.

\*

The next morning the children all walked quietly to the school in the centre of the village. Word had come early in the morning that during the night the Cossack had died.

No village funeral was being arranged. Only the deacons and the minister would bury him that morning. No one, especially not the children, was allowed to attend.

The school room was silent. The teacher routinely went through the exercises scheduled for the morning. About mid-morning the crunch of footsteps on

the loose gravel, accompanied by the noise of a small cart, signaled that the coffin was being brought to the village cemetery behind the school. Without a word, not even asking permission, the children stood up and looked out the window. The teacher decided to let this insubordination pass without a comment.

As the children watched, the deacons carried the wooden box from the funeral cart into the cemetery. Walking through the cemetery the men lifted the box over the fence at the far end. Outside the fence a hole had been dug.

Reading a few passages of scripture and saying a short prayer the minister nodded and the deacons lowered the box into the hole. He noted that the children were watching from the school windows. A word to the teacher would be in order later on in the day.

A hawk slowly circled high overhead as chunks of earth hit the top of the wooden box.

mm

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## POET'S WORD

— Elmer Suderman

### To Mennonites

Without your sacrament of pluma mose,  
your freshy zwieback incarnating Saturdays,  
your "Nun ist see erschienen" peppernuts  
a himlische sunne which became

erdishe nacht, announcing Christmas,  
my poetry would be different.  
I write about your peace on earth  
good will toward men

we both profess, but do not always practice.  
I yearn for the simplicity,  
both in my life in my poems  
which you, too, have given up.

I hear your men's choruses singing  
of our redeemer, of einen strom  
dessen herrlichen flut  
fliest wunderbar stille duresch land.

What is food or music which does not  
nourish, define, and show us  
a different way. Poetry, too, is more  
than decoration or readings for children

at Christmas programs.  
It, too, has its place.

# MANITOBA NEWS

**Jake Letkemann**, MCC Manitoba executive director since July, 1982, has resigned effective July, this year. Letkemann came to MCC Manitoba after he and his wife, Tina, served for three years with MCC in Jamaica. He had been teaching at a teacher training college while Tina worked in the college library and with disabled children. Since April, he has participated in the Sabbatical Voluntary Service, a program through which people give up their salaries for a year to live the same way as MCC volunteers — living expenses plus a small monthly stipend. The extra funds are channelled into MCC programs. In joining the program, Letkemann said that he was uncomfortable working as a salaried administrator side-by-side with people receiving a volunteer's allowance. Reflecting on his years with MCC Manitoba, Letkemann says that "I can simply, honestly say that there is no other place I would have rather been, and no other work I would have rather done." Among the many highlights for him was the opportunity he had to "meet so many good people, both in and outside the Mennonite church community." His future plans are undetermined.

**Gregory Dyck** of Winnipeg, most recently of Saskatoon, began a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Winnipeg, where he is working in computer services with the MCC Canada office. Dyck received bachelor's degrees in computer science and physics from the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. He was last employed as computer programmer and analyst in Saskatoon, Sask. Dyck's parents are Betty and John Dyck of Winnipeg.

**Wes Reimer** of Steinbach, most recently of Saskatoon is beginning a three-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Belo Jardim, Brazil, in January of 1988. He will be working as a vocational instructor. Reimer received a bachelor's degree in international studies from the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Reimer is a member of Wildwood Mennonite Church in Saskatoon and was previously a member of the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Steinbach. His parents are Annie and Peter Reimer of Steinbach.

**Susan Bergen** of Winnipegosis, has begun a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Akron, Pa., where she is working as secretary with the personnel department at MCC headquarters. Bergen is a member of the Nordheim Mennonite Church in Winnipegosis. Her parents are Cathy and Corny Bergen of Winnipegosis.



**Evelyn and Marvin Koop** of Winnipeg, are beginning three-year Mennonite Central Committee assignments in Belo Jardim, Brazil, in the spring of 1988. The Koops will be serving as community workers in a housing development. Marvin previously served as lay assistant minister of Fort Garry Evangelical Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. He received a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Winnipeg and a bachelor's degree in religious studies from Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Marvin was last employed as a construction supervisor in Winnipeg. The Koops are members of Fort Garry Evangelical Mennonite Church. Evelyn's parents are Jacob and Susie Thiessen of Winnipeg. Marvin's parents are Clara and John Koop of Kleefeld, Man.



**Marilyn Langeman** of Morden, most recently of Akron, Pa., has begun a two-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Akron, where she is working as administrative assistant with Mennonite Mental Health Services. Langeman previously served with MCC in Akron, Winnipeg, Man., Belgium and Zaire. She received a diploma of applied arts in secretarial science from the Manitoba Institute of Applied Arts in Winnipeg. Langeman was last employed as secretary-coordinator at Akron Mennonite Church, where she is a member. She was previously a member of Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg. Langeman's parents are Jacob and Justina Toews of Morden. She and her husband, Ken, are parents of two children.

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One that gives a person a "heart attack"



In this edition we announce the winner of the December puzzle. There was only one correct entry among those mailed in, and so Ilona Bartsch of Winnipeg is the winner.

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

A winner will be drawn from among the contest entries and the prize awarded.

Answers accepted for the December puzzle were plea, post, pear, spare, peach, and peace.

Entries must be sent to the Mirror office by March 16, 1988.

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Name

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Send Entries to:  
 Mix-Up Contest  
 Mennonite Mirror  
 207-1317A Portage Avenue  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 0V3

# Mexican Mennonites find life in their "cocoon" colonies an increasingly fragile quality

by Byron Burkholder

When German-speaking Mennonites migrated from Manitoba to Mexico in the 1920s, their intent was to preserve a way of life which would be immune from influences of the surrounding culture. According to Dr. Leonard Sawatzky, of the University of Manitoba, a climate of openness is now creating some cracks in the cocoon.

Dr. Sawatzky's latest book, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat* (1986, Elwert-Verlag, Marburg/Lahr), is a German summary of his earlier work, and a detailed update of his 1971 study of a similar title, *They Sought a Country*. The books document the migration and settlement history of the Mexican Mennonites, who now number some 40,000 in 15 colonies.

The immigrants, most of whom are known as "Old Colony" Mennonites, continue to be protected by a *Privilegium*, a legal agreement arrived at with the revolutionary government of President Alvaro Obregon in 1921, exempts them from military service and allows them to maintain control of their own education and local government. The group's forebears had enjoyed similar privileges in Russia in the 19th century, and had made unsuccessful attempts to obtain guarantees of the same status in Canada in the early 20th century.

Dr. Sawatzky, who teaches settlement geography and resource management, first visited the Mexican colonies in 1962 as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley. His doctoral dissertation, on which the 1971 book is based, was a study of their history and settlement patterns.

In the 60s, Dr. Sawatzky said in an interview, the agriculture-based colonies were still reasonably successful in excluding Mexican culture, the Spanish language, electronic equipment and other modern innovations, and education beyond the bare rudiments of the three-Rs.

As his 1986 update shows, some significant trends have become current since then. As the larger culture has encroached, "the ones who will brook no

modification in social terms: have followed the pattern which has characterized Mennonite history since the Reformation: they have emigrated." About 8,000 have moved to Bolivia, Paraguay, or back to Canada, and, too recently to be documented in the study, Argentina.

According to Dr. Sawatzky, the results contain both threat and promise for the survival and health of the communities. With the withdrawal of the conservative reactionaries, centralized authority has broken down and discipline of recalcitrant members is not as effective as it once was.

Both contributing to the permissiveness and feeding on it, Dr. Sawatzky said, have been an increasing number of "parachute organizations" which have competed for the loyalty of members. Besides sectarian groups such as the Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostals, the organizations have included the mission agencies of the colonists' "progressive" Mennonite cousins in North America, usually viewed as the Trojan horses of cultural and religious decay. Dr. Sawatzky states that several hundred have joined the various groups, even though it means excommunication and shunning from their own confessional communities.



H. L. Sawatzky

A more effective bridge to modernity, Dr. Sawatzky believes, is the *Kleine Gemeinde*, an 800-strong minority who emigrated from Canada in the 1940s. With greater openness to technology and to the national language — yet "without any demonstrated capitulation to the secular world" — the group has been relatively successful economically, providing models for their Old Colony neighbors.

One result is that the Old Colony Mennonites have in recent years deluged the *Kleine Gemeinde* with requests for teachers for their village schools, which consistently turn out functionally almost illiterate graduates.

A better educational system, Dr. Sawatzky said, could generate a certain "renaissance" of awareness about their history and cultural context. One reason he wrote his recent book in German was that it may be the "only history of the folk" available to them in their language in the coming years.

Some recent changes, however, appear to have inhibited progress, particularly in economics. One phenomenon is the rise in conspicuous consumption. While land and livestock used to be the criteria of social position, automobiles and other consumer items are gradually taking over.

"In essence," Dr. Sawatzky said, "this means that a greater and greater proportion of the wealth created in the communities is flowing out without circulating at all." The consequences: not enough wealth to deal with contingencies, the deterioration in equipment and buildings, and a decline in productivity, and failure to provide an adequate economic niche for the rising generation.

While the conspicuous consumption has on the surface put the Mennonites in touch with the modern world, Dr. Sawatzky found that other sociological factors inhibit growth. Voting rights in the communities continues to be restricted to those who are male and own land, even though the proportion of landowners is diminishing.

Dr. Sawatzky said although the land base has doubled since the immigration of

the 1920s, the resident population is now seven times what it was then — despite all the “bloodletting” to South American and Canada. As a result, many have slipped into landless status of *Knecht* (a laborer who works for a property owner) or *Anwohner* (one who has only squatter’s rights and no vote, but is his own master).

With the sale of land resulting from the emigrations, Dr. Sawatzky also noted similarities to the North American trend away from middle-sized farms. “Increasingly,” he said, “there is a strong representation of an agrarian elite vis-a-vis an impoverished agrarian population.”

Dr. Sawatzky believes it would make sense for the Mennonites to develop an industrial base with a well-qualified blue-collar technical class. However, he said, “that isn’t happening because of over-riding status concerns.”

By local standards, some non-farmers have been successful in developing small local industries such as metal works and furniture-making. However, advancement is inhibited by the association of excellence with pride (which in their Low German dialect cannot be distinguished from arrogance, one of the worst sins of the community). “The attitude has become very prevalent that barely good enough is as good as it dares to be.” As well, successful entrepreneurs try to keep their employees from achieving excellence and limit their access to training lest they start their own enterprise in competition.

The story of the Mexican Mennonites, Dr. Sawatzky believes, is in many ways a repetition of Mennonite history in general. In a paper he outlined the patterns of strategic geographical withdrawal, infiltration by the outside world (including other Mennonites), and a capitulation to the dominant culture.

In the paper, he highlights the alternative model of adaptation in which the *Kleine Gemeinde* seem to be in integrating change “within the brotherhood,” without threatening to undermine the community solidarity as some high-profile outside groups have. “Generally,” said Dr. Sawatzky, “those who accomplish anything are those who have not wish to raise a monument to themselves.”

mm

## BABYSITTER

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# POET'S WORD

— Tim Wiebe,

## Christ of the Andes

- I. Redemption is conspicuous from all parts of Rio.  
Curious pilgrims, we ascend toward the figure under whose stoney benediction so much justice is wrought.
- II. The air seems rarified at first then tainted with a miasma of smells from the factories and shantytowns that bleed for this city.
- III. Pinnacle of the temple Jesus tempted with all the kingdoms rejecting exploitation extending only nail-bitten hands and the grace of God.
- IV. At the summit in the bright shadow of outstretched resurrection we face lesser evils but still capitulate to salesman and moneychangers proffering I-was-there T-shirts and wooden replicas of the Saviour souvenirs to add to a tourist's collection.
- V. I weave my way between sweating bodies toward a waiting taxi hearing . . . the click of camera shutters low murmur of voices appraising costs (the statue . . . dinner . . . post cards); then, imperceptibly whispered to my feted soul the sound of the Son of Man crying over Jerusalem.

(While in Rio di Janiero)

## Boomtown

- I. Soil is red as blood in this poor Paraguayan village.  
late afternoon sunlight laces the air with sweetness  
Vegetation is lush and moist after two days rain  
Wizened locals carry harvest bundles toward some point of subsistence  
A sudden chill:  
it will be evening soon.
- II. Hurriedly we arrive disrupting impoverished calm and disembark:  
slinging on cameras like weapons — 12 rolls of film and slides at Christmas “here’s a picture of me with the natives.”  
We enter a dirt floored store shabby business I say derisively  
the best this town has to offer dusty shelves ancient products  
North American labels ostentatious reminders of the presence of economic justice.
- III. The old proprietor carefully closing shop is almost delighted that we’ve come from the land of Coca-Cola to thrust rasping wealth into his worn hands.  
He smiles forced obsequious knowing we expect servility  
yet maintains some dignity as laughingly  
I point out flaws in the indigenous goods — include among purchases that which would be available at home only not so cheap — and leave happy to have obtained a bargain and to have used his facilities to boot.
- IV. Afterward he fingers the filthy bills and tries to count himself into a better life.
- V. Darkness now encircles the faded town people draw shawls tighter against the cold and the old man stands, stooped, in the dying light choking on our exhaust as our shiny bus slashes through the dark earth en route to another point of interest.  
*(a village in E. Paraguay.)*

## Two contrasting Plays create a fine evening

Winnipeg Mennonite Theatre presentation of *The Valiant*, by A. Hall and R. Middleman, and *Minna Magdalena*, by C. Goetz; January 21, at the Kiwanis Centre of the Deaf.

reviewed by George Wall

This was an interesting evening of two one-act plays in a setting ideally suited for this type of presentation; but it would have been even better if all the seats had been filled.

The *Valiant* opens in a prison warden's office with a priest and the warden discussing the fate of a prisoner about to be executed; both are troubled because they don't have the real identity of the condemned man — a factor around which the suspense and drama of this play then revolves.

Peter Enns, as the warden, did a fine job of portraying a hard-nosed official who has "seen it all," his use of colloquialisms was very well suited to this role, at the same time, however, his use of them was not as natural as it should have been. Nevertheless, Enns did an excellent job of presenting the inner turmoil of the warden on the justice of this execution.

Eric Muhleisen, as the priest, carried himself with dignity and grace, appropriate to his position — he was a "good" priest.

Michael Woelke, as prisoner James Dyke, was very well cast for his role and gave a convincing portrayal of the condemned, successfully conveying to the audience a dimension of character that transcended the spoken words. In this case he was hiding his identity to protect his family honour by sparing them the shame of having a son executed for murder. Woelke was believable and genuine.

Veralyn Warkentin, as the prisoner's sister, was successful in portraying the anguish of her family at the prospect that he might be their long lost brother/son, and the later suggestion that he in fact was that person.

After a short intermission, *Minna Magdalena*, a comedy performed in German, provided a striking contrast to the seriousness of the earlier play. The setting in the professor's dining room, provided the backdrop to a classical confrontation between the verbose, absent-minded,

sophisticated, urbane professor and the visiting farmer.

Kathy Kruger, as Frau Professor, is becoming a proficient actress, capably and comfortably performing her role. Her domination of her "intellectual" husband becomes quite apparent through inflection, tone, and manner. She successfully sets the stage for the news that their young servant girl, Minna, has indeed become pregnant at this most untimely moment.

Alfred Wiebe, after a slightly shaky beginning, develops his role as the professor. His best moments come as he convinces Minna's father that "boys will be boys" and that he and Martin were once "boys" too. Wiebe's maturity as an actor developed as this play progressed.

This play really came alive when Ernie Enns, as Minna's father arrives as a good, but unsophisticated Bavarian farmer. Aside from appearing to lose the connecting thread occasionally, Enns provided comedy to the point of the hilarious and had the audience in laughter. Adding further to the fun was Enns' mixing of Bavarian accent and Mennonite plautdietsch. The symbolism was obvious and effectively funny.

Susanne Wiebe played the part of the poor, maligned, yet innocent Minna. She was sufficiently withdrawn and reticent to make the audience, along with her father and employers, think that she indeed had carried on a liaison with Fritz, the neighbor.

In the end, when everything is cleared up, the professor skillfully draws the audience into the story, making us all equally guilty of the very human frailty of believing the worst of someone else, especially when it comes to sexual transgressions.

This evening was one of the most delightful evenings of entertainment in years for this reviewer and his family.

mm

### COMING EVENTS

**February 23:** Workshop on genealogy and family history, sponsored by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and the Winnipeg Regional Genealogy Committee; auditorium, Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 169 Riverton Avenue, 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 23.

**March 11:** Annual fund-raising dinner of the Winnipeg Elementary School, Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Waverley Street and Wilkes Avenue; ticket information, call 885-1032.

**May 15:** The Annual Art and Music Festival, at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Tuxedo and Shaftesbury boulevards; for information call Peter Rempel at 663-0959.

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### MANITOBA NEWS

The Conference of Mennonite in Manitoba has published advertisements soliciting proposals for the sale or lease of the **Elim Bible Institute** campus in Altona. It's located on 13 acres and consists of an administration, classroom, residence, and dining hall complex. For information, call the conference office at 284-4010.

With the end of **Project North** in its present form at the end of 1987, Mennonite Central Committee (Canada) is entering a new phase in its involvement with Canada's Native people. In December, representatives of the 10 supporting churches agreed to disband the inter-church coalition on Native justice and development, replacing it with a study group, which will recommend a new structure by the end of 1988.

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# Books on peace and religion generate interest at Moscow fair

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Book fairs in Moscow, the largest city of the Soviet Union, are really unforgettable experiences. I felt that way after my first book fair in 1985, and my participation at the one this past September was no different.

A bit of the novelty had worn off this time round, of course. The fair was held again in the large Park of Economic Achievements, across the street from the Kosmos Hotel, where all the book fair people lodged two years ago. Our exhibit area was still Pavilion No. 2, with our booth almost exactly in the same spot where it had been then. The exhibition "system," if one may call it that, also had not changed much. Again we were busy for six days, nine hours each day. The crowds were still never-ending, often shoulder to shoulder, just as they were then.

I was delighted early in the Fair to meet a number of people I had learned to know then. Three of them now sported three-piece suits, all of them promoted to something "higher" I was informed by each one in turn. I know I can now consider them all personal friends. They will all welcome me if I should ever come again.

Some things though were not quite like they had been. Last time my baggage appeared where it needed to when I arrived at the airport. This time I found it moving toward me on the Tokyo flight baggage band, rather than the Frankfurt one, where it should have come. My first big surprise was at customs where I expected the usual routine, to look at the passport, handing in my declaration of goods brought in, scanning all baggage, opening everything, a thorough check. But no suitcases were opened now — the "smoothest" entry (of five visits) I had made so far.

This year the fair management lodged all exhibitors at the Hotel Rossia, the largest in Moscow, with over 5,000 beds. The halls seemed to be endless, but in time we found our way in and out without too much difficulty. The Kremlin and the nearby canal are brightly lit at night, while the street lights in the centre of the city create colorful patterns at night. One day I took a walk around the place and counted seven churches, six along one side and another one at one corner below my window. All of them are either used as museums and exhibit rooms, or else seem to be closed.

Buses took those who wanted to go to work in the mornings, and back at night. I preferred to take the metro (underground train) because I enjoy this mode of travel a good deal — fast, clean, efficient, and interesting at the same time. It seems to be one of the cleanest and most efficient public facilities around out there.

The new thing for some of us this year was the Peace Church Publishers booth. In 1985, several of us sensed that this might be a suitable theme to stress at this event. It might also give the historic peace churches a special opportunity to be involved in a way not tried before.

This booth did not get a translator, nor was it given any special security as had been the case with all the Christian literature booths in 1985. Several of our booth attendants spoke Russian, however, so communication was usually quite good. As on other occasions, we again met numerous persons who spoke some English, and not infrequently, also German.

A sculpture exhibit entitled "Beating Swords into Ploughshares" attracted quite a bit of attention. There was also an incredible demand for the catalogues we had brought with us, listing all the books on exhibit with comments in Russian and English. Each day about 1,700 copies were put out, and given away within the space of two hours. We could have easily handed out 10,000 copies more.

There were many opportunities to explain why we were there, and what we meant to say with our theme. Moscow Radio provided interviews, and the local daily news sheet printed these remarks also. Two atheist editors from the well-known periodical, *Science and Religion (Nauka i Religii)* asked a variety of questions, and promised to publish the conversation in their journal. They were very anxious to obtain some of the biblical studies on Genesis from our shelves. They needed them for their research, they said.

Another Soviet journalist told us that we should try harder to get some of our religious books published in the Soviet Union; many would be interested in reading them if they could. With a small change in title perhaps, he said, it should be possible to get some of them published in Moscow.

Someone wanted to know what we thought about the appearances of the Virgin Mary in one of the Ukrainian cities. This event had been making the news

there recently. One of the security men asked near the end of the Fair, "Now tell me, just exactly what is a protestant?" Many persons came asking for Bibles, or asked if they could obtain the books on exhibit somehow. When the fair ended, some of the books could be given away as gifts.

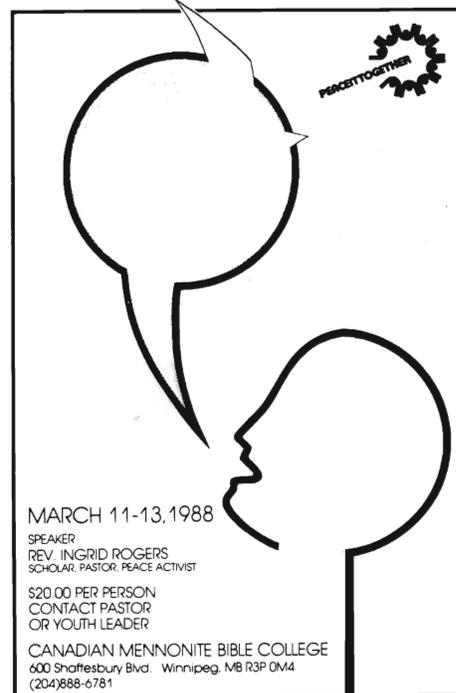
We were invited to homes more than once. It was easier now our hosts said, to entertain foreign guests. I had the privilege to enjoy a very tasty supper with a young couple, as I had also been able to do the last time I worked at the Fair. Both husband and wife were working hard at learning English, and very busy at their jobs.

The book fair was once more a wonderful chance to discover the meaning of friendship, and also Christian fellowship in a Soviet setting. This was true not only at three church services which I attended (Baptist and Orthodox) but in various other situations as well. We need these contacts to understand each other better because in Christ "there is not east or west." It's a truth that is easier to understand once you meet the persons there as friends. I can hardly wait to go back again.

*Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein is currently Historian/Archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He returned in July, 1986 from a two-year sabbatical and leave of absence in Europe. It included three visits to the Soviet Union.*

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# Nooa enn aundre bieblische Jeschijchten

**A**us etj kjeen wea wond etj bie miene Grootmutta. Dee wea meist blint oba lauss sea fäl. Enn wiels see meist blint wea haud see eene ditje Biebel mett sea groote Schreft. Dee Biebel wea meist soo ditj aus en Maltjbentstje huach es. Enn dee Biebel haud Bilda woont so groot wearen aus ne gauntse Sied.

Etj sie nienijch no Sindachschool jegoanen, oba wäajen disse Biebel enn uck wäajen miene Grootmutta kjann etj aule bieblische Jeschijchten ütwendijch. Etj wea soo bie sass Joa oolt enn hilt opp Jeschijchten. Grootmutta docht daut wea uck goot fe mie wann se mie dee Jeschijchten fetald. Eenjemol wea se en bät trürijch daut etj goanijch de Jeschijchten üt'm Niejen Testament wull. Etj wull blooss emma de Jeschijchten üt'm Oolen Testament.

Dann fruach se mie, "Mett woone Jeschijcht saul etj aunfangen?" Dann säd etj foaken, "Dee mett Nooa." Dann schluach se dee ditje Biebel op, dreid no dee Sied dee Nooa opp'e Arjche wees, enn fetald dee Jeschijcht, enn etj betjijtj mie doabie daut Bilt.

Doa stunt Nooa mett siene Frü opp eenem Enj fonne Arjche, enn äare Kjinja opp'm aundren Enj. Teschen an stunden dee Tiere. Fuats bie Nooa wea de Leiw, biem Leiw stunt en Schoptje, dann en Boll, enn Peat. Wieda wearen dann uck Hund, Kaut, Oatboa, Jiaopp (giraffe), enn aundre Tiere. En dee kijtjen aula sea frintlijch. Etj naum aun de wearen froo daut se jerat worden.

Etj stald mie dee Arjche so groot fäa aus de Prom mett däm de Russen äwa däm Nippa fuaren. Doa kunnen goot acht Foatia, Woages en Pead, nopp, enn uck fäl Menschen.

fonn Victor Peters

Etj fruach Grootmutta dann, "Haud Nooa nuscht schis wanna so dijcht biem Leiw stunt?"

"Nijch en drips," säd Grootmutta, "he wist, de Leiw wurd am nuscht doonen. De leewe Gott beschütst am."

"Must Nooa uck tseowens auffoedern goanen?" fruach etj dann. Bie ons em Darp, so teschen Klock 8 enn 9 emma jintj wäa emm Staul, mett'e Latorn, enn gauf daut Fee noch Hei ooda Stroo too Nacht, toom fräaten. Äwajens, dee Menschen eeten uck emma ferr'm Schlopegooanen. Nijch Hei natierlijch, oba Ruakworscht ooda Siltfleesch mett Äditj.

"Joa," säd Grootmutta, etj jleew Nooa jintj uck tseowens auffoedern." Wie hauden uck nijch fäl fonn Nooa jedocht wanna daut nijch jedonen haud.

"Oba de Leiw frat nijch Hei," säd etj.

"Na, enne Arjche doa must'a," säd Grootmutta.

Enn daut jleewd etj ar uck. Daut wurd je uck goanijch jegonen haben, wann hee däm Leiw jieda Dach en Schop ooda eene Kos jefoodat haud.

Etj wea uck froo daut Nooa mette Tiet launden kunn, enn aul daut Fee looss wort, enn etj jleew Nooa woat uck froo jiwast sennen.

"Nü fetal noch de Jeschijcht woa Abraham Iesaak wull oppfern," prachat etj dann. Enn Grootmutta dreid no dee Sied woa Abraham stund, enne hecht kijtj, enn en eene Haund een grootet Stäatj-massa hilt. He hold groats üt omm Iesaak auftomassern.

Iesaak lach doa opp'm Altar faustjebungen. Eenna kunn goot seenen, woo hee sitj grüld. Enn uck etj freid mie daut fuats hinja Abraham en Bosch wea, enn doa haud sitj en Bock mett de Heena faustjerant. Mie wea emma schoad, daut doa nijch noch en Bilt wea, woa dee Sündenbock opp'm Altar lach, enn Abraham däm dän Buck oppschlitst.

"Ditt ess oba jenuach," säd Grootmutta dann. Oba etj wort donn so tanga, enn prachat wada, "Fetal noch dee fonn Mooses emm Niel."

See dreid dann no daut Bilt woa de kjeena Mooses emm Korftje lach. Daut Korftje haud sitj aum Schelf faustjefoaren, enn schmocke egyptische Mejales trokken am mett'm Korftje toop nom Eewa.

"Daut ess oba goot," säd etj too Grootmutta, "daut Mooses siene Mutta nijch aum Nippa wond."

"Woarom?" fruach Grootmutta.

"Na," säd etj, "doa ess je kjeen Schelf aum Nippa. Daute Korftje mett Mooses wea jlei febie jeschwommen. Däm haud kjeena mea jerat."

Enn Grootmutta enn etj wearen beid froo, daut dee kjeena Mooses aum Niel enn nijch aum Nippa jeboaren wea.

Nü wull Grootmutta opphearen. "Daut's Tiet daut dü too Bad kjeemst," meend se.

Oba etj bestunt doaropp, blooss noch eene Jeschijcht enn dann wurd etj schloppen goanen. Grootmutta, wiels daut kratjt bieblische Jeschijchten wearen, gauf dann uck no.

"De latste. Woone sull etj fetalen?" fruach se.

"Dee woa de Hoadjung, David, däm Riese Gooliat dootschluch," säd etj. Daut

wea fe mie noch meist daut schmockste Bilt emm gauntsen Boak.

Enn Grootmutta fetald de Jeschicht enn etj betjijt mie daut Bilt. Doa lach Gooliat lang ütjestratt, enn David haud eenen Foot opp am siene Brost jestalt enn schmüstad. Dän Kopp haud hee aul aufjesäbelt, mett Gooliat sienem eajnen Säbel. Dän hilt David enne Haunt.

Dee Kopp wea en bät wajchjekullat. Gooliat siene Uage stunden groot op enn hee kijtj seea fewundat. Üt siene Stearn, kratjt woa David am mett'm Steentje eent jeplintst haud, spretst Wota, fielleijch uck Bloot, oba sest wea aules nü seea frädlijch.

"Enn daut deed aules daut kjleene Doftje?" säd etj.

"Soo motst dü niemols sajen," belead Grootmutta mie. "Wann bie ons em Darp Junges 'David' heeten, dann kjenn wie 'Doft' ooda 'Doftje' sajen. Oba däm enne Biebel däm mott wie emma 'David' nanen. Daut jeheat sitj soo."

Etj wea froo daut etj nijch mea jesajcht haud. Bie ons enne School, doa kjräelde se sitj enn muake schljachte Riemsels mett Nomes, dann muste dee sitj seea ojren. Dee Junges säden too däm David, woont enn onse Aunfenjaklauss wea, nijch blooss "Doft," see säden "Doftje-Hoftje-Heenaschnerts!"

Wann etj daut jesajcht haud, wea miene Grootmutta seea trürijch jewast. Enn so wear etj seea froo daut etj daut nijch jesajcht haud. Etj jintj schlopen enn docht noch lang aun daut Bilt. En bätje jaumad mie uck dee Gooliat. **mm**

## P. J. B. REIMER GESTORBEN

Am 11. Januar ist Peter J. B. Reimer, Lehrer, Prediger und väterlicher Freund vieler, in Hawaii im Alter von 85 Jahren gestorben.

Als Ur-großsohn von Claas Reimer, der die Kleine Gemeinde in Rußland gegründet hatte, war P. J. B. Reimer immer an Mennonitengeschichte interessiert und an alle seine Brüder und Schwestern, Mennoniten und Nichtmennoniten.

In schweren Übergangszeiten — man denke an die Versuche, englischsprachige Zeitungen einzuführen wie z.B. *The Canadian Mennonite* — war P. J. B. Reimer mit Rat und Tat dabei. Das werden viele damals junge Leute nicht vergessen.

Mit Recht kann man mit Mathias Claudius sagen:

„Ach, sie haben einen guten Mann begraben,

Und mir (uns) war er mehr.“

## ein wort auf deutsch

# Das Deutsche Buch in Englischer Uebersetzung

**A**rnold Dyck hat in seinen spaeteren Jahren daran gezweifelt, dass es je unter den Mennoniten zum „deutschen Buch“ kommen wuerde, das heisst, das sich die Mennonitische Sprachkultur so weit entwickeln wuerde, dass dabei „deutsche Buecher“ herauskommen wuerden. Obwohl er ein paar unvergessliche deutsche Buecher selber geschrieben hat, ist es dochwohl so, dass mit dem Wechsel von Deutsch auf Englisch vieles davon, was er und andere erhofft hatten, aus den Augen verloren ging.

Und doch ist damals schon so viel vorhanden gewesen, das wert war und ist, in unsere heutige Sprache, d.h. Englisch, uebertragen zu werden. Schon frueher hatten unsere Amerikanischen Brueder die alten Taeuferklassiker, den Maertyrerspiegel und andere Schriften, die lange, auch in Amerika, auf Deutsch gewirkt hatten, ins Englische uebersetzt. Akademiker aus der Bender Schule in Elkart uebertrugen die „Klassiker des Taeufertums“. In der letzten Zeit wurde auch das grosse Geschichtswerk von P. M. Friesen auf Englisch vorgelegt und so vielen zugaenglich gemacht.

Es scheint, es ist Zeit jetzt noch die andern Werke zu uebersetzen, waehrend noch Leute da sind, die des Deutschen maechtig sind, sonst geraten sie in die grosse Vergessenheit einer grossenteils geschichtslosen Generation.

Zur Zeit werden die Geschichtsbuecher des Echo Verlag als Projekt des Mennonitischen Geschichtsvereins Manitobas zusammen mit CMBC Publications zusammen mit CMBC Publications uebersetzt. Diese Buecher erzaehlen jeweils die Geschichte einer Kolonie oder Siedlung (etwa: Kuban, Krim usw.) und das meistens von Leuten, die es selber miterlebt haben. Solche erlebte Geschichte ist nicht trocken, sondern oft ergreifend und lehrreich.

Andere deutsche Buecher werden auch uebersetzt, wie z.B. der Roman, „Die Mutter“ von Peter Epp, kuerzlich von Peter Pauls auf Englisch herausgegeben. Solche Uebersetzungen sind besonders schwer, weil man den kuenstlerischen Anspruechen gerecht werden will (man frage Al Reimer!), aber auch besonders lohnend, wenn sie gelungen sind.

Das sind zur Zeit kritisch wichtige Aufgaben. Wer weiss wie lange solche Anstrengungen noch gemacht werden, nicht wegen irgendeiner Verfolgung, sondern eher aus Gleichgultigkeit. Arnold Dyck hoffte, dass Mennoniten lesen wuerden. Wenn diese Uebersetzungen wenigstens gelesen werden, dann wird auch das deutsche, Mennonitische Buch nicht umsonst dagewesen sein.

**vgd**

## Deutscher Sprachwettbewerb es geht um Grosse Preise

In Manitoba lernen ungefähr 7000 Schüler Deutsch. Davon bewerben sich etwa 1000 im jährlichen Sprachwettbewerb. Von diesen kommen um die Hundert in die letzte Auswahl, die im Februar an der Universität Manitoba, entschieden wird.

Am 19 Februar wird die entgeltliche Prüfung vorgenommen. Die Schüler werden in drei Gruppen geteilt, um ein Grad an Fairness zu bewahren, denn einige können Deutsch von Hause aus, während andere alles in der Schule lernen. Schriftliche und mündliche Prüfungen werden vor einem Prüfungsgremium abgelegt.

Während die letzten Entscheidungen getroffen werden, dürfen die Schüler und ihre Eltern sich mit Filmen, im Schwimmbad oder sonst amüsieren. Dann kommt das grosse Bankett, auf dem dann, nach dem Essen und den Tischreden, die Preise verteilt werden.

Diese können eine Studienreise nach Deutschland sein, ein Computer, Teilnahme am Language Camp, Bücher und vieles andere. Natürlich lernen Schüler nicht nur zu diesem Zweck Deutsch, aber man kann sagen, es schadet nicht, dass dieser gute Zweck durch solche Mittel gestärkt wird.

**vgd**

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# OUR WORD

## **Ethnicity denied and ethnicity affirmed: MBs still focus on the wrong issue**

With the publication early last year of *A People Apart*, Dr. John H. Redekop has made "the problem of ethnicity" a hotly debated topic within the Mennonite Brethren Church. One manifestation of this is that for the past year, few issues of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* have gone by without at least one letter from a reader offering an opinion on the issue.

Dr. Redekop defines two problems. One is that the word "Mennonite" is misunderstood, particularly in that Canadians typically understand it as identifying an "ethnic" group and not as a label identifying a Christian church with a distinctive interpretation of the scriptures. The second is that with an increasingly multi-ethnic membership, the "Mennonite" label appears to be losing its relevance. Indeed, there are those who argue that including the words "Mennonite Brethren" in the official name of a congregation hinders any kind of church growth.

Dr. Redekop points out some of the discomfort with the word "Mennonite" in MB circles may occur because MB members in general have a poor appreciation of their 400-year anabaptist tradition and the fact that many MB churches are employing ministers and electing other leaders who value evangelical Christianity more than the anabaptist version.

Nevertheless throughout Dr. Redekop's book and in the letters to the *Herald* there is the implicit assumption that the "ethnic problem" are those members from the Europe/Russian tradition, and that these MB members must hide their ethnic heritage not only in the interests of church unity but also in the interests of church growth. It is assumed that this will make the MB church more congenial to prospective members of English, Ukrainian, French, or other backgrounds. This message is directed at the established MB congregations as well as at new congregations opening in middle-class suburbs; in fact, new congregations are calling themselves "community" churches to downplay their Mennonite backgrounds.

By doing this, it is argued that MB congregations can become faith communities where ethnic differences don't matter. In these churches the ideal of the children's Sunday school chorus is fulfilled: "Red and yellow, Black and White, All are precious in His sight."

Where one part of the MB constituency wants to deny ethnic identity, particularly that shared by European/Russian members, another part of the MB church is hard at work promoting ethnic differences and the exclusivity that comes with it.

Some months ago the director of Missions and Church Extension (MCE) for the Manitoba MB provincial conference in a short Sunday morning report to a large congregation said more than half of the new congregations established by MCE in the past several years were "ethnic." He went on to list them as he introduced the pastor of the Spanish congregation.

The argument for a Spanish, Chinese, or other congregation with a similar label, is that it focuses on the language of worship so that the Christian life can be nurtured. On the face of it this is a good concept, but it is flawed because with language comes the "ethnic baggage." One cannot always separate "mother tongue" from the ethnic milieu that supports the language, and if language

is separated from ethnic qualities one can find examples in Canada where ethnic characteristics survive long after the group adopts one of nation's official language as its "mother tongue."

The existence of a congregation with an explicitly ethnic label (i.e. the Spanish church) sends out a signal that prospective members must have some connection, language or ethnic, or both, to feel at home in that congregation.

The point is that the MB church can't have it both ways. It can't have one part working to remove ethnic qualities (particularly the European/Russian qualities) while another part is segregating other members into congregations on the basis of ethnic qualities.

While solutions more easily proposed than implemented, it appears it should be possible to establish an environment within Mennonite churches (in this case the Mennonite Brethren) that is genuinely open to people of diverse backgrounds while at the same time allowing all to "rejoice" in their ethnic heritage. To achieve this it is necessary to establish an environment where an appreciation of, and commitment to, a distinctively anabaptist interpretation of Christianity is the characteristic that provides the basis for the congregation's existence. In other words, new members join the church because they are committed to an anabaptist interpretation of Christianity and to giving those qualities appropriate expression in the 20th century. Within this framework, it will also be possible, and necessary, to provide services that are language-based.

This also means that Mennonite churches must be of one mind in their commitment to an anabaptist interpretation of scripture. At present this is not true of MB churches. By proposing to rename the MB church "evangelical anabaptist," Dr. Redekop expresses the widely held view within MB circles that to be evangelical is at least as important as being anabaptist. Indeed, some argue it is more important to be evangelical. Dr. Redekop's proposal is a compromise so the conference can "have it both ways."

The debate around the "ethnic problem" within the MB church masks the real struggle within the MB church. That struggle is whether the MB church should define its "distinctives" consistent with historic anabaptist theology, or whether the much younger evangelical Christian tradition is a more appropriate basis for definition. The strong evangelical strain within the MB church is hardly surprising: inter-Mennonite Sunday school materials are scorned, young people are encouraged to attend "evangelical" schools, and outreach and other congregational programs are built around evangelical models. Other examples of how the MB conference tries to avoid being "too Mennonite" could be given. In this context, it is no surprise to find MB leaders and members who want to purge the conference of "traditional" Mennonitism.

Finally, it is the view of this writer that the "ethnic problem" within the MB church would resolve itself if the debate could be focused on the concept of the church. This would then force MBs into an either/or choice between: A Christian church with an Anabaptist orientation, or a Christian church with an evangelical orientation.

— Ed Unrau

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