

Mennonite Historian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE and THE CENTRE FOR MB STUDIES IN CANADA



Early photo of Mennonite Symphony Orchestra with conductor Benjamin Horch.

The Mennonite Symphony Orchestra and a Mennonite School of Music

ABE DUECK

An interesting chapter in the history of the Mennonite Symphony Orchestra has recently come to light as a result of some new materials acquired by the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. This involves a bold attempt in the mid-1950s to form a Mennonite School of Music in Winnipeg.

Early in 1955 the Mennonite Symphony Orchestra Society met to consider a proposal to form a School of Music. A "Referendum" (undated) was prepared which was to be submitted to Dr. H. H. Janzen, then President of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. The Referendum proposed the formation of a School of Music in one of the following forms:

- 1) A separate Mennonite School of Music;
- 2) A Mennonite School of Music affiliated to [sic] the MBBC;
- 3) A Mennonite School of Music with an integrated curriculum with MBBC
- 4) A Post-Graduate School of Music with a Junior Division.

Each of the options was spelled out in some detail and would have involved the support by an autonomous society with no direct conference support.

The need for and the growth of the idea for a Mennonite School of Music were listed as follows:

(cont'd on p. 9)

Conference marks new day in Russian Mennonite historical studies

HAROLD JANTZ

It is hard to imagine how Mennonite historiography related to the Russian experience can ever be the same again after the conference organized in Zaporozhye in late May. Hats off to Harvey Dyck of the University of Toronto and Aleksandr Tedeev, the director of the Zaporozhye Regional State Archive, co-convenors, for their efforts in making the event a reality.

The four-day conference, May 27-30, brought together a significant number of scholars to explore the experience of Mennonites in Czarist Russia and the former Soviet Union. They came not only from Canada and the U.S., but from a number of universities and institutions in the Ukraine and Russia as well. In all nearly 30 papers were read.

While the papers were of uneven quality and many were clearly works in progress, they reflected an amazing amount of research into a great many aspects of the Mennonite experience in the one-time Russian commonwealth.

Subjects ranged from the changing character of Soviet and post-Soviet Mennonite studies, the world of 19th century Mennonite diarists, documents available in the Zaporozhye State Archives, Mennonite Brethren evangelism among the Orthodox of southern Ukraine, Mennonites among the ethno-cultural minorities and how they were treated by the policies of the USSR, Mennonite Low German, Mennonites in the political life of the Ukraine, Mennonite education, and numerous other topics. Many were fascinating to hear.

Several observations quickly surface. One is that there are far greater documentary resources for researchers to explore than we had suspected. Several of the Ukrainian and Russian scholars described some of what exists and to put it plainly, there are huge amounts of material in archives (the deputy director of the Dnepropetrovsk Regional State Archive spoke of hundreds of thousands of files), some collected by the state, some by the Orthodox church, some by Mennonites themselves. Much of it remains unexplored.

(cont'd on p. 2)

The materials reflect Mennonite life in colonies, Mennonites who left colonies to enter the life of nearby cities, and Mennonites in their interaction with other German colonists and the indigenous Russian or Ukrainian people or other ethnic minorities.

Second, it is clear that no Mennonite historiography can from now on ignore the work of Russian and Ukrainian scholars. They are reading our work and we will need to read theirs and acknowledge their points of view. While the papers they presented at Zaporozhye sounded different than if a Mennonite had written them, they did not read as though they were hostile to these people who occupied their territory for a century and a half and then virtually disappeared.

Third, we now have a number of North American Mennonite scholars with facility in the Russian, who will be able to enter the Russian and Ukrainian archives and study them firsthand without difficulty.

Four, while there is great interest in Mennonites as an ethno-cultural group, this conference demonstrated too how easily the interior life can be ignored. Little of the religious life, practices and role of the church in the communities was in evidence in the papers read at the

Mennonite Schools in British Columbia Part II : Bible Schools *(cont'd from June, 1999)*

by David Giesbrecht

Mennonite Brethren Schools

The Yarrow Bible School: Given the economic and social vulnerability of a small immigrant population in the 1930s, it is remarkable that from the outset both MB and COM pioneers in BC as in other parts of Canada, dreamed of having their own schools. The initiator of the first

Mennonite Bible school in BC was J.J. Derksen whose zeal for Bible-based training was modeled after the Winkler Bible Institute. Yarrow MB church records note that "In the summer of 1930 several brethren expressed the thought, which soon grew into a conviction, that we are *(cont'd on p. 4)*

conference. The Low German scholar Jack Thiessen even maintained that you could do away with the religious life and keep the Low German and still maintain the Mennonite community.

Besides the formal conference presentations, several other events took place that clearly represented highpoints. One was the opening of a splendid exhibit on Mennonite life in Russia and Ukraine in the Zaporozhye Museum of Regional Studies, put together with the help of a number of Canadian and U.S. Mennonite centers and the technical help of Paul Epp of Toronto. Ironically, as Harvey Dyck pointed out in comments at its opening, immediately next door in another exhibit hall was a room dedicated to Nestor Makhnov and the movement he led.

Another was the dedication of a memorial stone at the village cemetery in Nieder Khortitsa, recalling the presence of the Mennonites who once lived here.

A large turnout of villagers was present and in his comments and prayer of dedication, the Orthodox village priest, Father Vasili, said, "I'm ashamed of what happened in 1943 (when the Mennonites were either forcibly moved eastward or fled with the Germans to the west). But Ukrainians as a people were not to blame. The regime caused it. I invite you to come back." A prominent historian from the Zaporozhye State

University, Fedor Turchenko, spoke perhaps even more significantly. "What happened to the Mennonites was wrong. They were driven from this region after living here peacefully and making many contributions to the development of our state. We will restore them to their rightful place in the history of the region." Such statements together with hymns and prayers and laying of flowers made the dedication a profoundly moving occasion.

Harvey Dyck, Aleksandr Tedeev, Svetlana Bobyleva and others both in North American and in the Ukraine who organized the Khortitsa '99 conference deserve warm congratulations. They've undoubtedly introduced a new day in Russian Mennonite history writing.

Harold Jantz, former editor of the M.B. Herald and Christian Week, lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



Father Vasili, Orthodox priest in Nizhniaia Khortitsa, prayed for reconciliation between the Mennonites who once lived here and those who now occupied the places they had vacated. "I pray you to come back," he said.

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Genealogy and Family History

by Alf Redekopp

Queries

Martens - Seeking information about my biological great-grandfather Dietrich Heinrich Martens (1873-1929). He lived in Memrik Colony and married Susanna Schellenberg (1894-1930), the daughter of the well-known teacher Peter Schellenberg. After Susanna died, the couples' three children were adopted by other families. I am interested in knowing where Dietrich Martens was originally from, and who his parents were. Contact Jacob Letkemann, 275 Albert St., Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3T7. Email: jletkemann@yahoo.com.

Rempel-Klassen - Seeking information about a Helena (Rempel) Klassen, who lived in Osterwick, Chortitza Colony. She was born in 1858, possibly in Einlage, and married David Dietrich Klassen (1856-?) of Osterwick. Their children were Dietrich (1879-1942), Johann (1881-1909), David (1883-1946), Helena (1886-1946), Peter (1890-1950), Jacob (1898-1949), and Heinrich (1901-1922). Who were Helena (Rempel) Klassen's parents and when did she pass away? Contact: Jacob Letkemann, 275 Albert St., Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3T7. Email: jletkemann@yahoo.com

Martens - Seeking information on the family of Johann Martens (b. 2. Dec. 1869) and his wife Aganeta Bergen (b. 28 June 1872). Johann Martens was the son of Peter Martens and Anna Klassen. Contact: Queenie Martens, 4435 Cascade Drive, Vernon, BC V1T 8J7.

Bergen - Seeking information on descendents of Heinrich Bergen (1746-1812), who lived in Leske, Prussia during the census of 1776, moved to Fischau of Molotschna in 1804 and died in Kronsgarten in 1812. Two of his sons, Peter and Jacob, came to Neuendorf, Chortitza in 1796. Other sons stayed in Fischau in 1812 and descendents of one came to Kansas in 1876. I am doing an

umbrella study of this line as well as being more focused on my mothers lineage back to Heinrich. Info on daughters of Heinrich is not known to me. Contact: Mike Hornbaker, 903 Coolidge, Wichita, KS 67203 email: mvb2@juno.com

Recent Books

Elmer Heinrichs and Jake Peters, editors. *Dit Sied Yant Sied : the Johann & Susana Leppky / Loepky Family 1831-1998* (Winnipeg, MB : Private Publication, 1999) 379 pp.

This book traces the genealogy and family history of the descendants of Johann G. Loepky (1831-1912) and Susana Toews (1835-1900) who were married in 1854 in the Bergthal Colony in Russia and came to Canada in 1877, and settled at Strassberg, four and one-half miles south of Niverville, Manitoba. A major component of the book are the photographs and family histories. Contact: Jake Peters, 47 Rosewood Place, Winnipeg, MB R2H 1M5

Hermann Schirmacher. *Die Geschichte und die Familienregister unserer Vorfahren* (Leopoldshöhe, Germany: Private publication, 1998) 247 pp.

This book contains the family history of Hermann Schirmacher born in 1967 in Volemdam, Paraguay and his wife Irene Redekopp born in 1965 in Duschambe, Tadschikistan, USSR who married in 1988 in Leopoldshöhe, Germany. It contains genealogical data, photographs, and story on all of their ancestral lines. Their ancestors include the following: Abram K. Loep (1839-1906), Halbstadt, Molotschna, Hermann J. Zielke (1836-1896) Danzig, Heinrich J. Martens (1840-1882), Einlage, Ukraine, Hermann J. Klassen (1840-1905), Kronswiede, Ukraine, Wilhelm A. Schirmacher (1831-1885), Ostpreußen, Kornelius J. Dyck (1859-1921), Blumengart, Ukraine, David D. Klassen

(1827-1906), Osterwick, Ukraine, Johann W. Redekop (1844-1917), Blumengart, Ukraine, Gerhard J. Dyck (1838-1903), Osterwick, Ukraine, Jakob F. Rogalsky (1882-1947), Neu Schoensee, Russia (later Curitiba, Brazil), David J. Pries (1882-1947), Chortitza, Ukraine, David Janzen (1841-1901), Insel Chortitza, Ukraine, Heinrich Rempel (1832-1866), Nieder Chortitza, Ukraine, and Simon Reimer (1825-1901), Orloff, Groß Werder. Maps, charts, a bibliography and a name index add to the value of this compilation. Contact: Herman Schirmacher, Föhrenstraße 4, 33818 Leopoldshöhe, Germany (e-mail: schirmacher.hermann @t-online.de)

Leslie Plett. *Family Register of the Descendants of our Grandparents Abraham L. Plett and Gertrude (Koop) Plett* (Calgary, AB : Private publication, 1999) 738 pp.

This book was completed in time for an August 1999 family reunion of the descendants of Abraham L. Plett (1859-1934) and Gertrude Koop (1861-1943) who came to Canada in 1875 with their parents as part of the Kleine Gemeinde group of immigrants who settled in the Mennonite East Reserve. This book includes recollection of the first major Plett reunion held in 1945, including a history of the collection of genealogical records pertaining to this family. Other contributions include an extensive biography written by Kleinegemeinde historian, Delbert F. Plett, a great grandson of Abraham L. Plett. This compilation is well organized, includes some stories, photographs, reproduced documents and an excellent index (full name and birthdate). Contact: Leslie Plett, 923 Midridge Dr SE, Calgary, AB T2X 1H5.

LDS Web Site

A long-awaited web site allowing searches of family names in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints database has now come on line. Some 400 million names are available. Visit the site at: <http://www.familysearch.org>.

Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5. E-mail: aredekopp@confmenno.ca.

BC Mennonite Schools

(cont'd from p. 2)

actually responsible to provide some form of religious education for our young people." By the Fall of that year a Bible school was formed and P.D. Loewen was invited to offer evening instruction. Student response at once was very encouraging. A year later Elim, as this school came to be known, was able to sustain a day program. Although not without formidable challenges, Elim continued to grow into a four-year school, adding new buildings in 1935 and again in 1947. Long time teachers included J. A. Harder, A. Nachtigal, H. Lenzman and G. Sukau. In the 1941-42 school year enrollment peaked at 152 students, prompting the addition of a fifth year.

The collapse of the raspberry crop in the late 1940s and the beginning of urbanization, however, did not bode well for this community or its institutions. The widespread and disastrous flood in the Spring of 1948 further undermined the economic strength of many Fraser Valley Mennonites. Supporting both a Bible school and a high school became untenable. By 1955 a dwindling number of students at Elim necessitated consolidation with other Bible institutes in BC, resulting in its closure after twenty four years of operation.

The Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Bible School: A second MB Bible school was opened by the South Abbotsford church in September 1936, with C. C. Peters as principal. As was the case with Elim, the Abbotsford MB Bible School also began its operations with an evening program. After somewhat prolonged birth pangs, F. C. Thiessen was appointed principal. The school was renamed Bethel Bible School and moved into new facilities at the South Abbotsford Church property. With the subsequent introduction of a day program, there followed a decade of steady growth in student population as well as in curriculum expansion. In 1944 J. F. Redekop was named the new principal. Under his leadership the two-year course of studies was expanded to four years, and then further enhanced by a "post-graduate program" and night classes were added by 1951. In the process of expansion, Bethel gained the support of six congregations in the Abbotsford area and was renamed Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute. In

1960 the BC MB conference accepted responsibility for MBBI, assuring its viability for the next decade. Prominent teachers associated with this era included J. Epp, A. H. Wieler, H. Nickel, N. Willems, G. Konrad and H. Born.

Sardis Bible School: Quite evidently, the desire to offer Bible training was a deeply entrenched ideal among BC Mennonites, even if the cost and complexity of operating a school was not always fully appreciated. In 1938 H. G. Dueck was called upon by the Greendale congregation to begin a Bible school in that community. The Greendale Bible School opened with thirteen students and saw its enrollment climb to 41 in the 1940-41 year. However, the need for qualified teachers and cost of maintaining an educational institution dictated the closing of the Greendale Bible School in 1943.

Black Creek Bible School: As was the case in other Mennonite communities, the Black Creek Bible School was established by the local congregation not long after its organizational meeting. In 1942 J. Goertz was called to commence an evening instructional program. Given the relative isolation of its Vancouver Island location and the limited economic potential of this small church, the school survived only briefly. By 1945 it was clear that the momentum could not be maintained, leaving the church with no option but to close its school.

Chilliwack Bible School: A more substantial Bible school was birthed by the East Chilliwack church. A mere three months after its inception in January 1945 this church elected a committee to explore the possibilities for the founding of a Bible school. Two years later a vacant business near the church property was purchased and G. Thieleman installed as principal. In October 1947 the East Chilliwack Bible School opened with an enrolment of 56 students. Joining Thieleman were three additional teachers: J. K. Brandt, B. B. Boldt, and V. Toews. By the time this school was closed twelve years later, some 365 students had received substantial training for entry into Christian ministry.

Conference of Mennonites Schools

Coghlan Bible School: Prior to joining Columbia Bible Institute in 1970, the Conference of Mennonites operated several smaller and two larger Bible schools in BC. Plans for a Bible training

center were first seriously entertained at the 1937 Ministers Conference, where three vision statements were adopted. As a community of faith these believers set out (1) to be a force in the cause of Jesus Christ, (2) to be a guardian of the traditional Mennonite faith, and, (3) to attract and draw together the many lost and straying members of their faith. It would require a hardy faith for a young, emerging Conference to translate those ideals into action. Very limiting economic circumstances and the outbreak of World War II notwithstanding, by 1940 Bible classes were held in four locations: Sardis, Yarrow, Coghlan and Abbotsford. These schools were popularly known as "Religionsschulen", or schools of religion. Under the leadership of the gifted teacher Nicolai Bahnman who had graduated from the Pedagogical School in Halbstadt and studied at a Bible school in Basel, the school in Coghlan matured into a day program that operated during the winter months. To the delight of the church, 22 young people enrolled in the first set of classes, with instructional emphasis on Bible and Mennonite history. Students paid no tuition fees and teachers drew no salary.

Bethel Bible Institute: The vision for a centralized Bible school continued to be widely discussed among COM adherents, often in a focused way at the annual conferences. Already in 1940 delegates asked the Bible Study Committee to look for ways of creating a single Conference Bible school. After three years of operation in Coghlan, the Conference assumed responsibility for a unified Bible training center. A parcel of land was purchased next to the West Abbotsford church. With the building of a women's residence, Bethel Bible Institute was launched in 1946. For most of the next two decades Bethel prospered. Additional buildings were erected and a strong school identity was in the making. Bethel produced an annual yearbook (*Echoes of Bethel*), a newsletter (*Contact*) and developed an alumni association. In its 18-year history Bethel had a total of 31 teachers and served some 500 students, although student enrollment tended to fluctuate considerably with the highest number reaching 61 in 1951-1952 and the lowest in 1955-1956 with 19 students. Nevertheless, this school nurtured a generation of young Christians and enriched the local churches considerably. Cornelia Lehn in her book,

School Name	Affiliation	Years of Operation
Yarrow Bible School	MB	1930-1955
Abbotsford MB	MB	1936-1954
Greendale Bible	MB	1938-1943
Coghlan Bible	COM	1939-1944
Bethel Bible Institute	COM	1944-1970
Black Creek Bible	MB	1942-1945
East Chilliwack	MB	1947-1959
M.B. Bible Institute	MB	1940-1970
Columbia Bible	MB/COM	1970-1985
Columbia Bible	MB/COM	1985-present

Frontier Challenge, notes that by 1953 every congregation of the BC Conference had one or more students at Bethel Bible Institute.

Two developments in the early 1950s sent shock waves through the Conference and the school. The withdrawal of the West Abbotsford and Chilliwack churches from the Conference in 1953 drastically affected student enrolment. Moreover, the perceived diversity of theological perspectives among the faculty at this time further eroded constituency confidence in the school. Some constituents felt that the fundamentalist and dispensationalist sympathies among teaching faculty were antithetical to Anabaptism, leaving students with a no clear theological direction. Although Bethel continued to attract gifted teachers such as M. Epp, J. Neufeld and G. Schmidt throughout the decade of the sixties, its survival seemed increasingly precarious. To the surprise of many delegates at a special convention in 1970, the Bethel Bible Institute Committee recommended amalgamation with the Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute. It would take some time before the fears of many constituents regarding the loss of denominational identity and the prospect of working so intimately with the MBs would be quieted. After all, as some openly surmised, would an association with the Mennonite Brethren work in the light of the fact that there had never really been such an intimate association between the two in the past.

Joint Mennonite Schools

Columbia Bible Institute: After consideration of several options and prolonged although very gracious

negotiations, the marriage of Bethel Bible Institute and Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute was strongly endorsed by both COM and MB Conferences in 1970. The aims and objectives of the new school, known as Columbia Bible Institute, were to include promotion of a strong evangelical, Anabaptist emphasis, to foster a mission-oriented teaching program with an evident bias favoring MB

and COM mission programs, and to cultivate a keen sense among students regarding the importance of the local church. The working agreement further stipulated that future teachers would be hired on the basis of need and qualification (rather than affiliation) and that electives would respond to the denominational distinctives of both conferences.

The decade of the seventies, under the leadership of presidents P. R. Toews and W. Unger, was one of growth and expansion for CBI, with student enrollment reaching 266 in 1975. With such an encouraging response a third year program was added and new buildings erected on campus. The evident progress of CBI could not mask the growing uneasiness over some aspects of the working agreement, especially among COMs. A re-examination of the partnership was called for. Accordingly, a historic joint meeting was convened in 1982 where the two conferences agreed to become full partners in both the ownership and the development of CBI. Thus, during the tenure of president Roy Just the first full fledged inter-Mennonite Bible institute in North America was established, which in its essence was to mirror the confessions of both supporting conferences.

Columbia Bible College: Under the presidency of Walter Unger, CBI achieved a remarkably stable student enrolment, a secure constituency base and a much expanded educational program. In 1984 CBI applied for accreditation by the American Association of Bible Colleges, resulting in full accreditation by 1991. As part of this maturing process, delegates at the 1985 society meeting approved a name change to Columbia Bible College.

Subsequently, on June 26th, 1987 the parliament of British Columbia passed the Columbia Bible College Act, thereby permitting the College to grant baccalaureate theological degrees. To support a quickly expanding curriculum, a new library was added in 1992. CBC was now a full four-year college, offering degrees in eight areas of specialization, with a mission that focused on preparing students for life and ministry. By the mid 1990s, enrollment had surpassed 300 (FTE). Consistent with long-range planning goals, approximately one third of the students now come from non-Mennonite backgrounds and a growing number from overseas.

Mennonite Bible Schools in BC

The chart summarizes the historic importance BC Mennonites have placed on the education of their young people. During the early years of settlement, Bible training centers tended to be established as local churches were organized. Typically, instruction was offered in the evenings and only during the winter months. Teachers commonly worked as volunteers or received only small stipends for their efforts. The initial purposes of these schools were remarkably similar in scope, including the propagation of the German language and the teaching of Mennonite history and the training in Bible interpretation skills. As Mennonites in BC became more urbanized and generally more educated, there followed a corresponding need to improve the quality of Bible school education. The result was an eventual consolidation of all BC Bible schools into Columbia Bible College.

Describing the contribution of these schools is far beyond the scope of this essay. But it is safe to conclude that for most students one or more years of a Bible-based education has deeply influenced their understanding of the Christian faith and, in many instances, their choice of careers. A very considerable number of pastors and Christian service staff working in Mennonite settings testify to the significance of their Bible school experience in responding to the call of Christian ministry. Perhaps most significantly, these Bible training centers were intended to preserve and pass on those beliefs and values most cherished by the supporting constituency.

A.A. Friesen Archives



The A.A. Friesen papers were recently acquired from Bethel College by the Mennonite Heritage Center in Winnipeg. These microfilmed papers, containing over 12,000 pages,

provide a rich resource for the study of the Russian Mennonites and their emigration to Canada in the 1930s. Comprised of carefully preserved letters and documents, they provide insight into the difficulty of finding a safe country after the Russian revolution as well as of the emigrants' struggle to survive in Canada. Because A.A. kept copies of all his letters and the replies, the papers also document the life of a complex and controversial man.

A.A. Friesen was born into a Mennonite lay minister's family in the village of Schoenau in southern Russia in 1885. He died as the manager of a lumber yard in the village of Rabbit Lake in northern Saskatchewan in 1948. Educated at the University of Odessa, he was invited to join the academic community in Moscow, but chose to teach at the Kommerz Schule (School of Commerce) in Halbstadt, near his home. A teacher of chemistry and physics, he stressed that natural science and religion were not incompatible, if each was studied honestly. Well read, intellectually curious and fluent in several languages, he was comfortable in a wide range of settings. As Chair of the *Studien Kommission* (Study Commission), he met with Prime Ministers and bank presidents and traveled extensively to further the interests of the thousands of starving Mennonites in Russia seeking a safe home. In contrast, years later his desk drawer in Rabbit Lake held a separation agreement he was asked to negotiate between an illiterate farmer and his estranged wife. Their "X's"

attested that the husband would receive the horse and she the cow.

It was A.A. who persuaded David Toews to accept the chair of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization; later he denounced him for failure to discharge his duties.

In articles in *Der Bote* dated November 24, 1948 and December 15, 1948, B. H. Unruh, a colleague and friend of A.A., recommended that an impartial scholar review available documents and write a biography of A.A. Friesen reflecting context of the times in which he lived. This has not yet been done. These files, and others in possession of the family, are a rich source of original material for someone interested in meeting this challenge.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre thanks the Bethel College Library and Archives and the Friesen family for their cooperation in microfilming these papers for use at the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Harder to Write David Toews Biography



Helmut Harder, former CMC General Secretary, has accepted the challenge of writing the biography of Mennonite leader David Toews. For the past number of years the Mennonite

Heritage Centre has been looking for someone to work at this important project.

David Toews (1870-1947) was a key figure in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and is more widely known as the head of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, the organization that assisted Mennonites from Russia to immigrate to Canada from the 1920s through the 1940s. In addition Toews was involved in founding and teaching at Rosthern Junior College. Over his lifetime he served on many committees and boards of the CMC and the General Conference.

Helmut Harder will begin researching the Toews biography in January 2000. Helmut has recently retired from a long, distinguished career with the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. He began

working with the conference in 1962 as a professor at CMBC where he remained until 1990 when he became the General Secretary of the CMC. He has written and published a number of books and resources for the Conference--most recently a study guide to accompany the Confession of Faith entitled: *Understanding the Faith from a Mennonite Perspective*.

It is anticipated that the research and writing will take at least two years. Donations are requested to support the research and writing of this biography.

Symbolic Donation

Shirley Perron recently sent a donation to the Mennonite Heritage Centre, a donation with historic roots.

Shirley's grandparents, Isaac & Helena Steingard, along with their 8 children, arrived in Manitoba on August 8, 1924 from Lichtfelde, Molotschna Colony. Her father Henry was 6 years old at the time. Her grandparents wanted a "better life for their children and grandchildren." They eventually settled on a farm in Minnedosa.

Shirley's father passed away at the age of 44 when she was 18 months old. However, her family kept the memory of her father a special part of her life. She has now embarked on a "family history / genealogy journey" which has included finding the cost of the family's trip from Russia to Canada. Shirley states that the Mennonite Heritage Centre was instrumental in helping her locate information.

Shirley recently made a "symbolic donation" of \$67.38 to the Mennonite Heritage Centre, which was the exact cost to the Steingard family of her father's trip. Shirley states that she is extremely grateful to the MHC for the preservation of valuable records, as well as providing excellent

(cont'd on p. 9)



1924 passport photo of the Steingard family

Summer Activities

During this past summer the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies was again able to hire a student under the federal government's Career Placement program. Peter Dueck, an honours history student at the University of Winnipeg, completed a number of significant projects. Among these were preparing initial file inventory lists for the Canadian Conference Christian Education Office files, processing the last of the MBBC files, sorting, arranging and describing some Saskatchewan congregational material recently acquired, processing additional tapes, maps, periodicals, papers and essays, and updating the existing finding aids. He also prepared an index for the photographs in the Walter Quiring book *Als ihre Zeit erfüllt war* and formatted a David Ewert manuscript in preparation for publication.

Recent Acquisitions

Ebenezer Mennonite Brethren Church

Among the records recently acquired by the Centre was a financial ledger of the Ebenezer (Rush Lake) Mennonite Brethren Church. The ledger contains entries for many of the years from 1922 to 1942.

The Ebenezer MB Church was founded near Rush Lake, Saskatchewan around 1910. The congregation had a reported membership of 43 in 1912.¹ The membership of this congregation peaked in 1920 with a reported membership of 61.

Delegates from Rush Lake in 1910 to the first annual session of the Northern district Conference (later known as the Canadian MB Conference) were David Froese and Franz Janzen.²

Franz Janzen was the leader of this congregation from 1914-1923, followed by Daniel Schindel (1924-1926), Johan J. Kroeker (1927-1929), Gerhard D. Rempel (1930-1931) and G.P. Dyck (1934-1938).

During most of the 1930s the reported membership in the Northern District (Canadian Conference) annual yearbooks was constant at 10. For some years no leaders were listed and no representation was present at the annual conferences. According to the published proceedings of

the 1943 annual session, G.P. Dyck, Rush Lake was listed as a delegate.

When this congregation officially closed is not clear. The last entry in the financial ledger (only extant item from this church) is dated 1943. According to a report by John Gunther in the *Zionsbote* written on January 20, 1944, the group was still meeting for prayer and Bible Study on every other Sunday and they were glad that minister J.J. Kroeker (presumably from the Bethania MB Church) "had not left them as orphans."³

¹ Gen. Conference Yearbook, 1913, p. 70.

² Northern District Conference Yearbook, 1911, p. 5.

³ *Zionsbote*, 9 Feb. 1944, p.7.

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Hermann Neufeld Photos

Hermann Neufeld of Tehachapi, California recently donated a set of 190 photographs of various former Mennonite sites in Russia and Ukraine. Neufeld is the grandson of Hermann and Katharina Neufeld whose autobiography (condensed) was edited by Abram H. Neufeld and published by the Centre for MB Studies in 1984. It was based on detailed journals written during his itinerant ministry with the MB Church in Russia which are housed at the CMBS. The younger Hermann Neufeld has transliterated and translated most of the journals and added photos and other interesting information. He made several



New York (Ignatievka) Mädchenschule established in 1907. Tina and Anna Neufeld, daughters of Rev. Hermann and Katharina Neufeld, attended this school.



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trips back to his grandfather's homeland and acquired a rich collection of photographs.

Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church Anniversary

The Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church in Yarrow, British Columbia, celebrated its 70th anniversary on June 19-20, 1999. A large crowd attended services.

David Giesbrecht, a former resident of Yarrow and presently librarian at Columbia Bible College, reflected on the history of the church and community. He related how the vision was born and how John Bargaen and Isaac Sawatsky first traveled to the area in December, 1927 and decided to settle there. By February, 1929, the Mennonite Brethren Church was organized with 96 members and in 1930 the first building was erected. Later a Bible School and a high school were established and by 1948 the membership of the church had increased to a high of 970. But the next decades were difficult in many ways

(cont'd on p. 9)

Regina Church Member New National Archivist

The National Archives of Canada has a new chief administrator, Mr. Ian E. Wilson. Mr. Wilson began his new duties in Ottawa on July 19. He becomes only the seventh person to hold this office in the 127 - year history of the National Archives.

Until recently, Mr. Wilson was the Archivist of Ontario where he was also responsible for Ontario's public library system, which he helped bring online. He previously served as the provincial archivist for Saskatchewan and as the archivist of Queen's University and the City of Kingston.

During his tenure as the provincial archivist of Saskatchewan, Ian and his wife Ruth (nee Dyck), attended and later became members of the Grace Mennonite Church in Regina. For a number of years he served as chair of the church council.

We congratulate Ian on his appointment and wish him the very best as he faces the challenge of keeping the archival heritage relevant for all Canadians.

Jews, Mennonites and Ukrainians Launch a New Book

The proceedings of the Jewish-Mennonite-Ukrainian Conference held in 1995 have now been edited and published. A launch of this new book will be held in the rotunda of the Manitoba Legislative Building on October 4, 1999 at 7:30 PM. Books will be available for sale after this event.

Evening Courses

Beginning September 16 at 7:00 PM the Mennonite Heritage Centre in cooperation with CMBC will again offer evening classes. In the fall term two 8-week courses will be offered: *Conversational Low German I* with Ted Klassen, and *Manitoba Mennonite History* with Adolf Ens. A 4-week course on Mennonite Genealogy with Alf Redekopp will begin September 16 and a 4-week

course on *Writing Memoirs* with Edith Friesen begins on October 14. Please call CMBC or the Mennonite Heritage Centre (888-6781) if you wish to enroll in any of these classes

Aboriginals and Mennonites

A conference on Aboriginal-Mennonite relations will be held at the University of Winnipeg in October 2000. It will focus on all aspects of the history of this relationship. It will examine both the successes and the failures in this relationship, and through a focus on history, suggest ways of strengthening the partnership of these two peoples in building a better Canadian society. The organizers believe that the commonalities of these two peoples - their close ties to the land, their minority position, and emphasis on equality - can serve as a foundation for common understanding. It is acknowledged, however, that Mennonites have been in a more privileged position during the past centuries than have Aboriginals.

Suggested topics include: Aboriginal Lands and Mennonite Settlers; Mennonite Missionaries and Aboriginal Religiousness; Mennonite Business and Aboriginal Workers; Aboriginal Artists and Mennonite Consumers; Aboriginals in Mennonite Literature; Mennonite Social Activism and Aboriginal Issues.

The sponsors of this conference are the following: Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, Chair in Mennonite Studies (University of Winnipeg), Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, Native Ministries of the Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

Please send a 100-200 word proposal to Ken Reddig, Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4 or to Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies, 515 Portage Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9

Two Wiesenfeld Villages

The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* lists Wiesenfeld as the name of a common Mennonite village. In a separate entry it

gives details of the village founded in 1880, approximately 60 km. east of Dnepropetrovsk. This creates the impression that there was only one village. The awareness that there are two villages by the same name might help genealogists and historians explain some conflicting accounts and information.

In 1867 settlers from Krongarten (1797) and kinfolk purchased land from the Globa estate on the east side of the Kiltchen River, 35 km. north of Yekaterinoslav, and established the first Wiesenfeld village. It consisted of 10 farms and a school yard and would have been located 1 km. north of the present day Olexandrowka. This village was affiliated with the Kronsweide (Friesian) Mennonite Church. A list of settlers before immigration to Canada in 1923-1926 is available.

If someone still has recollections of, or material on the two Weisenfelds, please send to the Mennonite Heritage Centre and we will forward to Heinz Bergen in Regina who requests this information.

Letter of Concern re. Census Records

I am writing you regarding a recent decision of our federal government that will have a devastating impact on every Canadian's right to know their heritage. I am speaking of the closure of historical census records to public access beginning with the 1906 western and 1911 national censuses.

The history of Canada's 20th century is the history of the family, religious, ethnic, and national groups which together make up the multicultural mosaic of modern Canada. Without future access to census records no accurate and complete history of the contributions of all these individuals and groups can possibly be written. I am especially concerned that since the immigration to Canada in this century is very much that of "non-traditional" groups--those other than of British or French origin--an unbalanced history of the country will inevitably result.

Until recently the Privacy Act has allowed the opening of census records 92 years after they were taken, striking a balance between respect for the privacy of those enumerated and the important right

of citizens to access government information. Statistics Canada now says a clause in the Statistics Act dating from 1905 forever forbids further release of census material to historians, genealogists, researchers, and others. An amendment to the Statistics Act is required to restore public access.

We are trying to influence government to make these changes by means of a letter writing campaign to government Ministers and our Members of Parliament, and by circulation of a petition to be presented to Parliament later this year. We need as many letters sent and as many signatures as possible to ensure the government will listen to our concerns. Some progress has already been made and there is every hope that further pressure can bring about a positive result.

Details of the issues involved, downloadable copies of the petition and sample letters, responses to the issue by Members of Parliament, and links to other relevant sites, are all available on the following web page: <http://www.globalgenealogy.com/census/index.htm>

The web site of the Canadian Historical Association also contains much useful information about this issue: http://www.yorku.ca/research/cha/html/english/census/letters_list.htm.

Without action on our part nothing will change and these priceless records will be lost forever to us and future generations. The directors and membership of heritage organizations like yours can play a key role in this campaign by writing letters, circulating the petition, and spreading the word to others. By working together I am confident we can succeed in this important undertaking.

If you have any questions or concerns I would be pleased to hear from you.
Don Nisbet, Surrey, B.C. Phone: (604) 581-1383 Email: dnisbet@vcn.bc.ca.

Yarrow MB's 70th

(cont'd from p. 7)

and a rapid decline set in until a "vision was reborn" in the 1980s and 1990s. The church, Giesbrecht affirmed, has again begun to reach out and has experienced a new vibrancy and commitment.

Mennonite School of Music

(cont'd from p. 1)

- 1) The widening development of musical activities in our Mennonite communities requires a universal control for achieving the highest ideals of musical expression;
- 2) Our musical activities have gone far beyond the requirements of our schools and churches;
- 3) Organized Mennonite Institutions which include music in their curriculum are no longer meeting the needs of our advanced young musicians who are forced to consider musical institutions completely removed from our Mennonite brotherhood and influence;
- 4) To provide a central place for teaching for our outstanding Mennonite teachers of music;
- 5) To foster our particular Mennonite philosophical outlook for making music in its simplicity and conservativeness, in its emphasis of musical value of German heritage and in its power for strengthening the unity of our M.B. Brotherhood;
- 6) The growing interest for the development of orchestral playing in the accompaniment of larger choral projects.

This referendum was received by Janzen early in February, 1955. Janzen responded to the proposal in a letter to D. J. Reimer on February 16. In it he stated that "we cannot see how the Bible College could enter into any form of a union or affiliation with this new School of Music." He continues by citing the College's fear that they would be constantly criticized by the constituency because the school would admit non-Christians and because "all types of music would be practiced and . . . presented to the public. We know from the past that the people are very critical as to the type of music the College presents to the public." The faculty response was also reviewed and endorsed by the College Board. Janzen added that plan #4 (a post-graduate school) might be workable provided that the Society "would not expect the College to trim its music program in any way." Janzen hoped that if the Society should proceed a cordial relationship would ensue.

A week later D.J. Reimer sent a copy of Janzen's response to A. A. Kroeker. Surprisingly, he commented that he considered it "not at all too hopeless. I think we could work something on the line of a Postgraduate school with a junior

division. When this venture is successful it will by itself develop into a more elaborate program."

On May 14 the Board of Directors of the Mennonite Symphony Society met at the home of A. A. Kroeker at 100 Dunvegan. The nine individuals listed as present were the following: A. A. Kroeker; Ben Horch; J.B. Schmor; Henry Voth; C. Klassen; Henry Redekopp; George Fast; John Suderman; and Alfred Dahl.

Various issues were dealt with most of which were unrelated to the proposed school. Item #9, however, reported that H. H. Janzen's response had been received and, "on hearing the letter, the general feeling of the meeting was that it could be taken as a green light for the society. A reply was to be sent to Janzen.

Finally, the meeting discussed the question of location of the proposed school. Kroeker indicated that several suitable locations were available. One of these was the lot "just south of the Commercial Bank building on the corner of Kelvin St. and Hespeler Ave."

No information is presently available about the future course of discussions on these proposals. Bertha Klassen, the author of *Da Capo: "Start Once from the Front": A History of the Mennonite Community Orchestra* does not provide any information on this period of time. She suggests that from the early 1950s until 1978 the Orchestra was virtually dead. There are no references to these attempts by the Society to create a Mennonite School of Music.

Symbolic Donation

(cont'd from p. 6)

research materials, and holding materials that are a key to our Mennonite ancestral heritage.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre Executive has expressed its thanks to Shirley for the donation and is very happy it could assist in her research. Shirley resides in Welland, Ontario with her husband Laurent and son Serge.

Correction:

June 1998 issue (volume 25 no. 2) p. 3, Helmut A. Epp's address should have read Fonthill, **Ontario** not Alberta.

Don't Miss the Boat : Celebrating the 125th Anniversary

by Conrad Stoesz

With the end of the century and the new millenium approaching, people are taking time to evaluate and remember times past. For the Mennonite community in Manitoba, this summer was an opportune time to bring to attention the 125th anniversary of the first Mennonites to settle in Manitoba.

On July 31, 1874, the first boat load of Mennonites arrived at The Forks port in Winnipeg. On board were 327 people, a fraction of the 7,000 that immigrated to Canada from 1874-1880. This first group entered Winnipeg to buy supplies and then reloaded on the riverboat *International*, and headed back south to the junction of the Red and Rat Rivers. From here they walked east to the area surrounding present day Steinbach where they would settle.

On August 1, 1999, about 1000 people came out for an early 8 a.m. service to mark this event. The Paddlewheel Queen riverboat came quietly up the river and docked at the port. On board were about 25 people, ranging in age from about 10 to 80 dressed in period costume. They delivered a dramatic reading, related some of the experiences, thoughts and feelings the early pioneers must have had. The audience was quiet with anticipation as they watched the group assemble on the stage behind the dignified figure of George Born. He began with a prayer in High German and asked for a moment of silence to remember family and friends still in Russia. The choir then moved forward and, under the direction of Rudy Schellenberg, sang a familiar German hymn.

Following the singing, the dramatic reading began. Written by Wilmer Penner, it consisted of four readers: Cyndy Warkentin, who played *Auna*, Jamie Warkentin, who played *Marieche*, Arthur Rempel, who played *Heinrich*, and George Born, who played *Foda*. The drama was written in English, with a peppering of Low German words for flavour. The drama was well written, bringing to light many of the human emotions and trials these people braved which are not always mentioned in the textbooks. The text

brought out the emotions of leaving friends at home, being dependent on an interpreter, burying loved ones at sea, the first contact with a black and white cat (skunk), fear of the unknown pioneering life, and a dependence on an ever-loving God.

After the drama the choir sang once again and the congregation also joined in. Henry Fast then proceeded to share a devotional. He focused on a tree that had been planted by an elderly relative of his and how the choices she made affected him today. His devotional illustrated that choices and sacrifices our ancestors made in coming to Canada benefit us now. It also accented the significance of the choices we make today, not only for us, but for generations to come. For this reason we must make wise, godly choices.

The Master of Ceremonies, John J. Friesen then introduced the Honorable Jack Reimer, provincial minister of Urban Affairs, and David Ifody, Member of Parliament. They brought greetings from the various governments and spoke of the benefits the Mennonites brought to the province and country.

A final congregational song was sung and then people were dismissed. The riverboat was on hand to try to recreate the popular 1874 picture of the Mennonites at the port on the riverboat. Many people in the crowd mingled for a time after the service to catch up with old friends, take

pictures, and tour the display of Mennonite pioneer photographs inside the Forks market. Other people hurried off to Steinbach where another celebration, complimenting the one at the Forks, began at 10 a.m.

Another related event was the twelve-page insert in the July 24th issue of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, with articles commemorating the anniversary. This publication was made available to people who attended the event at The Forks.

Sitting in the audience, I found the most moving portions were the singing by the choir and the audience's reaction to it. Many people in the congregation mouthed, hummed and even sang along by memory with the choir with a deep longing and somber look on their face and in their eyes. Hearing the choir and the spontaneous, reverent, response from the congregation was a moving experience for me. I look forward to another creative event for the anniversary of the Mennonite presence on the West Reserve (Altona, Reinland, Winkler areas) next summer.

Photos of the event and a video of the events in Winnipeg and Steinbach are in the making. Contact the Mennonite Heritage Centre for more information at 888-6781.

Conrad Stoesz lives in Winnipeg and works as an archival assistant.



Commemorating 1874 - Disembarking at "The Forks" (Courtesy of Bill Stoesz, Altona, MB)

Book Reviews

(cont'd from p. 12)

point might be the theological presuppositions articulated already in 1934 by Julius Legiehn, Kliewer's co-worker in the youth program: "Ethnicity finds in Christianity its ennoblement. God made the creation with wonderful diversity. To this diversity also belongs ethnicity. The individual people are also part of the order of creation and thus we may cultivate our special characteristic as a people" (p. 82).

This view has truth and it is similar to arguments made for respecting the culture of a people when bringing the Christian message to them through missions and then nurturing an indigenized faith and church. It also resonates with arguments made for establishing denominational bodies for different countries, as have several Mennonite denominations in North America. How do we uphold the truth and merit of this insight but not go down the path toward cultural supremacism and aggressive nationalism?

Tron'ko, P.T., ed. 1998. *Poverneni Imena*. Vol.1. Series: Reabilitovani istorieju. Kiev: Vir.

Reviewed by Dr. Johannes Reimer

This book is the first volume in a series called, "Rehabilitated through History", published by the National Academy of Science of the Ukraine and designed to recover the names and events of communist repressions in the Ukraine between 1917 and 1985. Volume 1 covers Saporozhje. The book is divided into three main sections: a historical introduction to the phenomenon of communist terror, some biographical sketches, and an extensive list of victims from the area which contains some personal data of each person like the date and reason for imprisonment, the sentence and, if available, the destiny of the victim. All materials are original archival data, some never published before. It is notable that the volume not only covers a number of German and Mennonite names, but it does justice to these victims by telling the true story of their repression. Other national minorities are mentioned as well. The interested Mennonite historian will find this book quite helpful. It provides an

introduction to some Ukrainian archival materials uncovered to date and it encourages further research. The book marks an interesting beginning of the Ukrainians' national attempt to rewrite the history of their recent past. It also marks the discovery of the Mennonites as one of the most vital elements in the southern Ukrainian economic and cultural life.

S.V. Sokolovsky, *Mennonity Altaya*, Moscow 1996.

Reviewed by Dr. Johannes Reimer

The anthropological study of Sokolovsky follows established Soviet procedures in an empirical analysis of a given ethnos. In this case, Sokolovsky analyzed the Mennonites in Altay with a special interest in the mechanisms of ethnographic preservation in the midst of the so-called Soviet melting pot. Sokolovsky acknowledges the enormous resistance to acculturation among Mennonites and searches for internal dynamics fostering this resistance. In order to understand such mechanisms he attempts to analyze the marital structures in Mennonite villages in the Altay region between 1980-1985, using original files in administrative offices in the region. Intercultural marriages are the best indicator of the cultural and linguistic adaptation of a minority people group. The study shows a number of endogamic barriers Mennonites have established against intercultural exchange. The analysis of such barriers shows that they are all rooted in religious convictions. And Mennonites definitely do not easily mix with representatives of other people groups such as the Russians; they obviously follow strong dividing lines in their marriages even among themselves. Sokolovsky's findings allow the conclusion that such resistance builds on ethnoreligious convictions with a strong colonial mentality and a sense of religious community which seems to stay preserved even after the Mennonites leave those religious beliefs.

Sokolovsky's study offers interesting data not only for the reader interested in anthropology but also for the historian and the church historian, since he offers original data from a remote Siberian region not easily accessible to the western historian. It also provides interesting

insights into the ethnoreligious realities of Mennonites and the role that religion plays in the formulation of their self-understanding. It makes difficult, but very rewarding reading.

Book Notes

Fresh off the press is the first complete English translation of *Golden Apples in Silver Bowls*, first published in 1702 in Basel, Switzerland, and in 1745 at Ephrata, Pennsylvania. For centuries this book has been available only in German in rare book libraries. The 352-page volume contains testimonies of Christian believers, prayers and confessions of faith, stories of Anabaptist Martyrs, and devotional texts from the 16th and 17th centuries. It served as one of the foundational books arising out of seventeenth-century Swiss Anabaptism. Translated by Elizabeth Bender and Leonard Gross it is available from the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499 for \$9.95 US (hardcover) plus \$4.00 in postage and handling.

Just published and received in late August is *From the Inside Out: The Rural Worlds of Mennonite Diarists, 1863 to 1929*. Published jointly by the University of Manitoba Press and the Manitoba Record Society this book contains selections of diaries from 21 Mennonites who were either Canadian or people visiting Canada. Diaries are from the first Mennonites to come to Canada (Ontario) from Pennsylvania between 1786-1814 and from Mennonites who came to Manitoba from Ukraine 1874-1879. Edited by Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, the book retails for \$24.95 and has been distributed to all Chapters bookstores in Canada.

On a literary note the Mennonite Historical Society in the US has recently published a book entitled *Migrant Muses: Mennonite/s Writing in the US*. This new collection of 17 essays and 7 book reviews provides an excellent overview of the current state of Mennonite engagement with literature. Edited by John D. Roth and Ervin Beck the 227 page book is available from Herald Press.

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Book Reviews

John Thiesen. *Mennonite and Nazi: Attitudes among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933-1945*. (Kitchener, Ontario : Pandora Press, 1999) 329 pp.

Reviewed by Peter Rempel, Secretary for Personnel, Africa and Europe, Commission on Overseas Mission, General Conference Mennonite Church.

Based on extensive research in Mennonite and government sources and written in a lucid and objective style, John Thiesen recounts the expressions and activities empathetic toward Germany's Nazi regime among the Mennonites in Latin America from 1933 until 1945, the period of Third Reich. The main question running through the book as formulated by the author is "Given a long heritage of pacifism plus resistance to the political order and relative withdrawal from it, why did some Mennonites in Latin America fall for Nazism so easily?" (p. 18)

After a survey of the relevant background in post-war Germany and among Mennonites in the new Soviet state, Thiesen traces the manifestation of pro-Nazi sentiments in the Mennonite settlements in Mexico and Brazil. The major portion of the book is then devoted to the course of events in Paraguay. The empathy for the Nationalist Socialist version of "Deutschum" was especially prevalent in Fernheim colony established for and by Mennonite refugees who passed through Moscow in late 1929. They had tasted the bitter persecution launched in the Communist Soviet Union and then found refuge in Germany before moving on to Paraguay.

With the assistance of Mennonite Central Committee, these Mennonites sought to re-establish themselves economically, ecclesiastically and culturally on a tract in the Paraguayan Chaco. Having benefitted from Germany's hospitality in their plight and recalling their German roots, they now identified with Germany's economic, political and cultural resurgence under Adolf Hitler.

Fernheim's youth program was the most sustained and systematic promotion of German culture along National Socialist lines in the various Mennonite communities in the Americas. At the

Mennonite World Conference in 1935, Fritz Kliwer, a teacher in Fernheim, described the colony's youth work under his direction as follows: "It endeavors to promote our Mennonite and German cultural heritage as well as our spiritual well-being." He then noted the impact of resurgent Germany on his youth program: "Since the world war we have received a new insight into the significance of God's provisions through creation for our well-being, provisions which include not only family, occupation and state, but also nation ["Volk"]. . . we as German-speaking Mennonites belong to the great German national and cultural group and we wish to affirm our participation in Germandom... The Fernheim Colony endeavours to strengthen the connections with Germany which were established at the time of our escape from Russia in 1929-30." (p. 81).

The propagation of Nazi sympathies in the Mennonite colonies in Paraguay was discredited not by the Nazi Germany's warmongering nor by gospel-oriented challenges by the churchly leadership. Rather it was a violent altercation in March 1944 between the leadership of the Germanic youth work and a number of youth rebelling against their domineering style.

While appreciating Thiesen's thorough and objective account of the pro-Nazi attitudes and actions among Mennonites in Latin America, one wonders whether he could not have provided some more background information and analysis. How could persons with such pro-Nazi agenda gain and retain positions of authority in these Mennonite communities, despite some vocal opposition? A description of the governing organizations in the colonies--churchly, educational, civic and economic--and how they related to one another and to outside parties would have been welcome.

For instance, in 1937 B.H. Unruh, a Mennonite leader based in Germany, sent a mediator to the Krauel settlement in Brazil. This resulted in a change of editors in the settlement's paper. Thiesen's recounting (pp. 64ff.) indicates the implications for the pro-German manifestations in the settlement but leaves one guessing about the means and organizations through which the change of editors was effected. Such information would have given some glimpse into the deeper questions of why and how which

perplex a reader disheartened by this record.

Among the Mennonite immigrants of the 1920s to Canada there were also pro-Nazi sentiments and spokespersons, but these did not attain positions of authority whereby they could promote their program in the way that Kliwer could and did in Paraguay. Apparently there were constraints in the composition and organization of the Mennonite community in Canada which prevented this. Perhaps a comparative study would shed some light on Thiesen's main question cited above.

Another way of explaining the susceptibility of the Mennonite immigrants of the 1920s to a nationalistic ideology could be traced through the identification of perceived common values. A letter of greeting from the Fernheim colony leaders in May 1933 commends the new government in Germany for upholding several principles which would have been dear to a people who had just experienced the ravages of an atheistic and revolutionary regime: "a government that freely and openly professes God as Creator" and "the protection of the family as the foundation of the whole national community." It is not surprising that these Mennonites whose families had been torn apart identified with a government which they perceived to be a bulwark against their persecutors. This perception of world affairs provided a base of support for the more nefarious pro-Nazi activities of some individuals.

Thiesen presents these and several other points in his concluding chapter to explain the phenomenon of being "Mennonite" and "Nazi", especially as manifest in Fernheim but a fuller treatment of them in the recounting of the story would have deepened the closing interpretation. In the end he focuses on the brief sojourn in Germany as crucial for the heightened role of Nazi proponents in Fernheim and then accepts as the best concise interpretation of the whole encounter the admission of one repentant participant, Walter Quiring: "The German people let themselves be deceived by Hitler, I also." (p. 226).

Perhaps the fuller illumination of the main question could come through some analysis of the theological formation of the Mennonites in the move from Russia/USSR to Latin America. A starting

(cont'd on p. 11)