

to develop an appreciation for both the wisdom and the short-sightedness of those who have gone before, and to learn practices to imitate and pitfalls to avoid.

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Waldemar Janzen. *Growing Up in Turbulent Times: Memoirs of Soviet Oppression, Refugee Life in Germany, and Immigrant Adjustment to Canada*. Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2007.

Waldemar Janzen is no stranger to many across Canada and beyond, given the decades that he spent on the faculty of CMBC (now part of Canadian Mennonite University). He has now added to an already rich legacy as a respected scholar and teacher with this absorbing account of, essentially, his life before Winnipeg. The book's title is apt, as Janzen did live in turbulent times during his earliest decades, for how else to describe a life shaped by Stalinist repression in the 1930s and the terror and carnage of World War II?

Indeed, if there is anything to quibble about in this book, it may be its designation as a memoir. It is often a memoir in some places but not in others, and this adds to the considerable richness of the whole. For Janzen was also a diarist and faithfully recorded much of his life in his *Braunes Büchlein* (followed by his *Schwarzes Büchlein* after 1950).

Now, years later, he often engages with both of these diaries as he writes his memoir. This allows him to be a memoirist at times and a historian at other times, and it is to his great credit that he can move back and forth between these roles with ease. For example, Janzen decided to enroll at Waterloo Lutheran College in the early 1950s in order to study theology. He first recalls this memory (238); then he produces his diary account of the momentous decision; whereupon he reflects on what had made it the logical next step in his life. The same interchange occurs in a moving account of his twentieth birthday and the intense loneliness that enveloped him on that

day (219). Once again, the memory is told in dynamic engagement with his recording of the day in his *Büchlein* (for one more instance, see 156).

All of which points to another strength of this study, and that is its candor. Thus we encounter Janzen's first moment of "sex education" (20), followed by recollections of his earliest religious education (21). He lets us into what a Chortitza Christmas looked like for refugees far from their homeland (132). He beautifully evokes the splendor of walks in the hills of Germany (112, for example), but expresses his amazement to learn years later that most Canadians struggled to know anything of the natural world beyond "the maple tree, the beaver, and the buffalo" (245).

Janzen's study is also delicately understated, as when he wonders how his exiled father is present in young Waldemar (28-29). Even his first contact with his father after many years is subdued beyond the exclamation marks (158) with no mention – for instance – of his mother's reaction. This is not to say the entire work is written with a certain reserve. Indeed, there are moments when Janzen appears almost overwhelmed, as in recalling the hospitality shown by women at the *Gasthaus* in Schlüsselfeld (105) or in his evocative reflection on Scheinfeld at the point of departure (166).

There is a way in which the refugee trek from the Soviet Union to Canada is only one of the journeys described in Janzen's "memoir." No less important, it seems, is the author's existential journey of faith, starting with his recollection of his first Bible stories (21). In time, his questions would grow, as in his critical and honest engagement with the Anabaptist notion of pacifism (250-51), which he does come to embrace.

It may interest readers to learn how much this seemingly most Mennonite of professors was profoundly shaped by Catholic and Lutheran influences and how these were at the core of his faith development and eventual baptism (148). It seems clear that the road that took Janzen to CMBC and (back to?) the Mennonite church was largely shaped by the writings of the church fathers and later Lutheran theologians (see 252-53).

There is much more that one could say, including the fact that Janzen divides his work into four discrete sections: childhood in Soviet Ukraine; two years in West Prussia and Mecklenburg; almost three years in Bavaria and Württemberg; and a final section that includes memories associated with Waterloo and Chicago. He ends his reflections in 1956, with CMBC just

around the corner.

The tone of this study is best captured by its dedication to Janzen's two parents: a long-separated father who emerged from the camps only to die in Kazakhstan in 1957, and a mother with whom he traveled throughout the pages of this lovely work. It is a fitting dedication, and all the more so as it begins a remarkable memoir – one surely worthy of their memory.

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