ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

OF

RUSSIAN-MENNONITE IMMIGRANTS

of the 1920's (Ontario)

Part I of Interview 11 in the series of Oral History Interview conducted by Henry Paetkau, Graduate History Student at the University of Waterloo on behalf of Conrad Grebel College under the direction of Walter Klaassen.

Date of Interview: Monday, June 14, 1976, 9:45-11:45 a.m.

Place of Interview: Residence of the Interviewee
53 Menno Street, Waterloo, Ontario

Interviewee: Jacob C. Fast

See also in conjunction with this interview several memoirs and essays written by the interviewee on microfilm in the Conrad Grebel Archives.

Interview:

JACOB: In Southern Russia my father and mother were Cornelius Fast, make it Cornelius M. Fast because his dad was a Martin. And my mother was Aganetha Wiens from Schönau. My father's parents lived in the same place where I was born. I had my schooling in a village school. Have you ever heard about it, would you like to have a description of the village school? We had two teachers. Most of the time the teachers would stay 5 years or 4 years; all depends how they liked the school and then they change to another teacher. After elementary school I went to the Zentralschule in Orloff for two years. From there I was transferred or I did transfer to Alexanderkrone to the Handelschule. There was it happened that family relations, my sister married a teacher from there and I had to go there. My parents put me through that. But I wasn't very good in the Zentralschule the first two years and when I came to Handelschule I changed completely. It was a different way of teaching; younger teachers and all that and I really improved immensely. And I'm very glad I made that change. This was up to 1917. 1917 in the spring I finished that school in Alexanderkrone. After that I didn't know what to do but I decided to prepare for a higher school. For either a university or there was another between the Zentralschule and university another school. Anyway I had private educational teaching by the same teachers in Alexanderkrone for four months and that was when the Revolution went further and that stopped me from going further in my education too. My father had sold in 1916 he had--should I mention that my father was an Industrialist?

PAETKAU: Yes.

JACOB: My father was an Industrialist. He was what they call a Balufärber , I don't know what they would call it--- He would print and dye material. That business of course went broke right when the war started because the raw material wasn't to be had and also the labour was so short that they couldn't afford to keep it up. Then in 1916 when the war was over, or wasn't really over for Russia but it was almost over and somebody came and offered my dad he'd buy all the machinery. And there was quite a bit of money involved there so dad sold that machinery. And this was just shortly before the Revolution. The Revolution was in 1917 in February, the first Revolution. That didn't affect us too much. That was 1917 in February. Me, I was still in school and of course in school the students they thought we had freedom now and we were taught freedom too. We had one teacher he was especially interested in revolution and so on. He was a Mennonite and he---oh we would take off periods and stuff like that and go out ball playing and things like that. But that didn't go for too long when they realized that that couldn't go on like that. But anyway I had--this was the last year of my schooling there and I graduated there. But in the meantime as I said my dad had sold the machinery and 1917--1918 or 1917 fall, beginning of'18 that was the time when I was taking private education there to prepare for another school. Then in 1918 in February the first of our people were shot by-- you see in October in '17 was the Second Revolution, the October Revolution. And then that was the time when the Communists or I should say anarchists took over. I'm sorry. Here's my wife.

MRS. FAST: How do you do.

PAETKAU: Hi.

JACOB: Henry Paetkau. You've met him.

Mrs. FAST: Yes I've seen him in the church.

JACOB: The Revolutioners they came and plundered all; everything , everything completely, whatever they got hold of. When this happened my dad said---oh by the way they came and of course took all the money away, somehow they got a drift that my dad had sold all the machinery. Somebody else must have squealed on them and they came and took it away; all the money. In 24 hours we had to get $20,000, lay it on the table. I can still imagine how that happened. There were five men coming in, they were called into the grosse stube you know--best room, and sat around the table, and each one held out a revolver there and laid it in front of

JACOB (cont'ed): him. And they started talking to dad and asked him whether he had sold his machinery. And he said, "Yes I have sold the machinery." "Well, where's the money?" "Well," he said, "My money, I haven't got that, my money now. That's invested. That's away." So they--just imagine how my dad--they told my dad 24 hours you supply that money or else. And he knew what happened. They had shot other people already and my dad knew what could happen to him. So he promised he would get that money and have it by that time. My dad sat at the end of the table and I stood in the next room and looked through the door. I just saw the way my dad's hair went up. Well anyway that little detail--- So my dad started chasing around to collect all that money that he had borrowed to other people and so on. And he put that all into a kitty and took it away. Or I don't know now whether they came and got it or he had to bring it there. Anyway he got rid of it. And that was the time when dad said,"Now from now on I can't pay for your tuition anymore. You better come home." So I came home and there wasn't much to do. Dad, he was 60 years old but he was quite well at that time. We didn't have very much land being my dad was an industrialist. He had some Kleinwirts land. You know what the Kleinwirtschaft were? He had Kleinwirts land so we started to work that land to at least have something to eat. Of course my dad had great orchards. He was a lover of trees. We had a nursery school and so on but that was all dead because he had no people to work in it and there was nobody buy it. And the fruit we couldn't get rid of the fruit and so on. That was an awful hard time for my parents, because my parents were the ones who built the whole thing up and here everything just washed away like that. But they took it. They took it for a few years at least. This was in 1918. Then in spring of 1918 something happened. The Germans occupied the Ukraine. And meantime though the Makhno started his gangs. And he was going from village to village. Fortunately we were living the farthest away from Makhno so I don't think that he was ever in our village. You have an idea how the villages ran along the Molochnaya . We were the third village from the lower end of the Molochnaya So that's how it came that the Makhno never came or--I don't think that he personally was ever in our village, but there were other gangs that came. Anyway in 1918, yes the German army came to Ukraine and they cleaned up the Makhno of course. And they chased everybody else, all the other bands and gangs and so on they were all dissolved because the Germans they looked after them. Of course people that had been molested by them they reported them to the Germany Army. And the Germans they tried and investigated these things in a very rough way. So Makhno went in hiding and all the rest of the gangs they went in hiding too. But then, Fall

JACOB (cont'd): the German Army was called back after they had transported an awful lot of grain from the Ukraine. You see that was the--oh,--they had made a contract with the Ukraine for getting the Reds out of the Ukraine they would get all the grain they could have, the Ukrainians could spare. That was the time the Ukraine started to be an autonomist country. That's right, autonomist?

PAETKAU: Yes.

JACOB: I thought that is. So when they had all this grain moved out, and at home in Germany the Revolution started they couldn't stay here anymore. The army had to be called back and that army was not so good anymore either because there were too many Reds, German Reds, in the army. And all that caused them to recall the army back to Germany. So in the fall about October they had to be out of the Ukraine. Of course there were quite a few of these Germans they stayed in Russia. They felt, well they probably had nothing at home. They felt that here is a country where we can have a future if he tried to and so on. Many had girlfriends and some had even married already and so on so they stayed in our villages. But the bulk had gone back. Now of course these few that stayed back, there weren't very many. During their stay in our country though they trained the young people for self defence--Mennonite young people I should say. Not only, they trained all the German descent people, but we Mennonite boys we all had to go. Well we really volunteered because we saw we would have to defend ourselves when these go out and we have nobody else to defend us. So we were training that summer for about two months probably. Every morning at five o'clock we had to get out of bed, go out and train and then the farmers they had to go and do their work. Their harvest and this and that and so on. So that was pretty tough time and those guys, those trainers they were rough . Anyway.

PAETKAU: What kind of training did you go through?

JACOB: Well, real proper military training. We had our guns; they issued guns and we would be taught all the details and way of defending ourselves whenever it would be necessary. So we knew--first of all we had to handle the gun, we had to know the names of each piece and all this and that . Well you probably have read about that. Well anyway we were trained, to a certain extent trained soldiers. We thought at first that that was a game or something. Anyway it didn't do us any harm as far as--physically it didn't do us any harm. So then when these Germans have gone, no sooner they were gone out of our villages here Makhno came along. Other gangs, they just sprung up. Some hoodlum says, "Let's get these Germans by the neck." So they did. Now what could we do. Out in this

JACOB (cont'd): district where Makhno--there were dozens of people they were killed. Not only that but tortured. They wouldn't just take the stuff and so on. People would say, "Here, come and take whatever you like but leave us alone." There was no way to that. They just had their fun with these people. Usually they were--the Makhno band they were usually drunk or anyway had too much and then for instance they'd go and have an old couple of sixty years or so and make them dance and then shoot at their feet so that they would have to dance and stuff like that. Many of these Makhnos they were former employees of these people. Now some of these employees they were different they would--they couldn't do that to their employers because their employers were descent people to them when they worked for them and so on. And they tried to help these people to get away with things but most of them they were strangers. And there were all these atrocities these men. Now that, all this brought the Selbstschutz along. Self defence what we call the Selbstschutz which is a very and famous thing to do some people think, I do not think so. Personally I think that was something we had to do or else we would have been overrun or probably all murdered out. Our villages would have burnt out like they did with some of the villages and so on. And I changed my mind about bearing arms and so on later on through this encounter we had. I know I never shot anybody or killed anybody or anything but I looked at it from the point of view that we had to have a defence and when the Makhnos knew that we were defending ourselves then they knew that they had to stay distant. And that happened. We know that that happened. So there are different views about it but that's my view. If we wouldn't have defended ourselves we don't know, we wouldn't have lived through it. So I was--that--this self defense business went on I would say from December or maybe even November 1918 when the Germans had retreated we had to start to defend ourselves and that went on until, well, it went on through the year '19. And in'19, December probably, that was the last time that people had to flee their homes into hiding. You see we had one resource where we would flee to and that was the Crimea . . It wasn't very far, it was about 200 miles from us but we could reach that by horse and wagon ahead--most of the time ahead of the Reds. That was the only time I went into hiding into the Crimea; this was in December, 1919. That was the last time there was a change of front in our villages. We had 14 times the government changed in our village--14 times where the Reds would come in and chase the Whites out. They'd be away for a few months and so on and then on come again the Whites, I don't know where they'd get it and then they'd chase the Reds away. You see the Reds they have such very very great front too because there was whole middle and Northern Russia that they had to defend. So, anyway I

JACOB (cont'd): was one of these men that had been in the self defense and up until this time that I went in hiding I had the opportunity to hide myself in our own quarters there. You see we had the factory. Dad had the factory and the factory was empty and we knew all these little spots there in the basement and so on so I would go into the basement and hide where you'd hear those gangsters rummaging all around looking for anybody. But the basement was kind of concealed. Not only that but we would keep our potatoes in the basement. So I would be occupied by picking out the potatoes you see in case they would find me and they couldn't say, "Awh, you were in hiding." And we would say,"Well, I've been working here." And sometimes that helped but not every time. At least I had pretty good luck. There were all kinds of troubles in the meantime but we got out of that. There's so much detail to all of this but I won't go into that. It's hard too to understand for anybody that wasn't there. Anyway in 1920 I returned from the Crimea in May. My dad had taken ill by then. He had been ill even when I went to the Crimea but he says you better go in hiding, I'll stay. So we--I come back home and we started to work the land again, whatever land we had there and nearby the village and so on. Then in the fall my dad got more sicker and sicker and he died in October. So then I was the only one left at home. I had brothers. The one brother had died in 1920 in the Crimea while I was there. He contacted T.B. and died of T.B. and he left a young wife and a child who was living in our home. Then of course mother, so I had to take over. Then the other brother he was pronounced lost. The Revolution--he had been called into the army and he worked there in the medical core. He worked and was taken as far as Germany and then back again and all this was during the Revolution you know; during the White and Red skirmishes there. Well anyway he hadn't come home so I had to take over and begin planning to run our little business that we had there, the factory was then.
So anyway I had a very smart mother. She was very determined in spite of all this that she had gone through she was a strong woman. Then in 1920, no in 1919 I omitted to talk about what the government did to us. As soon as the Red government would come in the Reds would come in they'd start to take all the grain, whatever they could lay hands on. Now all that would have to be hidden somewhere and it should be hidden so that they wouldn't get the idea that it was hidden. Because when they find out that it was hidden by us . So we were counterrevolutionaries, and they would punish us for that. And all things like that, we had to find all kinds of ways and means to keep on living, to have something for the future. But there was

JACOB (cont'd); no chance. Some people they were successful. Anyway the Reds they swept all our granaries. There wasn't anything left in the granaries. And that had to be put into bags. They'd bring the bags and then it was piled up at the station. In our village there was a station and they'd pile them--there were warehouses there and they were piled high with grain. And rat infested--terrible. Och--whatever spoiled there. There were thousands and thousands of tons of grain that spoiled there. And we didn't have it. We couldn't get it. There were always sentrys there that would keep anybody out. Then of course the railways they were dilapidated. They couldn't move this grain and so on. And all that brought that about. Anyway we didn't have, not even seed grain left for the next spring. That was in 1919. Then in 1920 when the Reds took over for the last time when they chased the Whites into the Black Sea or over the Black Sea. Then they came again. They plotted that we must have grain. The way we were living--they'd come and look at the house--you've such a great house and big buildings and so on, but you must have grain. Well we say,"You can't--try and eat those buildings. You can't eat the buildings. We haven't got the grain." Anyway that was in 1920. At the same time a great drought happened to be in the country. So there was nothing, hardly anything grew. Hardly any grain was harvested that year. Then in 1921 that was the same thing. The grain that was seeded died on account of the drought. And big sand storms that was very seldom in our country there --that blew all the sand off of the grain and the grain had nothing to germinate in. And it was too dry. So we had a big starvation coming. That was an awful hard time. I hope I'm not mistaking the years. In 1921 this was in the fall or was it in 1922 in the spring or in the winter. I think it was in the winter when the American MCC came over and brought in grain and food for the hungry. But during this time we had--they had robbed us of almost anything. They would come into the house, pull out the drawer out of anything , dresser and go into the clothing--take all the clothing whether they use it or not. They just take it along and put it on their wagons and away they go. So we were left with just whatever we had on us. And whatever we succeeded in hiding from them. So when this famine was on we would dig up whatever we could find yet and take that to the market. There was a Russian village right next to us and there was a market there. We'd go there and try and sell something or just exchange something for bread. And that bread

JACOB (cont'd): was just so mediocre and some cases I know they would take the corn cobs and grind them up and mix that into the flour and also the leftovers from oil at the oil press-- "Makucha"(?)they called that. They would grind that up. Now that was even nourishing. There was very little but there was a little bit oil in that. But a corn cob there is no food material in it at all. But we traded sometimes and we'd bring bread home and that was just as if you'd eat straw or something. Of course it was ground up. This went on as I said until 1921 in the fall and spring 1922. When the Red government allowed MCC to come into, to bring food into Russia. Of course they went first thing to the Mennonites that they knew and that they had visited and so on. And at the same time a lot of our friends here in America, like uncles; I have three uncles in the States and friends here in Canada they would send parcels. And that was at this time when MCC was allowed to get in then we would get parcels, through the MCC they were sent to us. And of course that helped and that really saved us from starvation. I know my brother for instance he had come, in the meantime he had come back from the army and he was swollen. He had swollen feet and ankles and so on. That was a sign that he was undernourished, extremely undernourished. Anyway we were saved through the MCC. In 1922 in the spring we had all these big buildings they were empty and so on and then they made a food kitchen in our buildings there. First--where the children were fed. Then gradually as they shipped in more food the grown ups would get a certain little bit of it and so on. But anyway that's how we survived. Then in--what the MCC did, they sent in grain, seed grain too. Not only for the Mennonites, even others, the Russian neighbours and so on they were getting it too. So that year there was seed grain and that was planted or seeded and we got the first harvest in three years that summer. And whoever had enough to seed and seeded out quite a bit he had a good crop. It was really, well that fall--this was the summer we threshed, we ate our own bread at that time . We were very thankful for that and then the Red Army had established enough that all the old army (I said the Red Army, I meant the Red Government) The Bolshevik Government had established itself and now to let all the old army go home, they were all discharged and they wanted to have new blood. They called it a peace time army. And the young men of 1901 had to--were drafted in at that time. I was one of them. Now before all this happened they had been all kinds of registrations and so on and they made two classes in this registration. There was the one class where the sons of richer people or well-to-do people they belonged to the one class and the sons of peasants--they didn't know

JACOB (cont'd): really where to make the limit. But anyway they made two classes and those of the poorer parents they would be men for the army and the others they didn't know yet what to do with them. They didn't trust them. They were sons of capitalists and well to do people and all this and that and so on so their ideology was different than these others which was a lot taboo but anyway they made that terrible mistake. Well anyway I came under the second registration for those that would be drafted into the army. And through circumstances I took sick right on the day when I went before the commissioner. I had asthma and I had an attack of asthma right there. I thought that I would be free completely but I wasn't lucky enough. And I say plainly that it was meant by the Lord that I should go through with this. But I was held back when all these were meant for the Red Army; they were sent away already and I got mixed in with these other group. Anyway I served in the army for a year and a half. And there's all kinds of details that I could bring up.

PAETKAU: What was it like in the army?

JACOB: Well, alright if you want to know. First of all they didn't know what to do with this group that I was in now you see. They didn't know where to assign them to. Where they could --they should be somewhere away from the front, from the frontier and so on because they could be traitors. And all this and that and so on so what did they do, they held us back and held us back and for--October, November, December, for three months they didn't know where to place us. Then after Christmas in 1923 they sent us--they gave us an assignment into the army. Now these three months we were going from one place to another. From one---the words run away on me sometimes. From one barrack to another. And all these barracks they were filthy. There were with dirt and lice and any bug that you can think of they were in there. Oh--- We came into the army, we were clean, we didn't have no lice or anything and here when we were there in these barracks it was terrible. It was almost chaos. So we wouldn't get any issued army clothing or anything. We were--after three months we were in our own clothing, we were sent to our new assignment there. We had our own clothing. The army was too poor; they didn't have enough clothing for their army. They weren't prepared for that. So anyway after Christmas they decided that they would send a group to a certain place. We would have to go and work for an army hospital. I guess that's what you call it. It has a little different name. Anyway we were taken to the one city, to Kherson and that was I think the Lord's leading. The way he led us to go to this city and it just happened to be that they needed some men in the offices and they wanted to have

JACOB (cont'd): some nurses or men that would nurse other people. And they wanted men for their warehouses and so on. And these big shots they came from this hospital and they had heard about us and they approached us and they said, "You are Mennonites aren't you?" "Yes." And they said that they wanted ten men to come over to their hospital. "Now what would the duties be?" "Well, they would have to stand sentry and work in the offices and different assignments there. So when he said about sentries, "Of course," he says "you would have to be a sentry with the gun." We refused. We said, "No go." "Well, how so?" "Well," we said, "that's against our conscience, and we're not taking any guns. We'll come and be sentries but without any guns." (Momentary interruption while Jacob excused himself) Well we refused to go with them. And they still wanted us though you see. There came the head of that hospital and a commissar. They were always going together to get somebody or for certain assignments. So they went for a conference and the next day they called us out. They had talked to me personally and they called me out and they called two more guys out and said to them, "Now look, we need two men, well three men, we need really more," he says, "We want ten men. But being you refuse to take arms, take up arms, we can't take them all but at least we want three men for the office." And he picked three men. He tested our writings and so on. Then after they had talked with us three they had another conference. And in the afternoon they came back again and said, "We want ten men." And you can come and work with us without bearing arms. "Alright, we are glad to do it," we said. So that's how it happened ten men were taken--there were at that time--you see we were sent to this one place to be on quarantine before we were taken to the assignments. So there were more, there were about 30 of our Mennonites that were in that place--in quarantine. So they picked ten,from out of these we were the first ones that had come there. We had to be, I think it was two weeks that we had to be on quarantine there. Och, it was all a big farce. Anyway they took us to their hospital. That was about 60 miles away from this. And this city was the headquarters of the division. And we had to go to a divisional hospital which was about 60 miles away in the city of Kherson. So we were ten men and they put us all in one room. The room was just big enough for ten cots. And we were so happy that we were alone. We were separate from all the Russians that worked there and so on. And we were singing; we all liked singing. And whoever could bring out a little something he'd sing along. We had quartettes there or rather sixtette. The other guys thought that they couldn't sing but we were---in the evening we would sit together and sing. Somebody had brought even some books along and so on. Then we'd have our devotional in the evenings and so on. So that went on for months. Everything was alright. Of course we had to be instructed in the Communist--they wanted to make real good Communists out of us because we had education and they thought that's what we need; we need these men. So

JACOB (cont'd): they tried to wean us and to get us into the Communism--teach us all the Communism that they could tell us and so on. But that didn't fizz on us very much. We just couldn't go along and that was it. But all this --that--there was jealousy growing in amongst the Russian fellows. They didn't like for instance that we were living separate there. There was one Communist especially he didn't like that--they knew that we were reading the Bible and all these songs that we were singing they were most of them were religious songs. We sang them in German or in Russian and we sang other Russian songs too. So jealousy grew amongst the other people and they complained. They went to the Commissar and the Commissar thought that we had something to do--first of all they came and took the songs away on us. Where most of the other Russians, our neighboring room there they liked when we were singing. They come and stood in the doorways and listened to that. But they came and took our songbooks away. We protested but we couldn't do anything. Then next they came and demanded our Bibles. Then we said, "No, you can't have our Bibles. The government, the policy is freedom of religion. And we have freedom of our conscience." And of course they wouldn't go for that and they took our Bibles away too. Then this went on for a couple of weeks. We didn't hear very much what was going on behind it but we saw that there was something going on. Then all of a sudden they called three men out of our group. We had to go to headquarters to the other city there. To the other city before the tribunal. Well I was one of them and two others. I was working in the warehouse. You had to be very very careful when you received food for instance, foodstuff and so on and sugar and tea and all that. When you divided that up and hand it out to the gang, to the other people, that's everybody gets his part and so on---well we thought, and also our---the office thought too that it was maybe something they tried to hang onto us or something. There were some things that had been going on that weren't quite right. The office knew all about that. They were doing that but we were innocent. We just handed out foodstuff and so on according to prescriptions. So they called us there and they asked us--they called me in first. I was all alone there and first there was a great big table and green cloth on it, and revolver on the table. Just like all these tribunals are. They started to ask me about what I was doing and how things were going and so on and I gave them answers the way I could give them--conscienceously. Then he went on, "What religion are you?" Then he picked me on religion. And those fellows they had either prepared themselves especially for this or they could trick me up. They held me there for two hours. They picked on me. First there was only one man and then another one came and then the two of them they threw up

JACOB (cont'd): questions, one after another. I told them, I says, when there were questions I couldn't answer I just said I'm no theologian to explain to you everything. I says I know the Bible what we believe and so on but I can't explain the whole Bible. And from the Bible he went to other things . He says--he tried to minimize God--he says, you always say that God is "Gerecht"

PAETKAU: Just?

JACOB: Just, yes. "You talk about your justice of God," he says. "Now what kind of a justice is that?" They read in the paper that there were so and so many children have died of starvation and so on. "Is that justice?" and so on. Well then--a foolish question you see. And I answered just as foolish. Just to tell them that --I think they realized themselves that it was a foolish question that they put up. Then they said to me, "Supposing you'd dissert the army?" I says, "I wouldn't dissert the army." He says, "Well suppose you would." And he says we'd go and chase around and couldn't find you and we'd go and take your dad and put him in jail. Now he says, what kind of justice would that--of your--in your case--you run away and hide somewhere and we'd take your dad into---. Well I says if I'd know that you had taken my dad I would turn up. I says,"I imagine that's what I would do, I don't know. I've never been in that position and I don't think that I ever will." Well then they jumped to other things. Anyway there were--for two hours they picked on me. Then after two hours they said, alright this is enough and they sent me out. They called the other two fellows in too-- performer you know--being they had called out. They asked for about ten minutes each they were in there and then they sent us back home. We talked to ourselves what could happen after this. And we kinda knew that it was the trouble that we had had about the song books and about the Bibles and so on. So when we came home and everybody asked us, "How was it?" and so on I says. How was it? They investigated and drilled us and so on but nothing has been said, nothing. It didn't take long and they let us have our Bibles, and the songbooks. Well then we knew that that was because of us being up there and they had grilled us there and they thought that we were entitled to them. Of course we had asked too. We were still insisting that they had to give them back. But all this year and a half in the army we never got clothing or anything--army clothing. And the food was miserable. It was--ach--there was no comparison with food that regular army gets and so on. But we survived the year and a half. I had the last--what was it, 4 or 5 months I was working in the office and then all of a

JACOB (cont'd): sudden the orders came through that we should be demobilized--in 1901 those that were born in 1901. So we were the first ones that were to be demobilized but being that I had a responsible position they wouldn't--they'd give all those lower--what do you call it, lower class--no what do you call it--

PAETKAU: --lower ranks.

JACOB: --lower ranks. And I had a little bit higher rank and they wouldn't let me go home. So this was a very small office. I was really alone. I was everything. I was looking after everything in that office. Then there was our manager or our boss was a doctor. And I spoke to him about it and I told him my story the way it was. At home we had applied to immigrate and that was just on a verge that it would happen. And I had at home a girlfriend too that was forsure immigrating. And I told him, I says, "If I'm , have to stay, it could happen that I was not, my girlfriend will go and I may have to stay here and all stuff like that." If he couldn't arrange things so that I could get back into the lower rank and be demobilized. "Well," he says, "We'll think about it." And this went on for a week or so and it just happened that another man that had been on furlough he came back and he had been working in this same office before. And I went and talked to him and asked him permission to--or asked him to install that man into my position and let me go home. And he did. So I came home, on April 14th I arrived home. And there's a whole story to tell how we were traveling. This was really only about 300 miles. And we were travelling five days to get home because there were no trains going and whenever the trains were going they would stop at the station, for days they would stand there. They wouldn't move. And those stations they were so dirty, so dirty, that was terrible. Maybe you have heard even now, the first immigrants, not immigrants but the first visitors to Russia from here. They are telling that in for instance the washroom there was no running water there or anything. There was just a platform and holes in it and shit and all over and things like that. That's the way it was then. Every corner you could see the human excrements; they were lying around there. You could hardly step anywhere without being dirty. Well anyway that's the way the condition is. And I arrived home in April and met of course my girlfriend. She was waiting. She didn't expect me then though. And in three months I was on the train to Canada. Everything just clicked like that.

JACOB (cont'd): Being this was in spring I didn't even have to worry about seeding or planting or anything. So we decided then that we would become engaged and go together to here, to Canada. Their family--my wife's family were what you call "Kassenpassagier". They had enough money to pay for their voyage and I had enough to pay to Montreal. So we were in the first train that arrived here; we were along with them. I came to Vineland. I was picked by people from Vineland to come to Vineland and also her family.

PAETKAU: Could I go back a little bit to Russia?

JACOB: Yah.

PAETKAU: I wanted to ask first of all, what had made you change your mind about bearing arms. You said you didn't want to take up arms.

JACOB: Well I tell you, that was my own experience in the self defense. The one night especially we--it was the night when we were giving up. You see we had been stationed in a certain village to keep the Makhno, the gangs, out of our villages--out of villages of the Catholic group of villages. There were groups of villages. You see there were Mennonite villages, and there were Catholics, and Lutherans and all (unintelligible). They were scattered in the same region, but in different districts like. Anyway we were defending a Catholic village at the time. It just happened that I was riding a horse. What do you call them in English? Anyway a friend of mine and I we had to deliver some papers to another place. This was in the evening and we rode--riding--anyway we were riding along there and came to the place and we delivered the papers. When we had them delivered we wanted to go back to our station again . And right--there was a village side by side with the Russian village. This German village was kind of a higher up on a hill and that was down below; the Russian village. And that Russian village we knew that Makhno gangs were in there. So we were riding along the road here and all of a sudden we hear a bang and be-e-e-e-m; we noticed that they were shooting at us. So I says to my friend, I says, "Do you hear that?" And no sooner there was another couple of bullets just whizzing beside us. The one, I had a glove on and the one went so close to the glove that I felt through the glove the concussion you know on my skin. Well we knew that we had to see to get away and we gave the spurs to our horses and we rode as fast as we could. After awhile we slowed down a little bit and we saw it was dark by then--real dark. And the terrain on the right from us was kind of hollows and hills. And all of a sudden we see a group of people standing in one of those hollows.

JACOB (cont'd): I says to my friend, I says, "Call the (what do we call that again when you have a certain word?)---

PAETKAU: Password?

JACOB: Password, yes. "Call out the password." We did and no answer from there. So we were baffled. We thought that they were people from--Reds perhaps. They didn't know the password. So I says, "Well let's go and---" and we gave the horses the spurs again and boy we rode as fast as we could. And these other people they stayed. We noticed that they stayed. They stayed behind; not that they followed us or anything. Then we came back to our station. We were just ready to--our time had just passed up and we wanted to go to sleep, it was about midnight. And here a call comes out, "We need volunteers to go to Halbstead." That was our headquarters and tell them that we are retreating, and we need night lodging. Or we need lodging because they wouldn't come there until morning. So my friend he was quick just like that. He says, "We'll go." We were tired. But he saw a way to get out of this. Everything was lost. We knew that everything was lost. So when they were retreating we rode ahead and gave this orders down there at headquarters. I says to my friend, "What now?" And he says, "We'll just keep on riding home because everything is retreating. So why not?" And we started off riding home. We were riding through our Mennonite villages then and we saw how the people were packing up to flee. You know, to get away. I says to my friend, "What do you think? Will our parents go too?" "Well," he says, "What can we do?" "Well I didn't know." Well anyway we stopped at one place to eat. Then we rode on to get home and we got home about 4:00 in the morning. My dad was very surprised but he was very glad to see me. I says to dad, "You know," I says, "There's a whole colony of Mennonites they're retreating; they're going into the . I says, "What will you do?" He says,"I don't know what to do." He says, "You go and (we were eating, or I had something to bite before I go and lie down) and he says, "You go and lie and have a rest and by morning I'll make up my mind." And when I got up in the morning my dad says, "We're going to stay." " We have pulled through up to this day." And he says, "We'll see what's going to happen from now." So that was--now all these happenings, how one thing hit the other. Here we were delivering our things there at the office, at the village, we were riding home, people were shooting at us and so on. We those other people we didn't even know. We don't even know today who they had been. They could have been Reds and they could have gotten us just like that.

JACOB (cont'd): But they didn't--they weren't sure and we weren't sure. So we got away there and come to this place there and then later on. What I am trying to say is, all these circumstances they made me make up my mind. And of course I became older. You know in 1918 I was baptized and after that I went into the self defense. And I had no trouble about it. It didn't trouble me at all. Then when I went through all this that made me sink. And I began to see God's leading into a different direction. Later on, soon after I returned, I think it was that same day yet, (this was in 1919) That same day--I don't know if you have an imagination how our villages were. They all had these brick walls for fences and so on. And it just happened to be a real nice day in February. That was the day when I came home, when we retreated. And in the afternoon--and I went downtown, down the village to hear what was going on and so on. Everything was so quiet. And we were sitting in the sun against one of these fences. And we were talking about one and another thing and it just happened that we were living here and there was a bend in the street like that. --of our village. And we were sitting about here. Just while we were sitting there and talking about what was going on we see a bunch of riders, about 20 riders, a gang, coming in. Just as all the same, the gangsters did. They had their wagon where the Commander would sit on and then they had us (unintelligible). And I had to go back and face them to get home, because I didn't want to go home without--mother was alone there and father probably would hide somewhere. And these other guys they just jumped the fence and ran quickly in the other direction. Something just told me I'll go and face them. And I just had the feeling that I wasn't alone. Going through all this trouble in the self defence I would be able to defend myself here too without arms. So I went on. I had a fur cap on and it just happened that our neighbour was the village office--the village Schultze. And this group stopped there. Now of course their idea was that all that we all were armed very heavily and so on. And the commander got off and went in and told the Schultzen that he had to see to it that all the arms out of the village would have to be brought to that place. And I don't know what they talked there anymore but I was facing these other guys that stopped outside. While I come walking along there (I was young, I was only 18 years old) he come up to me, a rider come up to me and says to me, "Say,"he says, "Did you bear arms?" I says, "Yes, I did bear arms." He says, "Where are your arms?" I says, "I turned them in." He says, "Oh, then you are one of those that has been bearing arms and shooting

JACOB (cont'd): at us and so on," "Well," I says to him, "Now look," I says, "if you are the Red Army ,I have never carried arms against the Red Army," I says, "We were defending ourselves against the gangsters and hoards that were robbing us, and torturing us." I says , "When we heard that the Red Army was fighting us that's why we retreated." "Oh,---". And he wouldn't take that. And he came and he had a short whip and he hit me over the head and right away there were 3-4 other guys around me. And the one howls out "Sabre" and swings it over my head. And I says, "Now look," I says,--he--this one that spoke to me first he said again that. He says, "He bore arms." I says, "Yes, I did. But, I says, "I didn't call you gangsters or anything. If you are Red Army I didn't carry arms against you. But I did against gangsters and bandits and so on." Well, then they were swinging, yelling and swearing and so on and I stood there. So one--I guess a deputy or something comes up and he says, "Leave him alone. Let him wait until the Commander comes and he'll tell us what to do." So, and these were the same gangsters that had been robbing us. But now he claimed that I called him a gangster. He really gave himself away. But anyway the Commander came out and they sent me on to his wagon. And that was forsure--if you were taken on their wagon somewhere that was the end of it. So I crawled on the wagon and I said that I had to wait until the commander came out. I said a prayer . And my mother stood across the street and saw and she came up and says, "Jasch, was ist los? So I told her. I tried to quiet her down. I says, "We'll see what the commander will say." When the Commander came out and this guy reported him, he says, "Here's one that bore arms and he said that --he called us gangsters." And I says, "That's not true. I didn't call you gangsters. I said if you were--that I was carrying against--that I was defending ourselves against gangsters. But I says that if you are the Red Army I says I didn't defend myself against you because we can't fight--we don't want to fight the Red Army." Well he took it. He says, "You can go home." He says, "We are going to have a gathering of young people here at five o'clock and see that we are not going to miss you." "Alright," I says, "I'll be there." And so I went home. Now that was--I couldn't help it--that was God's leading. And all these things they made me make up my mind that perhaps it wasn't right--it wasn't necessary to bear arms. I don't know the people they come and say, "What if they would come and attack your wife and so on, what would you do?" I know we have lots of people that don't feel like that. They say, they should (unintelligible) they talk about hanging and we talk about capital punishment and all

JACOB (cont'd): this and that. The trouble is that we haven't got it, too lenient and all this and that. Well all that made me turn against bearing arms. And I must say there was another thing when I was called into the Red Army. Now, I said to myself, "How can I bear arms for somebody that we don't like?" I couldn't fight for the ideology that I despised and so on. That was natural to me. Well, anyway that's, if that answers your question.

PAETKAU: What about when the White Army came into your villages, did some of the Mennonite boys and men join the White Army?

JACOB: You see, I must talk about the self defence again. The organization of the Self Defence did not dissolve completely. There was one group of people, they were under the leadership of a German man. They stuck together and they were fighting against the Red Army all along. But they were men, they had to themselves to fight the Reds. And I must say that that group of people they were sometimes behaving just as bad as the gangsters. Not against our people but against the gangsters and so on. They have been terrible, they have tortured people and they went into their houses and I know that a fellow showed me what he had taken from people. He says that's all stuff they had stolen from other people so he had a right to go steal it from them. I couldn't go with that. Yes there were lots of our Mennonites they were fighting for the Whites against the Reds. Of course lots of them they were injected into the White Army too. My brother was one of them that was drafted. But during that time in 1920 when I was in there was a whole battalion of Mennonites, purely, purely Mennonites that were in Crimea. They retreated back into the Crimea and there they were fighting the Reds.

PAETKAU: About how many would there have been? Do you know?

JACOB: Oh, perhaps. Well I don't know. I couldn't give you a-- perhaps there were--altogether perhaps there were 100. Maybe not quite that many.

PAETKAU: What about the Red Army? Did any join the Red Army? Any Mennonites?

JACOB: Oh, yes. There were odd ones that joined at freewill, voluntarily. But they were confused people, real confused. Their minds set--when they saw that--they even joined Makhnow, some of them. They went along. What I have heard, I can't say that forsure but when they took all

JACOB (cont'd): the money away from my dad there was supposed to be one of them was a Ger--a Mennonite too. But they were no good men anyway and then they thought this was their opportunity. Oh yes there were.

PAETKAU: You mentioned the Lutheran and Catholic and Russian villages and so on around. What were the relationships like between the Mennonite villages and say the other German villages, the Lutheran and the Catholic and so on?

JACOB: Well, we weren't--we were separatists and didn't mix with them. Although we had in our villages Catholics and Lutherans and all people like that living. They were--mostly they were trade people like smiths, woodworkers and stuff like that. But each village had some of these people, these tradesmen because they had to have them to do repairs and make wagons and make, for instance there were shops where there were dozens of wagons made for one year. They were often, often, they were of other religion. But you see our villages they were--there was not even allowed that anybody would sell his property to a Russian. And I think that holds to a Jew or to a, even to a German Catholic or Lutheran. I don't remember this thought just came to me now--I know that it was restricted to sell to Russians but I'm wondering whether it was restricted to sell to other religions people. I know that these people they lived in our villages. For instance my dad employed up to about 20-25 people in the factory . And one or 2 were Germans. Perhaps they were Lutherans. I don't even know because I was quite young when the first world war started. And these people they were even German citizens. And they were all exiled into Siberia. So I don't quite--know whether they were Lutherans or Catholics. But otherwise, for instance, we had our own schools you see, and all that. For instance the higher school like the Zentralschule, like Secondary School and also the higher, the Kommerzschule in Halbstadt that was one of the highest institutions we Mennonites had; a private. And there were many of the Catholic and Lutheran neighbours that were going to those schools . Where I went to Alexanderkrone to that secondary school there were others too. Of course there were even Jews and Russians going to that. And there were another sect of religion, Bowlcons (?), they were living near our villages there too and they were going to our schools because that was a very religious sect. And Russians too.

PAETKAU: What were the feelings like toward the Tsar among the Mennonites.

JACOB: Well. This I have read quite a bit about it and heard quite a bit about it. I must say, my family-- I would think that my family was favouring the Tsar. We didn't I don't know, I really don't know. I know that my dad was a politician. He was one of those people that was reading papers, outside papers; like Russian papers and so on. And German papers that come from outside of our village--which was a little strange you see. I know there was one other old man he would read a Russian paper from Moscow. He subscribed to that paper. But I can't say that we were slow--not patriotic to the Tsar regime. We didn't know what was going on. They didn't bother us and our forefathers had had those privileges from them so why should we be against them? Of course there were things that perhaps people would be shocked, if they hadn't heard about that before. For instance in 1905 there was a Revolution. My dad had trouble at that time. Almost more trouble at that time with the employees than he did in the second world war, or in the second revolution. The first revolution was after the Russian Japanese were (unintelligible), Russia lost the war at that time. And then there was a revolution there. And there was--my dad had employed a man; he was a very smart man and a very good worker and he was a supervisor with our machinery and so on. And when this came along, the revolution came along then he was one of the leaders of the revolution. And he demanded money from my dad and all stuff like that. I was only five years old but that has scared me terribly because one Saturday (this is just one episode out of that) One Saturday evening they had been drinking. I guess they had been planning this to demand more money. This leader comes into our--there was a hallway and then there was our dining room I would say. Somehow dad must have had words with him before. And dad comes in and he locks the door. And this guy goes along the gangway there and first he wants to enter through the door and the door is locked. Then he goes and punches the window and breaks the window. I was a young kid and I was playing with--had a box with some stuff; play things--and I had just dumped it when I heard that window break. No sooner I turned around and I go see what happened. And boy that guy stands there and has a revolver, swearing like anything. My mother I guess goes and opens the door,"If you want to come in alright come in, let's talk." And this guy I guess he had a little bit too much to drink and he come to my dad and he started to tackle my dad. And mother steps between and says, "You leave my husband alone." This was a little bit of a skirmish like that and finally my mother goes and graps the"--fork" (you know what that is?) a steel rod about that long. And she stands there between this guy and my dad and she says, "Batroy (?) if you're going to touch my husband then you see

JACOB (cont'd) here." And there was no touching, no shooting or anything going on then. But I remember--some things I remember and other things I was told that after---for years when that subject would come up I would always turn sick. I was scared that--I was so scared from that time. But anyway that--I remember that my parents or somebody called a--our village was divided into a "
You know and so on they were people that would come in and help discuss things if there was some kind of a trouble between neighbours and so on. Then the one person could go to a and ask him to help come and negotiate this trouble or try and talk it over. And they had called neighbours over and they were sitting in our room while this guy came in and talked things with my dad. So that he--just to avoid too much trouble. But I know my dad had a gun in the house and so on but he never made use of it. I don't know, I think dad, in those days it was something to make himself feel more secure or something.

PAETKAU: Did he talk about politics at home?

JACOB: My dad? Oh he probably would have. I can't say too much about that he did while we were younger . Later on what occupied him mostly was what all this would come to. Because, as soon as the first world war started he had to shut down his business, and fortunately he had gone into subsidiary businesses like the orchards and the school--nursery school---auch no--tree nursery, that's the name. So we tried our best to get along with that work in it as much as we could. But then when there was no buying any more and no trade of it at all we didn't plant anymore then we just let the thing go. I remember that we had such great crops. In those days plums, a certain kind of plum was very popular and we had oodles of them, we had tons of them. We tried to sell them at the markets, at the nearest cities but--. My dad tried to send them to Moscow and so on but that was all during the war and you couldn't--all these things were hampered by military shipments. There was no way. So he hasn't talked politics to me. Perhaps it was because we were so young and--. But dad wasn't very educated man but he knew his business well. There is a lot to that business. He took it over from his dad when everything was hand work. All the printing was done by hand and all the forms that they printed with. They were all carved, hand carved and so on. Then dad went into apprenticeship with another company and he learned the trade there and tried to build up his own business. When dad was in business there were only one more and our neighboring villages. But years ago when--in the 1800's there were many many more of these dye shops around. But either they went bankrupt or they went out of business because business wasn't going good enough.

JACOB (cont'd): Now my dad wasn't--what dad was producing was mostly exported into other countries; into the Balkans. But my dad didn't do it himself . He had--there was a Jewish company in the city that did the trading. My dad--in other words it was really as if my dad worked for them and they took all the supplies that my dad was producing. They took all that and did business with that, exporting it and so on.

PAETKAU: How did he react, do you remember, when the Tsar was killed and the new government established? How did your father or how did the Mennonites react to that?

JACOB: Well, you see that was a temporary government. That was a Socialist government and they thought--I kind of think now when I think back that my dad appreciated that. Because the Tsars had--there was trouble--the Tsar had given, passed a law, the government had passed a law that all the land of the Germans had to be liquidated. Taken away on them. There were other things that would mean a lot to our colonies and so on. When the Tsar was eliminated that law was changed. People kind of felt better about it when the new government came in. But whoever looked a little bit deeper, was involved in politics, they must have seen that that couldn't go on like that. The Reds they were too strong a government. It was really a coalition at that time from what I see now.

PAETKAU: Could you see the Revolution coming?

JACOB: Here? Oh there.

PAETKAU: Yes. At that time.

JACOB: Well to a certain extent yes because we had read about all the skirmishes and all the protests and demonstrations and so on in the big cities against the government. And of course the war had taken up.all the wealth of the country. And hampered with anything, all the industries, and everything; they didn't work anymore. That was all going for the government, working for the government. Then when the war broke down the factories couldn't start up again. During the revolution you couldn't buy a share, you couldn't buy anything. You couldn't buy a match. There were times when we would have an eternal fire in the stove just because you couldn't get matches. And you couldn't buy oil for the lamps or anything. We had electricity in our shop and so on and in our home. But that was taboo as soon as the war started. You couldn't

JACOB (cont'ed): buy the resource to and the energy for the motors and so on. Oh it was a time when people didn't know what would happen. But being we had had a revolution and-- some 10-15 years before it could be that the Bolsheviks would take over. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised if my dad or other politicians that really were interested in politics that they saw that come. That they saw the revolution coming.

-- End of tape

Part II of Interview #11

Interviewer: Henry Paetkau, Graduate history student at the University of Waterloo on behalf of Conrad Grebel College under the direction of Walter Klaassen.

Date: Thursday, June 17, 1976 ; 10:00-12:00 a.m.

PLACE: Residence of Interviewee - Jacob Fast, 53 Menno St., Waterloo, Ontario

JACOB: Well we can take it up where I came home on April 14 and then my wife and I decided to get married. As it usually is,(my dad was dead by then, he died in 1920.) well anyway I came home and we decided after that that we would get married and we had to have a Verlobungsbuch My mother who couldn't go with us to America she stayed back, she said at least I want you to have the Verlobungsbuch --engagement fast. She said why not invite some friends and so on and have it a little bigger size so that we have something to remember? She went to talk to the parents of my wife and they said O.K. to everything. Well we had talked to them already . So there wasn't too much time left for us to get married in Russia but then we postponed that until we get here and we wanted to work here first for a few years and then get married. We used that little timebefore our immigration , there was only May and part of June left . We used that time to make visits as it was usual at that time, a couple would visit all their kin, like brothers and sisters and so on. We used our time for that and preparation for the voyage. We went on until June 20, 1924, the first train was loaded at the station nearest to our village. There were things there that I'm not sure I should mention for instance my wife she doesn't come from the Molotschna, she was born in Samara which is Queebashaef now, that's way up at the Gulf, there was a settlement of Mennonites and that's where she was born. Her grandparents they immigrated to Russia in 1860's something like that. Somehow her dad--there needs to be an explanation to this but we are getting away from our routine.

PAETKAU: O.K. tell me a little bit about her background.

JACOB: About her background, alright. Her dad was born in Molotschna of a great big family . As it was in the Molotschna there was no more land to be had for the younger people to settle on. So what do they do they look out at other places for land and there were the community of the Molotschna Mennonites. They went to work and financed, lend by amongst the Russians and other Provinces like. So it happened that my mother's

JACOB (cont'd)dad went to the Volva, they were, well there were all kinds of rumors that there was land there to be had and her dad went there to look at the land and so on and when he first time came there what he did he went to the preacher of the village and my wife's grandfather was a preacher so they talked with him about land and so on and he gave them the directive and while they were there that was the first time they had a look at her mother. Anyway they didn't buy land but there was a big tract of land that was for rent, government land, the rent was very cheap and they could rent it for as long as 36 years and that's what they did. And her dad went back home and talked to his parents about it and everything was approved that he would go there but then he didn't want to go alone ; he had seen this girl . Somehow there was not much visiting ahead of time he just went there and asked the parents about giving him that girl and that's what we have out of diaries about grandfather and mother. Anyway he came there and asked for this girl and they said O.K. if you want to settle here we'll help you along . By that time these people, the grandparents of my wife , were pretty well to do because they had come to Russia not as poor immigrants, they had brought their implements along, their cattle along and all stuff like that. And they were all set up so that was quite a big family I think there were 9 in the family. The brothers they like my wife's uncles they went in and rented of the same land so that they had kind of a settlement there now because for 36 years it was worth to build and there was an option on it that they could buy that land later on or even before the 36 years would be over. So they established themselves on this land and they were quite prosperous. It was very good land, very good crops and it was they started business, my father-in-law went into implement business. First a few pieces and then more and more and finally had quite a big implement business, selling implements to not only German people who would settle down there or Mennonites that would settle anywhere in the surroundings but to the Russian people too. All this made him quite successful . Then this was around the turn of the century in 1908, something like that . In 1905 as I mentioned before there was a Revolution that was during the war or after the Russian-Japanese War there was a Revolution . Many many of these exiles, now just a minute it seems to me there should be a correction about the time when they settled there and so on.
I don't want to say anything that doesn't....well I have a source to check. While they were living on this land there was quite a big family to the Nickels. My wife is a Nickel and there were 7 youngsters in the family and business went on until the war stopped.

JACOB
(cont'd) Then of course there were no more implements to be had and also the repair parts nobody could get the repair parts because all that came from America. They were McCormick, well that was the main one out there. Well anyway the business didn't go so good but the crops they weren't too bad . In 1917 when the Red Revolution started and the Tsar was thrown out and killed the government released all the political prisoners from Siberia. They were tracking back in big hordes/tracking back into European Russia where their provisions and so on were very poor and then there were so many gangsters among these political people so my father-in-law he figured he wasn't safe there. They lived near the railway so they left everything and wentto the Molotschna. Because in the Molotschna my father-in-law had his parents and brothers and sisters . So at first they were living with them a little while and then finally they bought a place in one of the villages there and lived there for 3-4 years and so after this the immigration started working and my father-in-law was one of the first ones just to get out of the country. So he started selling his property to get, he figured this way if I'm not selling now in the beginnning nobody will buy my place later on when there's so many immigrate out of Russia. So he sold his property that he had just recently a few years bought and went to another village and it happened to be my home village that they went to. They happened to have some relatives there and there happend to be a place vacant that they could/buy and move in . So they moved into this place in our village. That was in 1920. The aftermath of the Revolution was still going on, there was still anarchy and all this was still going on there in the villages. My father-in-law was quite a hotheaded guy he wouldn't let just anybody pull around with him and do whatever they liked. During this time there was much--the army would demand horses and wagons to transport--they would demand transportation. I can't just think always of all these words, well anyway--My father-in-law he was not always willing to supply transportation for these people so he got into trouble with all the heads. In 1919 that was the year when I left. In that year there was a village burned down, one of our neighboring villages and everything was very critical at the time. So my father-in-law decided we couldn't stay we had to go to the Krimea. He hitched up his horses and wagon and too his oldest son that was left, his two other boys they had gone and were lost, unheard of. He took his oldest boy who could have been drafted in the army and so on, they went to the Krimea. At the same time, or in the same month I left by train to the Krimea, to a different village than where these people went. So

we were in the Krimea for six months and in May we returned home. That's, in the meantime one of the boys of my father-in-law like my wife's brother turned up in the Krimea sick with typhoid. He died while in the home where my father-in-law lived. Then when the Whites were going back or when the Reds were driven back into Russia and the Whites were going through our villages again all these people who had fled from their homes and sought refuge, you could call them refugees because that's what they were, they went behind the army and went home again. That was really the last time there was a chance of moving back and forth. So, I came back then, back home too. I was 19 yrs. old and I hadn't-- I knew my girl but now she lived--that was during the time I was in school--I said that before, that's where I really saw her the first time as a young kid 13-14 yrs. Now she was a young girl, not too old, she was only 16 at the time. We started going together, that's really the background of her. That's how she came into our village, by being refugees from their home. Now, shall I break off here about this and go on with the deal. (Silence) So I had then in the arm--we had decided to get married and on June 20th the first train load of immigrants left the station at our village there and we went up north, we would have to travel through whole Russia, all the way to the Baltic provinces to the Baltic City of Riga, that's where we first were said we would embark into a boat but that didn't turn out that way we had to go a little bit further south there's another port Libau that's where we embarked into the first ship. Now this transportation this voyage through Russia took us 14 days. Then with all the trouble, when I talk about the train you musn't imagine a passenger train like they got here they were all freight--(silence) that was really a freight train and we had to accommodate us there and I forget how many people we were in that train . Anyway, if we got to a certain station then usually the first thing that we did is to grab our teakettles and run for hot water . And usually there was no hot water then we had to get at least cold water and if we wouldn't leave right away with the train, very often it would happen that it would take an hour or two then of course we would prepare a meal outside of the cars and have our meals. This delay happened being this was a special train and they didn't care too much and sometimes we were sitting a whole day in the one station waiting for orders to move us. But it was beautiful anyway we were going through the Russian timber woods there and so on and there were places where many of our immigrants , many fathers of the immigrants had been working there during the war. They were conscripted

and they had to do Forsteidienst . Well these weren't Forsteidienst land but they were camps where these men had to work in the wood cutting timber and so on. Such beautiful trees!. And anybody who has an eye for beauty that was really--then of course for me I had my girlfriend along with me and we enjoyed that together. Often we sat just sat in the car while the train was going and have our legs, feet dangling down, sitting on the floor and looking out the door was open a little bit and way into the night even . So when we arrived, after 14 days when we arrived to the border. The border city was Sebezh we had to have another inspection of our papers and all the papers except the passport was taken away from us, in fact we didn't even have passports, we had only a slip of paper that we were allowed to get out of Russia. But there were other papers, registration papers and so on and being I had been in the army, just recently returned from the army I had, for me there was another paper that I had never got so I was kind of jittery when this last inspection was going on because they demanded this paper or they would demand this paper from me and I couldn't supply it. They would take me off and get me to Siberia or home at least. So this took a few hours and then all of a sudden they --in the stations were these bells, the first bell, the second bell when the train would leave and the bell rang and the train started moving each-- nobody who didn't go through it can imagine the feelings we had, the relief, we didn't have to be scared anymore. There wasn't very far to go and there was the Estonian City and that was on the other side of the border. And they opened up to us, "You Are Welcome". Boy, that was tremendous. So we travelled something in that place again and that border city we had to go through quarantine and we had to be deloused and all our clothing was taken away and were pushed into great big ovens and baked so that all the lice and vermins would--well we didn't have too much there were probably were lice because I came out of the army and we were so lousy in the army it was terrible. Not during our service but during the time of going from one barrack to another . Later on we cleaned up and we were in a hospital there, we were all clean. But anyway we had to go through quarantine on account of diseases and so on and another inspection and finally we started going to Riga. In Riga we didn't stop very long; they shipped us out right away to Libau and as far as I remember we arrived in the evening . We had to stay then in our train until morning when we disembarked. We left the train then in the morning and embarked into the boat. That was only a small boat and had to go only through the Baltic into as far as into the Northern Sea as far as Belgium and Antworp, we would take the ocean boat. On the boat

it was very uncomfortable there, there were no cabins that was a real immigrant boat, everybody was just on perches like that, on boards, and that was where we were lying and well the meals weren't too bad because the CPR looked after that. I forget how long we travelled on the boat---I know on the 9th of July we left Antworp so we arrived there about the 7th and then we moved from this boat into the other but my trouble was I contacted Malaria on that first boat. Malaria was the disease that was in our villages going from one place--for instance my wife was so sick the time, the day of their auction sale when they were selling out she was lying on a bare floor and didn't know how to get over that day. Now somehow I must have contacted that Malaria and it started on the boat which was very unusual for anybody as a matter of fact. Anyway they took me to the hospital there and by the time we came to Antworp I felt a little bit better but malaria has a routine of coming back every other day . You're sick one day and the next day you're not sick and then you rest up a little bit and then it knocks you down again . So I came onto this boat with malaria and they started feeding me quinine. That cut it down a little bit but I was always going around all this voyage over the ocean I was walking around with, I wasn't seasick still I had terrible headache and every other day I had tremendous fever. That kept on until we arrived in Canada, Quebec. It took us 10 days, the voyage. We arrived in Quebec in the evening. It was a beautiful sight. Have you been in Quebec? There's a boardwalk and along the boardwalk they had lights , electic lights and so on and when we looked out there all these lights were on and the whole city was lit up. It was really beautiful. We haven't gone through there to see that again to remind us of the days. Anyway we arrived in Quebec in the evening and in the morning we disembarked. There was a commission from the board of our Mennonite board of settlement.

PAETKAU - Do you remember who was there?

JACOB - Yes. There was a Mr. Sawatsky there, from out West. He came direct from the Board and there were other members of the Board from Vineland. There was Chris Fretz and Rev. Coffman . Those two were there, they greeted us and helped us along because most of us hardly anybody could talk English. From the boat we had to go into a train and it took us two days to get to Vineland. Of course traveling all this way through Quebec there and so on we saw all the dilapidated French villages and farms ,rocks, mostly rocks and so on and we didn't know what we were, had to expect for us and so on. But we were going on and before we arrived to Toronto a group of people was designated for Markham and they left the

station in Toronto. I said before we get--that's not right and in Toronto they left the train and went to Markham. They were picked up by Markham Mennonites . The rest of us--I must make sure that it's right the way I'm telling it. This group, these two board members from Vineland , the one especially he was there to look for help for the summer, to give the people work and so on. So he picked all families with adults . There were very few, just the odd family that had kids about 10 or 8 years old and so on and of course I was a single man and they picked me too . And we went to Vineland to work there. We kinda liked to go there because we had heard that that was a fruit country and so on . I especially loved it because I had grown up with fruit and dad had fruit orchards. We arrived in--we had to take a different route from Toronto and the main train left for Waterloo. They arrived here at the--Allen St., there was a station--no that's not true, they arrived here on Erb St. at the station and from there they walked to the Mennonite Church , Now we arrived at the station in Vineland and there we saw all the orchards and so on. Then the people that we were assigned to they picked us up and on the truck and took us to our future home. It was a brand new building built especially for us whoever would come, emigrants. It was divided like two apartments. So they put 15 people--not just a minute, there were 18 people in this house, three families. So the one family--two families had the bedroom upstairs that was all their living quarters and so on and downstairs we had the dining room at the one end and the kitchen and the other end the Nickels were living in, with me at that. So they divided that all with curtains,the whole room and there was only a bed, or three beds, yes, behind this curtain. Old people and then there were 3 girls, there must have been 3 beds behind the curtain. There was another bed under the stairway, just so it was squeezed in there and that was my brother-in-law and I were sleeping in there and the stairway was without backboards so that anybody as they would walk up, dirt and everything would land on our bed, so finally we just took some kind of a cloth and nailed that on there so that that wouldn't fall into our faces. Well usually nobody walked there and of course we had an outie--(sigh) and they were permanent people that lived like that. Like my wife's parents they were well educated and had been well to do and on just above us there was a family of five, the old man he had so much land and sheep that he couldn't count them, he didn't know how many sheep he had; he had a big estate. And on the other side, the third family, he was, the head of the family he was an engineer, a machine--

PAETKAU - Do you remember the names of these other families?

JACOB - Yes. There was the Cornies's, this was John Cornies V all descendants of the well known Cornies that settled in the Molotschna and the other family was Rempel. You know Cornie Rempel from the Brethren, that's, he was there too, him and his parents with their family. Cornie, at that time he was only a boy, 12 years old, something like that. So we were living there; we arrived on the 19th on a Saturday afternoon in Vineland. Then the next day was Sunday of course; good Mennonites they thought we had to go to church . The local Mennonites was Rev. Coffman, so they loaded us onto a truck and we trucked down to the church, got off and went in . Well it was all strange, people--who are they, this and that and so on. But we could sing very good and all things like that. Well anyway the church service went on and we were placed just so that I could look through a window onto No. 8 Highway. The church was right on No. 8 Highway. And we looked there and watched all the cars go by, one after another. Well I couldn't understand anything of the preaching so I sat there and counted the cars. Well when the minister was finished with his sermon he asked us, our group to sing a song, in German of course. We sang, "Nun danket Alle Gott" And boy, you should have seen the people there, the whole church was crying for us. It was overwhelming altogether you see, but even those people there they were all crying. Well anyway we got over that too.

PAETKAU - How did you relate with these people, the Mennonites? How did they treat you?

JACOB - Well, how they treated us--very well, very well. They were just great. But they didn't know who we were, what we were, and how we had been living in the old country and all that so they thought they are just Russians you see. What is it just Russian? They didn't know. They had heard all kinds of things that they were Reds, the Russians were Red and we could be Reds too. Well anyway the treatment was very good. Maybe I could read little bit from here on . Here I say on 9th of July we left Antworp. It was berry harvest in Vineland when we arrived there and we were to pick them by piece work, getting paid by the box . That took awhile to get onto it, especially us men, but soon we were doing other work getting paid by the hour. I had to do odd jobs in the greenhouse, etc. As winter approached my fiance and I decided it would go better if we could get married and work together to establish ourselves. Our courtship had lasted long enough and we knew each other pretty well by now. Anna's parents, my wife's name was Anna, agreed and gave their permission to get married. This meant that I would have to be able to find a job to be able to support a family. It turned out well when we learned that a farmer nearby wanted a couple to work for him on the farm, the man outside as farm help and the woman as housekeeper. The farmer was contacted and the interview turned out like this:

JACOB (cont'd) - Farmer: "Hab gehört du willst a job habe." You understand that? "Ia, ich nochte gerne abeiten." Question: "Kannst du pluge?" Answer: "Ja, ich hab schon gepflügt?" Question: "Kannst au milcke?" Answer: "Nein, ich kann nisht mölken aber ich kann lenen. Wievill Kuhe send zu mölken?" Question: "Zehne. Wie alt bischt du?" Answer: "Vier und zwanzig. Wann konnen wia anfangen und wieviel Lohn bezahlt ihr? Farmer looking at his wife because she always had to say the last word. The Mrs.: "Wir ha'en gemient 60 dollar und de board für's halbe--für's coupale waere gute lohn und ihr könnt um erscht next monat anfange." Farmer: "Wir schne euch denn (after he had said this) wir schne euch denn." And that was the end of the interview. He was a small man but the Mrs. was a big woman so we were committed to work on a farm. We felt it was God's hand. We stayed there until July 15, 1925, when language problems and the hard work brought things to a point unbearable for me. The housekeeper was liked very much , this was my wife. But by-then our first baby was expect, reason enough to quite the job. But I have to refer back since we were not even married yet when I had this interview and so on. Before this place some preparations had to be made like getting a minister to perform the marriage in the German language, since the immigrant ministers were not licensed to do that. In fact we had no church of our own. We attended the Mennonite church in Vineland . Rev. Coffman said he would officiate in Pennsylvania Dutch and we could invite a minister, a Russian immigrant as speaker. We did invite Rev. Jacob Friesen of the Brethren church in Kitchener. That was...some of the Friesens live there yet, I think two older girls live there. A problem arose when we wanted to exchange rings. The Old Mennonites did not believe in it but Rev. Coffman was understanding when we insisted on having rings and explained to him what a ring meant to us. But we had to put them on outside of the church. In fact he helped me buy the ring. There were no flowers in the church either. And also my wife was not supposed to wear a veil. So my wife says, "Then I'm not going to get married." "I can't have a veil; for us , our young people that means chastity--" We explained all that but that was taboo to them. He says "I can ask the congregation to allow you flowers in the church, but not that." The church was full of immigrants and friends of the congregation . A storekeeper was taking us to church in his car and also back to the house where we had fellowship with our friends. We had three more days before we went to the farm . The word honeymoon was unknown to us. And that's the way it was 1924. So after this we moved onto that farm , my wife and I. It wasn't much to move, a couple of suitcases and that was all. It wasn't very far away from where my in-laws lived. They lived still in Vineland with one son and one daughter at home and two girls they were working in Vineland.

PAETKAU - Do you remember the name of this farmer?

JACOB - Yes, Emerson Culp. I don't know if you know the market here but there's a farmer bringing fruit there every year, all summer like. He's right on Scott St. when you walk in on Scott St, right on the right hand--he's a distant relative of this Culp that I worked for. And in the Culp family there was an adopted girl and the grandpa was Wismer, he was a Rev. Wismer too. So we started up working there. The trouble for us was the language. They spoke German so we spoke German, it was this Dutch, Pennsylvania Dutch and we couldn't get onto it at first. That went on and we had quite a bit misunderstandings between us. At first, she was the peacemaker in the family, the farmer's lady and very nice woman. She would talk to my wife about things and my wife related it to me and then I tried to adjust myself to this. But the farmer was a terribly hard worker. My goodness he was small but he was so wiry and so strong I often wondered how he could stand it. So this was; we started in the fall and I had to get out to the ploughing and all that--that "pluge", which the plough was different completely than the ploughs we had in the old country. There were no wheels even in the front . He says, "If we put wheels on it's much worse than this." And there were so many rocks. Where I learned ploughing was by cultivating new land, there's was bush chopped down and stumps were pulled out and so on and I had to plough that land. And there were all the rocks and the big roots in the ground and then every once in awhile I got a stab in the ribs. Oh there was so many things and he was--he wouldn't talk very much because he knew I couldn't understand. And when he said something he just walked by, he wouldn't stop and explain things to me, he just walked by and he mumbled that under his...well anyway it was pathetic. I couldn't like it, I couldn't get onto it; I tried, I tried my best because I knew this was the idealist setting that we had. So I went on; during the winter it wasn't too bad --cleaning out the stable and all that wasn't too (end of tape).
(other side of tape:) and throw down the hay from the hayloft and do a little poking around there and so on. He disliked that. Then one day he calls me down and he says: "Jake, come here, you can milk that cow." And I said: "I don't know how." He says: "You sit down there and you learn." "Alright." I knew that that would come so I sat down there and starting milking and it was a fresh cow and it was a heifer, the first time a calf and so on. And boy I was milking away there and all of a sudden--zip---and she hit that pail and all the milk went---. Well he says. "Hast eins gekriegt?" And I said, "No, she didn't hurt me." "Alright", he says, "Go and wash that pail then come back and keep on milking."

So that's the way I learned how milk a cow. Then one day I was milking the cow, it was fresh milk from a fresh cow . See, that's not usually used, or mixed with the regular milk because it is either too strong; it has a special name. So I had to milk the cow and I came back to the place where they gathered the milk and I says to him, "Shall I put this in the "sei" pail?" In Pennsylvania Dutch I said, "Sul iches in du sau ema do?" "Sau ema", to us--there was a special pail with the screeen so that when they poured out through that the straw and so on would stay in and that's what I meant the "Sau ema." And he roared at me, "No," he says, "Meir shouldanet de gotta milk in the sau ema ." "Sau ema" was the slop pail . "Oh goet." Then came spring and we went out into the field and we started working the field. And he told me how to rake and how to plow and all that. There's where so many misunderstandings come in. I would for instance work in the stables, clean out the stables and he would go past there and give me orders what to do for the day. So I couldn't grasp all his technical words that he used, how to do this and I would ask back and he wouldn't answer me. So I stopped asking because he wouldn't answer me anyway. Finally it came to hay harvest; he was cutting the hay and I had to turn it and do all kinds of other things there. So when all the hay was brought in , we had nice weather, this and that and so on, got it all in the loft, I said to my wife, "This is it! I'm not going to work any longer." So I gave notice from 15th of July on we would not work any longer. Well, the old Mrs. she hated to see us go. And the neighbours that I had been talking about they said, "You're the first one to stay there that long." They said, "Everybody would leave." Well I said "I would like to stay longer but..." The Mrs. she was very soft hearted; tears would come to her eyes just like that and she talked to my wife and asked her what was wrong. Well my wife told her that she was pregnant and the baby would be coming and Jake isn't getting along with the old man at all. Well, she says, "I know that, I know that is hard." But, she says, "Why didn't you tell us about that you are going to have a baby?" They had an apartment for the hired man built onto the house but we were living upstairs in the one room. She says, "Why didn't you tell us and we would have let you move in there and you would have your own house there and cook for yourself and so on." I didn't like it. There were other things that happened but my wife disliked him too. I resigned and they were very sorry. Anyway I was sorry too because I didn't have no work, no place to work. Of course it was summer and I knew that I would find work. So at the same time the farmers from out West the farmers were crying for help from the East. So we went out west. For $25.00 you could travel as far as Winnipeg and whenever you go further you had to pay

a measly $10,00 or $15,00 more and you would get as far as Alberta. Anyway my brother-in-law we decided we would go out for the harvesting. Everybody told us they were paying $5,00 a day there and all stuff like that. Well alright we went on one of these harvest trains and boy am I telling you was that a mess. Was that a mess and we came to know the Canadian people. Wow we didn't know where to turn . All the swearing and dirty talk. As soon as we would get on towards a station and we would pass a village or anything like that they'd see a woman they'd holler and yell and talk obsene to them and what not. Oh, we were so disgusted and we didn't know what, was that the Canadian people? But that's the scum, they came there from eastern provinces , Quebec and so on. We hadn't come to know about all that. We found out later all kinds of things. But we got on the train and the train was filled right up and all the gangs and everything was sitting full of harvest workers . That's the way we went to Winnipeg. I think it took us five days to Winnipeg. We decided we would go further, oh, George Peters he was with us too and he stayed in Winnipeg because he had friends in Manitoba. We were advised to go to Saskatchewan. Manitoba about that time was pretty well harvested, at least had enough men and we were supposed to go to Saskatchewan, as far as Moose Jaw and from there a little train spur was going to Riverhurst , that was right at the end of the railroad. A man picked us up there and took us across the river onto his farm. It was an English man. Saskatchewan River was very low, water was very low. We went through it with the car. The next time I think we used...well, anyway we got to our farm. We started working at the farm. Now by the time we got onto--it took a few days to get onto the routine of threshing and so on. Five o'clock in the morning we had to get up and by 7:00-6:30 or so you had to have your team ready and hitched to the wagon and so on and go into the field. It was kind of interesting but finally it became so hard, working such awful hours, 13-15 hours a day. They wanted to use all the dry weather you know and get everything done. We worked there ten days then we had everything threshed at this farm. Then we went back to Riverhurst and somebody else picked us up. There was a Frenchmen picked us. We went there and we threshed there 2-3 days then it started raining and snowing. This was in September, so, when it was raining we just sit around and not do anything . But the meals, the farmer had to serve the meals. It didn't cost us anything but he did his outmost. All those farmers that I had been working for were people that really knew how to feed the working man. This rain went on for a week. After this week was over and it turned out nice and we just went out into the field and started turning the sheaves to let them dry a little bit, the next day comes

another snow storm and spoiled everything. Then the farmer comes in . No, we were there two weeks, and those two weeks we worked maybe 5 days all the rest of the time we were loafing and eating at the farmers table. Then after two weeks he came and told us, he says, "Men I would certainly like to keep you here and let you help me bring in the harvest, but I cannot board you anymore." He says, "You can live here, but I cannot board you anymore. You'll have to pay so and so much board from now on. So my brother-in-law and I decided we wouldn't do that we would just go home. We were homesick anyway. That was in late September and took us probably another 5 days to get home anyway on the 2nd of October I arrived home. I had saved $50.00 from that trip. Then at home it was apple picking time so we went picking apples. They paid us $2.00 a day, whatever it was. Anyway we picked apples until the end of the month and then the frost came and killed all the fruit; stopped the picking. From then on it was a little bit of a tough time. We didn't know what to do. My wife while I was out west, she had been working for a canning factory and she kept on working even when I came home. But then she worked probably until the middle of November perhaps the end of November then that was closed too. From then on we did odd jobs. That didn't go very well. We heard of a farmer he wanted trees cut down for timber in his bush. So my brother-in-law and I we went and applied for that. We went there and he told us how much he would pay, it wasn't very much. But at least we had a chance to occupy ourselves which was very important. We worked that winter there for a couple of months, 3 months. Then in March I heard of a farmer in Vineland he needed a man, he needed help to run the farm, he had six acres there. And besides he had a tinsmith shop, tinsmith and plumbing. So I thought to myself, my goodness, that's nice. So I went and applied and he took me. He engaged me and started to teach me tinsmithing like making eaves-troughs. He did that all in his shop there. He would take me along when he thought he could use me at plumbing and all stuff like that. And he saw that I wasn't bad for catching onto the job. Then when it began to get warmer I had to work his farm there and so on. This went on until fall, to my and to his satisfaction. Then in the fall a friend of mine he had taken a job in Kitchener the year before. And then I tried too but without success. That was the year when we were out west. So this time I thought I'd go earlier to Kitchener and look for a job. I decided I'd go to Toronto and see the Exhibition and from there I'd take the train to Kitchener. So I arrived here and went to the place where I had been applying before to McBrien's and they said yes I could start. So I started in and what was it, 20¢ an hour and I worked, I learned to make suitcases. It was the cheapest stuff there was. In those days each man would start from scratch

JACOB (cont'd) and make his own suitcases. I worked there for a year and then they got so slack that they had to lay off for Easter. They laid me off for one week and then another week and then I came back after Easter and they couldn't give me no work then . And I looked other places for work and I got a job at Dominion Tire. I started working there, it was shift work. That almost killed me, boy. I was so glad that those three months were over and I went back to McBrien's and I got the job and the foreman said, "You can start right now." So that was it. I worked there for 42 years. At first I went by myself to Kitchener until I find something to do here. My father-in-law or my in-laws they had moved to Kitchener that same spring and I started, came here in fall and they had been, you know, they had been here the year before already. They bought near Cressman's woods. You know where that, well there's a little farm right on the left. That name is now different that Cressman's Woods , I forget what. Well anyway they lived there and I think I was boarding with them for a week or so until I could bring my wife and I found three rooms upstairs and we moved in there. Baby was growing. This working in the factory, people looked kinda unsympathic towards me in the shop. I mean people from outside, like our immigration board--J.J. Thiessen was at that time a big shot on the board and so on. He came here and preached one day and mentioned amongst other things, he says most of the people that go in shops, he says, that work in the city, he says they turn to me proletarian. That was a bad word for us. Now he hinted that we being we sought work and living for our family and so on in the city we would turn, oh, hoodlums. I didn't agree with him that really hurt. That's why I never forgot. But anyway we kept on going and this was in 1926 I started there at the factory. In 1924 shortly before Christmas the J.H. Janzens arrived here and then in 1925 a group had rented a hall where they had meetings here. Where at first in 1926 no 1925 right after the Janzens came there were East End Mennonite Church offered them the church for the afternoons--they could have German service there. That went on for a little while and was very inconvenient so in 1925 a group rented a hall here in Waterloo. They had meetings there and here in Waterloo there were also quite a few girls working in homes and so on and also our men started working here. Socially they gathered together in groups and so on and they organized a choir and when this hall was rented that choir was had become famous because Canadian people, Kitchener-Waterloo people had heard them already and they had been singing in different churches and so on. They were singing of course all German songs but gradually they went into the English songs because some of these young people had gone to school here, even a year or two and that's how they got onto the English language. Anyway when I came to Kitchener in the fall of 1926 the group was attending

the meetings here pretty steady. There was I don't know how many people there. I remember when I went to church the first time that was around Christmastime they asked me to come and sing with them. There was a choir at that time and J. H. Janzen was leading that choir and it was upstairs at the Harmony Hall. That was, oh , that was a smokey thing, terrible. But anyway we had our own place to worship. And as far as my work was concerned it went its routine, it went up and down ,sometimes we were very slack we could hardly earn enough to live on and then again you would work overtime, you worked up to 13-15 hours a day. It was very hard on us really but we were young we didn't realize how hard that was. When my personal life in the factory was too because people, we couldn't understand each other too well. And people they had different ways of living and different ways of thinking and so on and working man he, we couldn't understand each other . Our ways of doing things and so on. But anyway we were there to work and we did work. And the company liked us because we were good workers , Mennonites were good workers they knew that. There were, once in a while there was trouble on account of the language . There was one guy he was especially miserable, he always laughed at my way of talking and so forth. But that's really where I picked up the English language. There were men there that spoke German but they were older men and I could make myself understand with them but the younger men they would talk English and I still remember my lesson in English. That was when we were out west sitting around there not doing anything, I started reading books. Somehow, somewhere I got hold of a little book, It was short stories and real light reading, short stories. I was sitting there and we knew the alphabet because we learned the Latin alphabet in our schools so that didn't make us too much trouble to read but to pronounce the words and understand the words that was something else. Here I sit there and read the word meet. And I know that meat was meat that we eat and here it talks meet and I couldn't understand the meaning of that word why that word meet was in there. I asked one guy, I says, "Now here is the word 'meet', what that meant?" He looks into it and he reads and he says , "You see, meat is what you eat," but he says, "this doesn't mean meat what you eat," he says, "This meet is what you meet when you'll be going home now and you are going to meet your wife." And he says , "This is that word." That was so comical the way he said that. I could never forget that. Anyway that was--now in Vineland, while we were in Vineland they started a night school there too for the immigrants. I attended that a few times but we were outside of Vineland on a farm and we couldn't attend all the time and so I lost a lot through that. But the language we were getting along pretty good. Of course the 30's, the dirty thirties were terrible time for us. We were poor. We had been

JACOB (cont'd)-working pretty good from 1926 when I started in a factory and with the exception for the three months I worked at Dominion Tire I saved a little bit money. We had saved $300.00 from the farm work that we did originally. Besides that I had paid out some of my travel debts and also my wife had to pay to her parents some out of that money that we earned there. So we had a nest egg and when I had been working here we tried to save as much as we could . And I had a little bit money saved about $600.00 something like that. Then we decided we hadn't enough with the three rooms upstairs and we wanted to live somewhere independent. We looked for a house and we bought a house for $4,000.00. I paid down $500.00. This was in 1928. 1929 went pretty good yet then 1930 it became slack, and '29 was the brink they crashed it and '31 was very bad, there was hardly any--I have some notes marked down. I used to bring $16.00 home in two weeks. Well, we were getting along. The whole work at the shop did go uneventful except for these dirty thirties where it was very hard for us ; by then we had two children. Then something else happened, out in Virgil, in Vineland there lived a lot of people they had been working out like, and on farms and so on, they all, somebody bought up a big farm that was Peter Wall. He bought up a big farm and he parceled it up so that each one that wanted to buy a small parcel of land he could buy it and build up a little shack there to live in and so on. That was going on from '31-'33 and that started tempting me. But when I would go there I had good friends in Vineland. Vineland seemed to me like it was our home because that's where we arrived, that's where we got our first contact with people and so on. Our oldest girl was born there and all that made that home for me. And it was a very nice place at that time. There were two rows of great big trees in Vineland, right on Victoria Street which was very beautiful. I knew quite a few of the people there, of the local people and so on . When this business of buying land would come along some people encouraged me to do that very same thing. Now I couldn't very well do it because I had two children,the third one was coming and 1931 early, no,1930 friends of ours came from Russia the Boeses, Boese food. Well anyway they came from Russia and they used to be neighbours of ours in the old country. When they came they rented in there in Vineland. They lived in Vineland for a while . They had a grown up family, the boys were all big boys but they were only 15-16 years, 16 I think was the oldest one. And the old man says, "My boys have to work and not sit idle,that wouldn't work." Winter approached , during the summer everybody had work because they could pick fruit and so on and when winter came along the boys had to do something and the old man bought a truck and they started carting manure , hay and straw down to the farmers from up the

JACOB (cont'd) - hill. Well they made their living that way. Then in 1931 I think they moved into Memrik, near Beamsville there's a settlement of Mennonites. They lived there in a closer range. They bought a little parcel of land too and built a house on it and planted there orchards and so on. We kept visiting and they encouraged me too why don't you come this way. For me I would like to go too but here I had the job, I had income. Even if it was lousy, but I had income. That was emotionally really a bad time for me. But we stayed anyway and I didn't change jobs or anything I just kept on working for McBriens. I never amounted to very much but when in 1932 they took that house away on me, they foreclosed on the mortage I didn't cry about that because that house was dilapidated and so much repairs to be done and stuff like that. But then in--it improved, the work improved here a little bit. In the meantime we had boughten that church there and somebody had to look after that and in 19--yes but this was. I was living still in Kitchener. We lived in rent, we lived in the same house and rent for another five years. In 1937 we moved here into this house. This house was for rent, very reasonable . Was owned by a Mennonite, a local Old Mennonite and we moved in here and at the same time they looked for somebody to take care of the church and I took over that job. I got $9.00 a month for taking care of the church. All things like that. You see wherever I could make a little bit money I would try and turn that. That was in 1938 when I took that job. Here I kept on working at McBriens. There wasn't much events at all, I knew the trade pretty well and I thought maybe someday it would happen that they could use me maybe little advanced job; there was none. Anyway the war came along and that was another drawback for us. Because, who would buy suitcases; nobody. All what happened there was all the older men were kept on and supplied with work. But most of the young men were drafted. So that was kind of a hard time too for a couple of years. In 1943 the time came when there was a real housing shortage. People flocking from the farms all over Canada to these industrial cities and started looking for work and would get their work and the houses the rent went up and so on. So our landlord raised our rent a little bit that wasn't too much. But we didn't like the house there was no heating in here. There was one big hole in the center there in that room from the furnace from the basement. That was to heat the 7 room house and then of course there was a cook stove in the kitchen. There was no bathroom either, there was only a toilet in the basement. We saw that we would have to do something about a house and I really had sworn off that I wouldn't buy a house on payments. I wanted to pay it cash and had started saving for that years ago. In 1943 the rent went up and in 1944 people would be just thrown out

JACOB (cont'd) - of their houses, furniture put in the street. Well I said to my wife before that happens to us we better see that we have something of a room . Well we didn't want to buy; this was offered to us for $4,000. We went and looked around and tried to find something at least that was a warm house and bathroom. Our girls were growing up and they started to work and the oldest one worked in Dominion Insurance. We needed a bathroom very badly. So when we had seen quite a few houses that were much more money than this one cost we figured out for the money we pay more on those old houses with old equipment and so on we could put that in here. And we knew all the drawbacks on this house so we bought this house for $4,000.00; same as we paid for that other one. I paid $500.00 down and so much a month and everything went alright . The first thing you know we put in a bathroom. Then after a year we put in hot water heating in the house. That cost us some $1200 odd dollars. The bathroom cost us $340. We didn't have to move from this place, we kept on. Then during the war, the girls were growing up--well Ingrid the oldest girl was working at Dominion. She was giving part of her earnings home at least she was paying more. And the other girl was going to Normal School. The boys were hanging around. At that time the industries needed help so badly so the boys would go after school and work for 3-4 hours in different places--Kaufmans, the Brewery here. And during the summer the same thing, they'd work in these places. But then the war was over in 1945 and all that stopped. The boys they couldn't earn their pocket money anymore and they go after dad for spending money and so on. Well that was a hard time. Also our work at the shop didn't pick up till 1946 it began to go a little better. When we did move here it was more convenient for us to have our children in our school here . As long as we lived in Kitchener our children went to Sunday School at the Brethren Church. The Brethren Church was on Church St. at the time . Then all of a sudden something happened in the Brethren Church. Until then all the Sunday School teacher's meetings would go together with the Brethren. Then all of a sudden it was separate. And we thought well if people think that way why should we send our children to that school. I bought an old jalopy and took them over to church here to our church. When we were living here it was so much more convenient.

PAETKAU - What were the relationships like with the M.B.'s earlier?

JACOB - Very good, very good. So often--while I was living in Kitchener I would go to their church--very often. I liked--in fact, H. J. Janzen one of the ministers that died two years ago, he was the same age as I was. I knew him from the old country. In fact he was of the General

JACOB (cont'd)

Conference when he came to this country but he got converted here to the Brethren . At that time we were all very sorry about that. Anyway that was 1946. I was elected into the church council already in 1928; I was a young punk, 27 yrs. old. In fact I was at the meeting when our--you see our church was really the original Mennonite church. Then Leamington started to settle, Vineland and Virgil. All these people they all belonged to this church. I was quite busy with church work; quite active working in the church at that time. Going to choir, I was singing in the choir for 25 years. Now that goes into the more recent time, would you have any questions about the living that I didn't touch. About our living communities like Vineland and so on maybe there are things that--.

PAETKAU - Well I'm just about out of tape now. Maybe when I come back; bring back some of your books we can talk about some of that again. O.K.?

JACOB - Yah. Yah.

PAETKAU - Because I'd like to ask you about the church life a little bit more and some of those things.

PAETKAU :

Mr. Fast has been a most capable and informative source in my interviewing. He is very interested in history. He served on the editorial committee along with Herb Enns of the Jubilee Issue of the Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite church, the anniversary issue 1924-1974, and did a fair amount of research for that. He seems to have thought about his history and his past and hence has recalled much of it. This is demonstrated by the fact that he has written several short memoirs, reminisences . These include several booklets, notebooks of memories. The one is somewhat of a family history and includes of course history in Russia. It is rather extensive; is in handwritten form though and not in polished form, includes several additional notes which Mr. Fast would like to incorporate into the body of the document itself before it is put into a more polished form and hence it will not be microfilmed at this time but should be a very good resource. There is a second booklet, a notebook which begins with the Revolution of 1917 and contains reminisences through several years. I believe until their departure from Russia. This also is in handwritten form. It is incomplete at this point but Mr. Fast indicated he would continue to work on it, perhaps this winter, so this resource will also not be on file immediately in the Archives but should be a good resource. In as much as he is interested in history and preserving these records Mr. Fast will certainly keep this himself and indicated to me or expressed at least some interest in having these placed in the Archives permanently. That is the original copies themselves. Then it should also be noted that Mr. Fast has written

several diaries, the one of his service in the army and a second one of his voyage to America which are also in his possession. In addition to that he has written an article on service in the army which is in typewritten form and will be microfilmed for the archives. A second short article deals with leaving Russia and arrival in America, 1924 will also be put on deposit in the archives. I might also mention that Mr. Fast is a brother-in-law to Cornelius Nickel whom I interviewed earlier and has in his possession the original diary of Johannes Wiebe which comprises a chapter in the family history rather family histories compiled by Mr. Nickel and edited and added to by him,a copy of which is now on microfilm on file in the archives. The original as indicated is in the possession of Mr. Fast. As indicated he has worked these memories through in his mind as he stated to himself later to me and hence his memory is very good. I didn't need to prompt him or ask questions at many points about his experiences. He continued on his own hence I gave him free rein to reminisce as he recalled the events. As indicated at the end of this tape I believe there are still things that we could discuss about church life and so on and I anticipate going back to him and talk more about some of these aspects.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

OF

RUSSIAN-MENNONITE IMMIGRANTS

of the 1920's (Ontario)

Part III of Interview II in the series of Oral History Interviews conducted by Henry Paetkau, Graduate History Student at the University of Waterloo on behalf of Conrad Grebel College under the direction of Walter Klaassen.

Date of Interview: Tuesday, July 13, 1976, 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Place of Interview: Residence of the Interviewee
53 Menno Street, Waterloo, Ontario

Interviewee: Jacob C. Fast

Interview:

JACOB: Further on things went the other way. They joined a conference in the states, a Canadian Brethren Conference joined there. They said we can't have Sunday School meetings with you anymore---teachers, Sunday School teachers convention. And we couldn't have them no more, together. Well everybody was stunned on our side but that's the way it was. And that has been going on all along.

PAETKAU: Was there an attempt to stay together with them?

JACOB: Well, not--there was no chance. Why, they just told us there wasn't and our teachers felt sorry about that. They wondered why, how this came about. But they were orders from headquarters to do this. That was their excuse or explanation. I wouldn't say excuse because these people here in Kitchener they didn't like it themselves.

PAEKTAU: So there weren't really hard feelings between the M.B.'s and the General Conference?

JACOB: Not exactly. Not exactly hard feelings but we couldn't understand. We had sent all our children to their Sunday School while we were living in Kitchener. My wife and I we often went to their church because this was quite distance and we had no car. We had to walk, we didn't have money to pay for a streetcar you know and we walked all the way from Mill St., Kitchener up to here to church. In the beginning it was even further up. Not only once on Sunday. At that time J. Janzen was minister and during the week he would give courses and Bible Studies and so on and we would attend them.

JACOB (cont'd) I don't think there was really--there were differences alright between Brethren and--but nothing serious. The differences were only in thinking and ways of holding their church, taking care of their church. But then we had our own conference at that time already. But we didn't mind to associate with them.

PAETKAU: How had it been in Russia? What were the relationships like there between the M.B.'s and the Kirchengemeinde?

JACOB: Well I couldn't tell you very much about that because-- I was quite young you know. Well I was 20-23 when we came here but in the meantime I had been away from home too while I was in the army and this and that. In our village we didn't have a Brethren church. Our village was mostly General Conference and the Brethren church was quite a distance away. But there were all kinds of church problems like all over--the ministers don't fit and this and that. I think I mention that in my writing there too; the way my parents were. They were, I would say, thinking people, at least my mother was more so than father. My father didn't have the background. Mother's father was a minister too; he was a real old timer. That's what he had his things all written down or copied from somewhere else and then he would go around and around and read those sermons to people. I know him only as an old man. I've heard him only at my father's funeral and maybe once or twice before that. But the church that we belonged to was kind of slippy. The ministers they were real old timers and so on. My mother was quite--well shall I say, she wasn't educated much but she educated herself because being that her son was in Germany studying as a theologian and so on. He started off being a school teacher and then he went to studies in Germany and Switzerland and so on and he would write letters and tell mother and father what he was studying and how it was and all these and this. I think that that helped my mother to keep up with them. Then in church when there was a minister that would preach things that really were nonsensical she didn't like that. Then there was a separation there on account of some--oh there was an elder there that had two strains of children like from the second wife and so on. And then his children the one girl got a baby and that naturally as an elder of the church that was boo and he had to resign. And there was a great big issue they made out of that. So then my parents they went along with those people that were separatists, And those that were separatists they were mostly teachers and preachers and there were Brethren that would go to that same church--this separatists. So all this--och that's a long story after all. Well anyway my parents belonged to these people and they dared to them. And I remember only once that we went to the church. We were always gathering in this other building and that was in the same--just across the street from the church. That was in Orloff, that's a different village, we had to go

there. It was about 7 miles from our place. All--being that--my family was completely different than all the bauern you know because they had their, how shall I say--they looked forward a little different. The bauern all they did was work and work and had their same thing all along and being my dad had the factory and he came around more and my mother would go along with him and they would go to cities and they'd see things and not only that but the division in that church that helped an awful lot to build up our--well our parent's mind and so on. When my brother went to Germany everybody wondered what was going on that he would go there because our villages they were strictly farmers and now some people--Of course from Halbstadt, I don't know if you know enough about that, that was a more of--oh there were higher schools in Halbstadt and so on. From there other young men went to Germany too to study. But, anyway this separation finally broke up because Brethren built a meetinghouse in that same village and then many of these that were going to this other--many of the separatists I would call them, they went to the Brethren church. But they didn't turn Brethren. They were what they call inbetweens. They were Allianzgemeinde. See that Alliance, they were allianced, aligned with the Brethren but they weren't really Brethren people. My mother had at that time an awful time. She didn't know where to go when this--as a separatist she wasn't satisfied with the old church and she wanted something better and she was--I remember that we would go to Brethren meetings and that was quite a distance away; as far as from here to Hamilton to go every Sunday. I think that was about (unintelligibile) but at least--well she didn't quite go along with their teaching either but they had much better educated preachers. There were the teachers of schools--of the villages, they were preaching in Brethren churches. Not in all of them I grant you, because this what I'm talking about is from Orloff where there was a Zentralschule, a Secondary school like and the teachers from that school would preach. Well it's the same as here too, quite a few of the secondary school teachers that are Mennonites they are preaching also. But as far as studies they weren't, some of them, for instance J. H. Janzen he had been studying in Germany too--in Switzerland. And there were others that were well educated even in theology but most of them were plain farmers out of the village. What would you really call a farmer, a bauer? A bauer is different than a farmer. A bauer is a man living in an enclosed community and a farmer is living on a farm. What would you call a farmer--or a bauer in English?

PAETKAU: I don't know, you don't really make that distinction in the other.

JACOB: That's it. And I think there is a distinction, definitely. Well we understand each other that's the main thing. I'll call them farmers. Most of the preachers were lay men

JACOB (cont'd) and some of them were really very--had very little view and had very small brains I think. Oh I was young at that time and I noticed this later on when I turned teenager and so on then I noticed it more. Then my brother came home from Germany in 1912 after he had been there 7 years I think he had been studying there in Germany. Then he was, he went to Halbstadt where he got a teaching job at the Secondary School there. But he was only two years with that school. He hadn't finished his doctors so he had to go back to Germany to brush up on it and make his exams. Then the first world war broke out and he stayed in Germany. So that was the end of his career in Russia.

PAETKAU: What happened then to these differences in Canada? The differences between the churches, not the Brethren and General Conference but within the General Conference itself, I understand there were differences.

JACOB: Well, I tell you. We didn't have too much differences here in Ontario because that was--we were--all the churches were organized by J. H. Janzen or they grew--all these churches they grew out of our church. Of course the people hadn't been in our church. They came from other places and they settled down and J. H. Janzen gathered them all into one church and gradually they grew bigger and they separated from the mother church, like our church and they went on on their own. We didn't really have large differences, ach there were little things crop up at conferences and so on but most of the times we were-- they were negotiated and the--there were--the biggest difference was with Leamington. Leamington grew pretty fast and became the biggest congregation. They had their own ideas about things. They were, I would say, the most conservative , Leamington, and sticking to the tradition so much, even today. Not as much but--- . Then at one of our conferences, Ontario there were differences now I come to think of it--you probably read the history. There were differences about organizing this church or the church school in Leamington. Leamington school,that was organized at a meeting that took place in Beamsville in the school. Just before that, in the beginning of 1940 Rev. Janzen tried to organize the Ontario Conference so that we be all in one conference, being we had been separated in different congregations, and so that we would still be one body. The ministers of the congregations they had their conference, the Minister's Conference before that. That started I would say that started about in the 30's in the beginning of the 30's while J. H. Janzen was our minister. Then he resigned from the ministry here

in our church. But he stayed on for awhile. You see we couldn't support him enough at that time. He had a big family and so on, so he was doing an awful lot of writing. And that took so much time (unintelligible). And he would be invited to other universities and to colleges and so on and he had to go out West so often and all these things and then in '35 I guess it was when the conference it didn't go so well here . And the General Conference had been supporting him and then they withdrew the support of him because they thought it wasn't necessary anymore. The Canadian, no it was the mission committee of the General Conference they sent him to Vancouver to organize a church there. So he was away here and that was a very hard time for us because we had, Dietrich Koop was our elder for awhile, as long as Vineland wasn't a church by itself. But when they established a congregation of their own they wanted-- Dietrich Koop was living in Vineland, so they wanted him to be their elder and only their elder. They didn't want to have an elder together with us. So that was really a problem then. And that grew up in our congregation, we wanted an elder too. So there was a group here that wanted Bishop Janzen back. Then we got into trouble here in the congregation; that was really--there was a great bunch of them--don't, really shouldn't take this up on the tape. It's the truth but, I don't know, it's never mentioned anywhere in our writings and so on. Well anyway this group started to correspond with Bishop Janzen about coming back here and he had--there was another man here that was a very popular or well known worker for the Board of Colonization. That was Wiens, J. B. Wiens' father. J. B. was elder in Vancouver. Him and Janzen were great friends then all of a sudden they-- that friendship broke up on account of--oh, all kinds of quibbling and so on and so on. When the Wiens' they were still living here at the time and J. B. was our minister. But there was a group that thought J.B. would be our elder eventually and this other group they thought we should have J. Janzen. So there was a rivalry there and that was really that turned into a very nasty thing. There was so many of our members they resigned from membership and stayed away from the church for a long long time. Until you know years healed and J. H. Janzen came back then. There were reasons too because the weather in Vancouver was such that didn't agree with Mrs. Janzen and she was ill quite a bit. And of course then J. H. Janzen came here and J. B. was taken to Vancouver to run that church and he became elder there. But this trouble that we had here in the congregation through that that lasted way too long and made too many enemies in the congregation amongst the members. But as I said the years healed wounds. Quite a few came back after a few years, others they stayed away, others they died over it, and, but.

JACOB (cont'd): When J. H. Janzen was here he started to look all these people up. He didn't make no difference. He went and listened to everybody's woes and all that and he tried to bring peace in the congregation again. And he did, he succeeded too to a certain extent; but not with everyone.

PAETKAU : I had heard somewhere, I can't remember where, that he had left for Vancouver because of some diffficulties here, that there were some other reasons other than that he was asked to go or that he left.

JACOB: Do you know, I don't really know whether there were serious differences. There was just that he had resigned in 19--, I think it was 1933 when he resigned, or his ministry here, or leading ministry. And he was still minister of the confer--- still chairman of the conference though. And then one thing come up. We were the first ones to have a church you see we bought that church. We needed it and so on and that was just the time when all this was going on. And then people, in Leamington for instance they blamed us that we wanted to have the conference to pay for our church and all this and that. And it wasn't the case at all because so after that we all, all these congregations became self-supporting and they had their own ways. And there were three of us except that we all were under, at that time we called it the Allgemeine Bruderschaft. That was the organization that we all came together and talked over our troubles and our successes and so on. But then in 1940, up until 1940, during the 30's the ministers had their conference; Minister's Conference. And that's usually where they were, well talking over things to run our congregations and to stay under a certain, how shall I say it, have a plan under the same ways and so on. Then in 1940 Bishop Janzen tried to organize a conference. But Leamington stayed out of it. They didn't want to join our conference. Then to be along with Leamington we had a conference here; the Niagara Peninsula and we, we were called the Eastern Churches. And Northern Ontario belonged to our conference and Leamington stayed out. Then gradually they saw that it would be better that we all go under one Ontario Conference and that was organized then. At one of these meetings, conferences, it was decided that we would build a church, a Mennonite church--ach, a Mennonite school. So that was decided it should be in Leamington because there was the most people there and also to perhaps they were more interested in it, they showed more interest although Niagara District showed a great interest in it. There was always a lot of their peoples that would go there, I don't think (inintelligible) And this--since then we had this Ontario Conference and also the Minister's Conference and it always was that the Minister's Conference would talk over the

JACOB (cont'd): programme of the Conference. And then of course they were in the picture and when the Conference would take place then they come along and push whatever they thought should be pushed. And there were laymen that thought it wasn't quite right and then that was pushed out. The Minister's meetings they had it--they were organized in a different way. They had different programme. And the Conference would talk more about the organization part, I would say the politics. And they had the religious part. So your question was, "What happened to the differences in our congregations?" They were, most of the time not very serious; the differences. They could be eliminated by negotiations and so on.

PAETKAU: So the reason that Bishop or Aeltester Janzen originally resigned as Aeltester here was that the church couldn't support him?

JACOB: Ah, to a certain extent it was. He wanted to have more time to write. But he knew that he couldn't support himself with writing cause what's a writer make amongst our Mennonites. So that's the way--then when he resigned and Dietrich Koop took over. Dietrich Koop wasn't as ambitious as J. H. Janzen. Well he didn't have the experience either. He came as a farmer from the west and took over a farm here and so on he had other things he was I would say almost like a layman. But he had been a teacher in the old country. He was a wise man no doubt. But when Vineland insisted on having their own elder we had to look for someone else. And when J. H. Janzen, well you read all those things already in the history of the church the way it was when he resigned . He warned us that he would have to resign on account of his health. Then H. H. Epp was here as student from Bethel College and all that and he was introduced here then. He came and worked one summer here with us. Then later after he went back to Bethel we asked him to come and serve us as minister, as helper to the pastor, J. H. Janzen.

PAETKAU: I was going to ask you about the name change of the congregation or the conference. They were originally called the--something like the Conference of Refugees in Ontario?

JACOB: Yes.

PAETKAU: The word refugees was dropped several years later?

JACOB: Yes. Well you see we were all refugees in the beginning. But gradually we grew out of that because years passed by and we weren't refugees anymore. We became Canadian citizens and so on and that's why we changed that name.

PAETKAU: So it was just a natural process?

JACOB: Yes, it was just a natural process. We didn't want to be refugees anymore. It was quite natural we wouldn't be after five or six years; we wouldn't be refugees then.

PAETKAU: Talking about conferences, was there ever any thought of joining with the Old Mennonite Conference?

JACOB: No. That's why we started up our own because we were so different. You know gradually we have accepted quite a bit of theirs and they have accepted, I assume that it's quite a bit that they took over from us too. And we weren't really--language was the main obstacle there to join because we had our Hoch Deutsch. And if they would talk in German that was I would say a slang. We--no--they're ways were so different and their--they didn't really accept us the way---we didn't feel at home in their church. And this what's going on here now, that's why we have even now this Inter-Mennonite Conference there's differences. People don't just go right at it and so on. It's, just because we are different people. We were brought up differently and we have been living differently, and our churches, our preaching and everything. I would say our ministers were much more educated than theirs. That's why we couldn't join.

PAETKAU: Could one say that part of it was the difference between being more conservative and more progressive or liberal or something like that?

JACOB: In some way, yes. There were-in some ways they were more conservative. On the other hand there were things that we thought, now how can they do that and so on. It seemed to us that they were overstepping their conservatism completely. But there has never been any attempt made once we were organized to join us until of late. Even as I said before, even now there is differences and people cannot understand why should we get closer together, get it into Inter-Mennonite. I personally feel that that won't hurt us any because that--we can take over much from them or learn from them and they can learn from us. But there's--at this point we came here we were real poor and we worked ourselves up to a certain level, I mean materially. But they have been farmers here for, their fathers and grandfathers and so on and they are much richer than we are. And their spending and so on I believe has much to do with the difference, with the objection to this . There's another thing perhaps that their--that they have views that differ from our views of what is a priority. They have certain priorities which and still in a way I can't quite understand. We were working together with them and not so much in education, I mean schools. But on Conrad Grebel for instance we pulled together and there were

JACOB (Cont'd)other things, for instance in missions, we have been for years we have been working with Stirling Ave. And also with the Old Mennonites when we organized the Sudbury Mission there; Waters Church and so on. I always liked that when we were together in missions and did things together. What I didn't like is that they were contributing so much more than we did because--maybe proportionately it wasn't even a big difference. But always it seemed to me personally that we were always a little lagging behind and we were too tight in many things. On the other hand we had to think about the circumstances, their circumstances and ours.

PAETKAU: How do you think J. H. Janzen felt about working with the different conferences, the M.B.'s, with the O.M.'s? Would he have approved of Inter-Mennonite activities?

JACOB: I think he would. I think he would. Because he was a big friend---well we worked together even in the 40's when the Second World War as on, in the Peace Section of our Conferences. They worked together for these C.O.'s and so on. And J. H. Janzen was a well known person and well seen person, well liked person amongst the Old Mennonite. Och, well at least I don't know of any great differences there. I mean problems or anything like that. When there were problems J. H. Janzen was very wise and judging those things, appraising them, how far he could go and with them and so on. Oh I think that he would approve of the Inter-Mennonite Conference. Perhaps he would have his own views about it too. This whole thing now with the Inter-Mennonite business that made me think back years ago we always had not very serious differences as I said before with Leamington. But there were, for instance at conferences there were always---they were always pumping for more support from the Conference . And they even tried to make the school a Conference school. It was organized as a private school, as a--it was I would say an educational committee--no that's a little different, We should name it a little different. A society--a society that organized that school. In fact there quite a few of our members there. I was myself a member of this society in the beginning but then I saw that it wouldn't do me no good as far as my family was and the support grew bigger and bigger and I couldn't simply afford it to go all out with it. For years I was supporting that school too and I think it was a very good thing to have that school. I sent my one son to Gretna one year. Then he came back from there and I couldn't very well (unintelligible). He hadn't been so well there. Then we sent him to Fort Erie to that school. That was a good school too. That was the Old Mennonites were in the school. And there were like William Dyck was going there to school and others. From Virgil there were quite a few of them. And Richard was teaching there and so on so we sent him there for a year. But we didn't send anybody to Leamington because of distance and--.

PAETKAU: When did the language become an issue?

JACOB: Pardon.

PAETKAU: When did the language become an issue in the congregation?

JACOB: When did....

PAETKAU: The German, English, did that become an issue in the 30's at all?

JACOB: No. That began only in the 40's . I should say in the 50's. In the Sunday School it began early. You see there were children that of our members they couldn't understand the German anymore. And people were insisting on it though that they should be taught German. There was quite a bit problem about that. First of all the teachers, there weren't enough teachers that could teach the English language; Sunday School at the beginning. Then later on we couldn't get the German teachers to teach the Sunday School. Well it finally became English and then it became, it started in our services. That started mostly when H. H. Epp was here. We had, that was really a problem. There were a group that wanted to have it in English and then again so many newcomers came after the Second World War, immigrants. And they were completely German so we had to stick with the German language. Now we decided we would have both. I think we tried three different systems. How to--the one system was just that we have it during the summer and then there was one other, for a year or two we had----

PAETKAU: I think the English was first once wasn't it? And then Sunday School inbetween and then the German.

JACOB: No I don't think we had Sunday School between. But we had German. For a while we had German-English in the one like we have it now. But then there were the dissidents they would walk out after the first service. And we changed that off. Some weeks we had German first and then the other weeks English first. We tried, Henry really tried his best to please the congregation and find the right method of the services the right way. It really wasn't proper because it was really hurting when you'd see people go out and we still had service. The service was on and we were singing and as soon as we start singing up they go and walk out. So then after that-- I think that was the second way. Then we came to the way we have it now. We have early German and Sunday School at the same time. But we tried to change that. German like second service. But that collides with the Sunday School, and Sunday School teachers and everything. All those people that are English they are busy from 9:00 on. That's why it

didn't work to change that route. I for one I have always thought that we should gradually cut out more German. Leonard thinks different and perhaps it is the right way to, he is catering to the people that are still German and still insist on German even though they talk German in their families and the children don't understand anything German but they themselves insist that it's got to be German. I don't think that that is the right thing but I have no solution for that.

PAETKAU: That's the problem there is no easy answer.

JACOB: No, no. There is no easy answer. And that's why I better not talk about it because, or, too much. Every once in awhile I mention that I would like to see it, English and that's it. But as I am growing older I feel that perhaps it would be different if we would have--if I would have attended the English service all the time I would get more used to it. I understand it but as I am getting older our thinking doesn't, isn't quite as fast anymore and all that and it's harder for me to go to English service but I really love a German service preached in the German language, real language. For instance, Leonard had a very good service last Sunday. He preached about the....

PAETKAU: Capital punishment?

JACOB: Yes, capital punishment. I mean, he worked it out properly and he used the proper words and so on. Otherwise I know how hard it is for Leonard to work out a German service. But I don't like that the way he used words in there that make me shutter. But I understand that. He can't, he just can't do that and we have to put up with that. We can't get no other minister. That's why I think that you should keep up the German language. Try and, even study it and hang on to it. Someday you might-- I don't know what you are studying now. Are you in theology or what?

PAETKAU: I've been doing theology and history together.

JACOB: Yah. Well someday if you are ready to take over a congregation somewhere and it could happen that it's a German-English congregation that would be a big value for you. Henry Isaac he was much better then. But it's not surprising. It's --

PAETKAU: There aren't that many left anymore with both languages.

JACOB: No, very few. That's why I personally feel that we shouldn't--- I have other beefs there too.