

Chapter IThe Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario in
Historical Perspective

The Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario was organized on May 25, 1925, at the home of Jacob P. Wiens, in the village of St. Jacobs, in the County of Waterloo. Eighteen persons were present at its inception -- Jacob P. Friesen, Jacob and Maria Wiens, Jacob W. Reimer, Gerhard Dueck, Gerhard Enns, Johann G. Rempel, Isaak Sawatzky, Johann Lorenz, Lena and Anna Dick, Katharina Dick (Swartz), Marichen Braun, Maria Fehderau, Mrs. Peter Friesen and Mrs Heinrich Braun. Two names are not available. (1)

To organize a Mennonite church somewhere in Waterloo County was, to a casual observer, nothing unusual nor extraordinary, for Waterloo County is the home of, and was pioneered by Mennonites of Swiss origin in the early 19th century. It was Joseph Schörg, whose grandfather emigrated from Switzerland to Pennsylvania in 1727, and Samuel Betzner, whose father came from Württemberg in southern Germany in 1755, who left their ^{home} in Pennsylvania in 1799, and decided to settle in Upper Canada on the banks of the Grand River. They chose this area for settlement because they were favourably impressed with what they found -- the quality of the soil, the stands of timber, and the countryside in general. (2) When more settlers from Pennsylvania arrived, and land was purchased, Waterloo County emerged. The fledgling Mennonite congregation that was formed in St. Jacobs on May 25, 1925, was unique however. It was an event of considerable importance, for those involved in its organization were not Mennonites of Swiss origin, but were of Frisian-Dutch extraction, Mennonites who had but a year earlier emigrated from the Soviet Union. They were descendants of the Anabaptists who had turned to Menno Simons, a priest recently converted from Roman Catholicism, and had begged him to champion their cause. This young priest gave his name to this religious

reform--movement, unleashed in Switzerland by the Patrician Conrad Grebel. As the Rhine has its headwaters in Switzerland and flows in a northerly direction through Germany, parts of France and Holland, so too flowed Anabaptism from Switzerland northward to the Netherlands -- albeit not in water, but in ideas, not through parallel mountain chains, but through people. In Flanders and Friesland along the North Sea coast it found receptive ground among the sturdy folk fighting to gain religious and political liberty. Under the leadership of William the Silent these folk were trying to free themselves from the yoke of the Spanish Habsburgs. It was these people who prevailed upon Menno Simons ca. 1536 to become their spiritual leader.

The 16th century saw much of western Europe convulsed in the throes of religious and political upheaval. Caught in this turmoil, Anabaptism attempted to crystallize its religious convictions. More than any other contemporary reform movement, it tried to carry through a programme of restoration of primitive Christianity. " 'Restitution' was their great word. Much more drastically than any of their contemporaries they searched the Scriptures in order to recover the pattern of the early church."⁽³⁾ Their theology enunciated such principles as freedom of conscience and religion, voluntary church membership through adult baptism -- thus aiming at a church of believers only --, the separation of church and state, and the rejection of all military force.

To the 16th century mentality, conditioned to the union of temporal and spiritual powers, such concepts not only smacked of extreme radicalism, but were the embodiment of left-wing leanings of a revolutionary movement. As such it is not surprising that Anabaptism incurred upon itself the wrath of existing institutions, both religious and secular. Such conditions prompted the Friesian and Flemish followers of Menno Simons to consider possible emigration as a means of obtaining that religious liberty and freedom they so ardently sought. When, therefore, King Wladislav IV of Poland issued an edict in 1642 favouring Mennonite settlers in his lands, the Dutch Anabaptists exchanged their native Friesland

and Flanders for the lowlands of the Baltic basin. Here they were able to apply their knowledge of hydraulics in draining the marshes bordering the Nogat and Vistula Rivers. Although tolerance to a certain degree was the coveted reward, in certain places persecution persisted, as in the Danzig area, where the Mennonites aroused the envy of the guilds because of their economic prosperity and success.

The 18th century brought a great measure of tolerance which led to the erection of church buildings, which at first were only simple sheds because nothing else was permitted. During this period a gradual shift was made from Dutch to German in the worship service. It would also appear that the concern to establish their own schools to preserve their heritage can be traced to this period as a result of contacts with Moravian brethren. (4)

Of significance during this period also, is the transfer of sovereignty of this area from Poland to Prussia in 1772, with a subsequent Edict of Toleration by Frederick the Great in 1780. However, the Mennonite conscience could not remain satisfied indefinitely with Prussian militarism making its demands. Motivated by major upheavals in Europe, the Prussian Mennonites were faced with military pressure and with a scarcity of land. Government controls prevented Mennonites from buying more land. Families were large. In view of this, where were they to turn? Since agriculture was their way of life, "a Mennonite without a farm was like a rider without a horse." (5) By 1789 the great migration to Russia was in progress.

Even prior to the edict of July 30, 1789, which restricted the Prussian Mennonites in their quest for the purchase of land, they felt compelled to turn once again to emigration as a solution to their dilemma. Under the existing restrictions the manifesto of Catherine II, issued on July 22, 1763 to Germans and other Europeans alike, to occupy the vast areas of the southern Ukraine and Lower Volga regions, vacated by the Turks as a result of the Russo-Turkish war 1781-92, seemed to be an indication that God was leading them in this direction.

The Russian colonial director and later curator of the Mennonite colonies, von Trappe, expressed similar sentiments: "If this work be from Thee, help us to prosperity, if this work be of men, prevent it from advancing and change our minds." (6)

Upon von Trappe's suggestion two deputies, Johann Bartsch and Jakob Hoepfner, were dispatched to Russia in 1786 in order to look for a suitable place to settle, and to negotiate with Her Imperial Majesty for a charter of privileges, pertaining to all Mennonites who would eventually settle in Russia. (7)

Within ten years of Catherine's invitation to occupy the Ukrainian steppes, (1763) about 100 German colonies had been established; the Mennonites, however, did not arrive until 1789. In that year 228 families started the first settlement at the junction of the Chortitza and Dnjepr Rivers, in the Province of Ekaterinoslav. This group was followed subsequently by others. Unspeakable hardships and poverty initially threatened to extinguish the fledgling colony, but with the arrival of new settlers bound for the Molotschna, in the Province of Taurien, help came for the struggling Chortitza area. Mennonite immigration from Prussia and Poland ceased in 1840. By that time some 1150 families, or 6000 persons had arrived in Southern Russia from Prussia and Poland. (8)

In due course new land purchases were made to settle and accommodate the growing population. Daughter colonies sprang up, not only in various places of the Ukraine, but in the Caucasus, the Middle Volga region, in the Crimea and in Siberia. This proliferation is illustrated by the following table. (9) (insert page)

Maps?

MAJOR MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS OVER 10 VILLAGES
IN RUSSIA IN 1918

No.	Settlement	Date of Founding	Location	No. of Villages
1.	Molotschna	1804	Ukraine	58
2.	Chortitza	1789	Ukraine	18
3.	Memrik	1884	Ukraine	10
4.	Zagradovka	1871	Ukraine	17
5.	Jasykovo	1868	Ukraine	10
6.	Terek	1901	Caucasus	17
7.	Old Samara	1861	Middle Volga	10
8.	New Samara	1891	Middle Volga	12
9.	Trakt	1851	Middle Volga	10
10.	Orenburg	1893	Middle Volga (West of Urals)	21
11.	Crimeas	1860	Crimean Peninsula	35
12.	Omsk	1900	Siberia	58
13.	Slavgorod and Barnaul	1907	Siberia	51
14.	Pavlodar	1907	Siberia	16

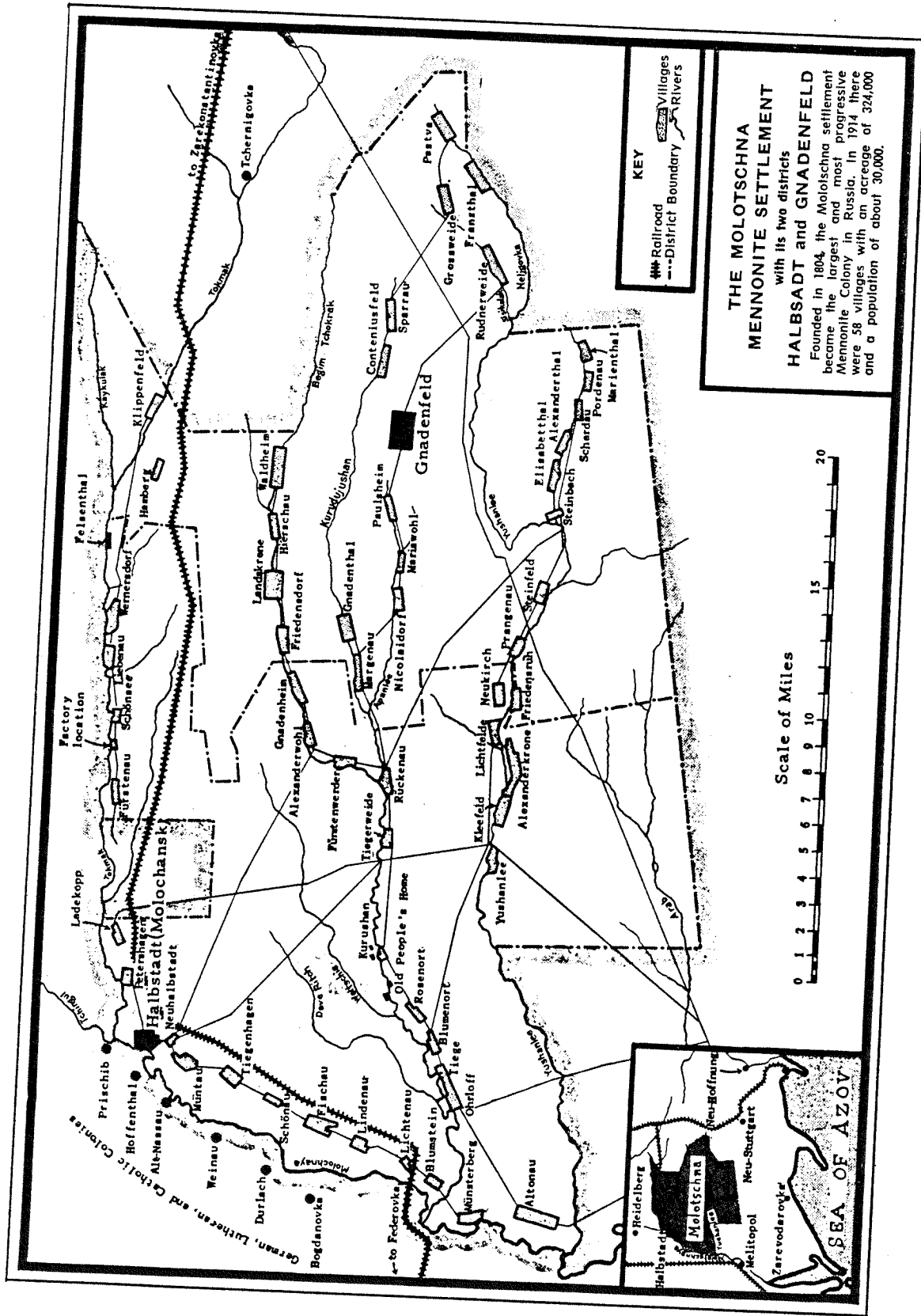
Russia's colonial policy at the time of the Mennonite migration was to keep foreigners and native Russians apart by settling the former in separate communities. This was very acceptable to the Mennonites, for such an arrangement enabled them to administer and control civic, religious and educational matters in their communities. (10) *This gave rise to a veritable Mennonite Commonwealth.*

Mennonite community life in Russia, which begins in the late 18th century, comes to a halt about one hundred and fifty years later, at the conclusion of World War II. C. J. Dyck sees at least two similarities when comparing the beginning and the end of the colonial period. In both instances military action was involved in shaping the destinies of the people concerned. Military pressure in Prussia, resulting from the French Revolution, determined their migration to the east. Two World Wars of the 20th century turned their course once again to the west. The 1920's saw ca. 20,000 finding new homes in Canada, while ^{many of} those who remained behind were evacuated by the Wehrmacht upon its retreat in 1943. Both periods were marked by poverty and extreme suffering. Those who left Russia in 1943 entered the Reich as refugees. (11)

Notes and Bibliography

Chapter I

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- (2) Dr. Gottlieb Leibbrandt, Little Paradise, (Kitchener, Allprint Company Ltd.), 1977, p. 5.
- (3) Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, (Boston: Beacon Press), 1952, p. 95.
- (4) Cornelius J. Dyck, Editor, An Introduction to Mennonite History, (Herald Press, Scottdale, Penn./Kitchener, Ontario), 1977, p. 124.
- (5) Ibid., p. 127.
- (6) Franz Isaac, Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte derselben, (Kommissionsverlag und Druck von H. J. Braun, Halbstadt, Taurien), 1908, p. 2.
- (7) Ibid., p. 5.
- (8) P. M. Friesen, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia - 1789-1910, Translated from the German by J..B. Toews, Abraham Friesen, Peter J. Klassen, Harry Loewen), Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Fresno, California), 1978, p. 92.
- (9) Frank H. Epp, Mennonite Exodus, The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution, (D. W. Friesen and Sons, Ltd., Altona, Manitoba), First edition 1962, Reprinted 1966, p. 19. (Table)
- (10) Dyck, op. cit., p. 127.
- (11) Ibid., p. 126.



Map 4. The Molotschna Mennonite settlement.

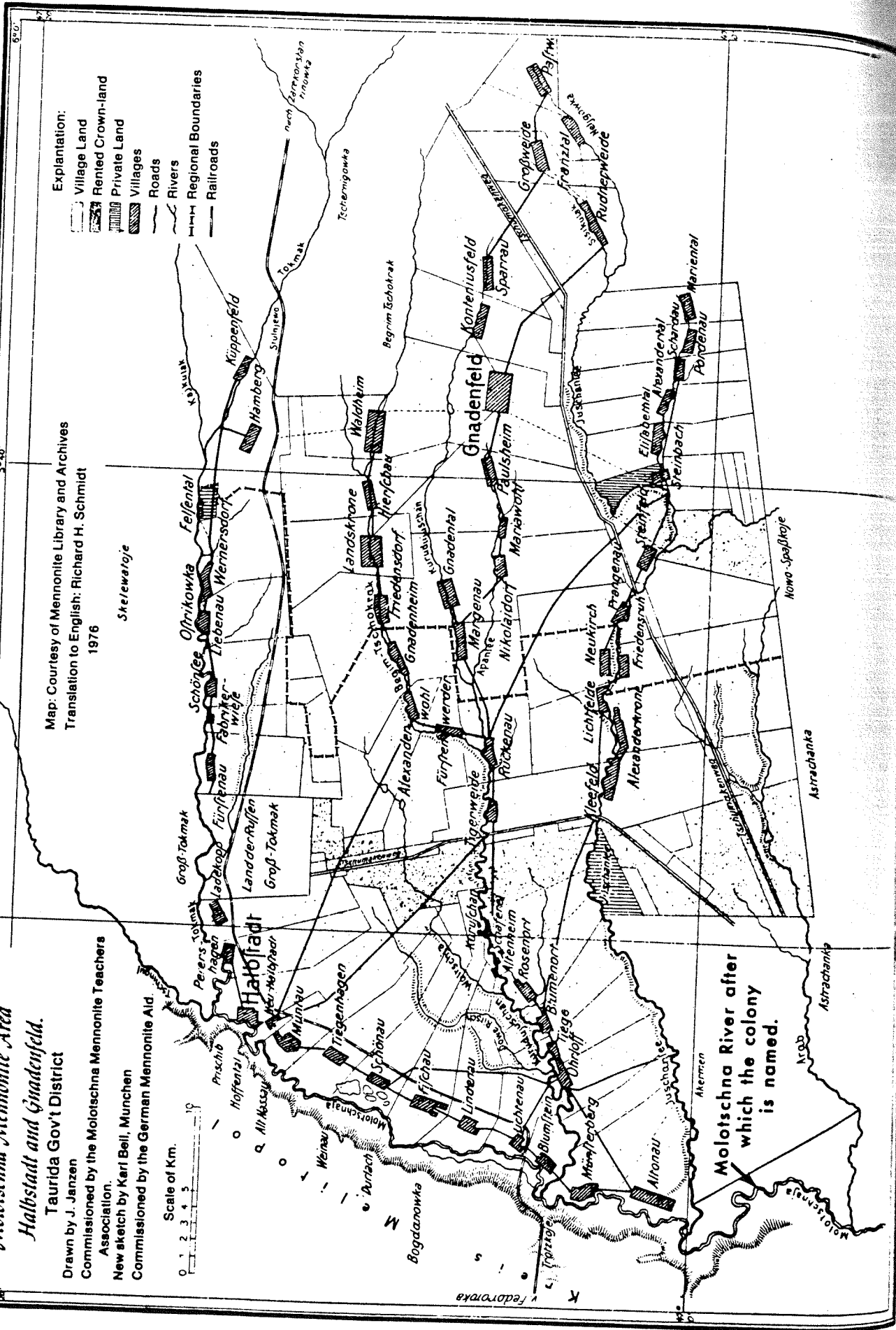
Molotschna Mennonite Area
Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld.

Drawn by J. Janzen
Commissioned by the Molotschna Mennonite Teachers
Association.
New sketch by Karl Bell, Munchen
Commissioned by the German Mennonite Aid.

Scale of Km.
0 1 2 3 4 5

Map: Courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives
Translation to English: Richard H. Schmidt
1976

- Explanation:
- Village Land
 - Rented Crown-land
 - Private Land
 - Villages
 - Roads
 - Rivers
 - Regional Boundaries
 - Railroads



Molotschna River after
which the colony
is named.

Chapter 2

Communion in Elisabethtal --1860

"A river cannot rise higher than its source.
But for the grace of God, a people can rise
no higher than their heritage and their
leadership." (1)

Repeatedly from time to time the Christian Church has been subjected to schisms. Of these, one of the most fundamental and far-reaching in its effects was the split caused by Luther's Protestant Reformation in Germany. Thereupon widespread reformations and resulting divisions in churches followed in other countries. It is not really surprising, therefore, that the Mennonite Church, also, which upheld the Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers and the resulting freedom for laymen to interpret scripture, should have to contend with divisions in its brotherhood from time to time.

The earliest schism that occurred in the church to which Menno gave his name, took place in Friesland, previous to any eastward emigration. The rift occurred between the Frisians of Friesland and their Flemish neighbours, who had migrated to Friesland in order to escape persecution in their native Flanders. The disagreement that led to a split in the young church was over the mode of baptism employed by the two groups. A Frisian elder baptized by taking water from a basin in the hollow of his hand and sprinkling it on the head of the candidate. Colloquially, and in rather coarse language, this group became known as Japsministi (hollow hand Mennonites). The Flemish baptized by pouring water three times from a small pitcher onto the head of the baptismal candidate. This group became known as Kauntjiministi (pitcher Mennonites). * Although these differences appear to be mere trivialities, the division between the two groups became so deep-rooted that they were transplanted to Prussia and later to Russia.

*This information was passed on to the author by her father, who himself was the son of an elder in the Kronsweide (Frisian) Church.

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In case of intermarriage between the two groups, rebaptism seems so have been required. Eventually, however, the elders felt a need for a better understanding between the groups, and reached an agreement whereby a person who wished to marry someone from the other faction, could request a transfer of membership by presenting a certificate of baptism. (2) The attempt to bridge the chasm that for many years proved to be a sharp divider of the Mennonite family was a positive move. Unfortunately, however, ^{division} this was not to be the last one. The life-style adopted by the brotherhood in Russia no doubt contributed to further splits and divisions.

Although life in Russia was patterned upon that previously led in the Delta of the Vistula, it was nevertheless modified by socio-economic-political conditions of the new homeland. A poignant component of life in Russia was the wide spectrum of freedoms and self determination the Mennonites enjoyed. By the large measure of autonomy and self government granted to them by the government, the Mennonite colonies developed into somewhat of a state within a state -- a Commonwealth in miniature. Within their boundaries they were in complete control of religious, educational and civic matters. The only direct link between them and the government in St. Petersburg was the Fürsorgekomitee (Supervisory Commission) appointed by the tsar. This commission, stationed in Odessa, performed chiefly administrative functions. Thus the Mennonites, for the first time in their history, had to assume administrative responsibilities, and try to reconcile this practice with their historic Anabaptist faith of a separation of church and state. (3) For them this was no easy task. It was a difficult assignment to bring together "the temporal and the spiritual spheres of influence -- the spiritual 'Mennonite brotherhood' and the civil 'Mennonite jurisdiction'. For them this was a completely new frame of refernce within which they had to learn to get along with one another. Many could not grasp the fact that brethren, elected to run the civil government, should excercise

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civil, police and judicial power -- i. e., should rule in the ways of the world-- over other brethren, while others exercised such ecclesiastical powers as admonition and excommunication, powers which had very soon to be applied because of the not very pious character of the immigrants." (4)

Turning one's attention briefly again to Prussia, the country whose customs became the founding stones for the life-style that followed in Russia, one cannot escape the query concerning the level of spiritual concerns that prevailed among the Prussian brotherhood previous to the move to Russia. An enigma that remains to the present is the fact that no provision was made by the first contingent of 228 emigrating families who left Prussia in 1789, for any kind of spiritual leadership or nurture. Why was it, that the first group of settlers arrived in Russia without a spiritual head? Was it an oversight, or could it be that a spiritual decline had set in during their sojourn in the Valley of the Vistula? Was this merely a lack of foresight, or was it poor organization that caused this obvious neglect or oversight? One does not wish to interpret it as indifference. This lack was quickly recognized and remedied by commissioning Bernhard Penner, via letter from Danzig, to serve as elder. (5)

P. M. Friesen believes that a possible explanation for this apparent lack of foresight might be that ministers were lay-people chosen from educated and more prosperous families, who could afford to serve without remuneration. The Old Colony, Chortitza, established in 1789, was at first poverty stricken. Friesen believes that the fact that no minister was among the 228 families that left for Russia was an indication, that those in Prussia, who were better situated economically, and from whose ranks the ministers were chosen, "viewed the migration with suspicion". (6) In the Molotschna, a colony founded in the early 19th century, the spiritual situation was somewhat better, in that some groups, the village of Gnadenfeld, for instance, had migrated as an organized congregation.

When speaking about academic qualifications for ministers at the time, the standards were pathetically low. No special provision for the education of ministers was made. What training these men generally received for the ministry was limited to the religious instruction provided by the village elementary school. This meagre training, coupled with geographic isolation and lack of any cultural contacts with the outside world, "produced an intellectual stagnation and a leadership with very limited mental horizons". (7)

In spite of the general dearth of competent leadership in the Mennonite colonies during the early nineteenth century, there were astounding exceptions. A case in point was Johann Cornies (1789-1848) of Ohrloff. Probably no facets of colonial life escaped the scrutiny of his eagle eye. As a tireless innovator and reformer, he was decades ahead of his time. Agriculture and education claimed much of his reforming zeal. Perhaps it is not coincidental, that for a brief period of time during the 1820's an intellectual and religious renaissance flourished in Ohrloff, the village in the Molotschna that Cornies called 'home'. Here the founding of Russia's first Zentralschule, a secondary school, marked one of the first energetic efforts undertaken to improve the education of the Mennonites in Russia.

Linked inseparably with the history of this school is its founder and first teacher, Tobias Voth, who was born in Germany in 1791. Here he received a good education. Through the writings of Jung Stilling, a Pietist, Voth developed deep spiritual insights and cultivated a living faith in God. He accepted a call to come to Russia in order to found the secondary school in Ohrloff, where he taught from 1822-29. According to Gerhard Lohrenz, the Mennonite masses of the time had little understanding nor appreciation for such a school, and many were definitely opposed to higher education. Voth, however, was a superior pedagogue, and he was successful in instilling an appreciation and a love of good Christian Literature in his students. Not only was Tobias

Voth a spiritual and a deeply religious man, but he was also musical and somewhat of a poet. He is supposed to have had considerable skill in Art, and the only extant picture of Johann Cornies is attributed to him.

A man of such cultural and intellectual stature, however, was far beyond the comprehension and appreciation of his 'Russian' Mennonite compatriots. Misunderstandings forced this gifted and noble man to leave Ohrloff, and look for employment elsewhere. This was no easy task, and meanwhile he had a hard time providing for his family. After a lonely pilgrimage here and there, he died in Berdjansk, a city on the Sea of Azov. As an educator Voth left an indelible mark for good among his people. He stood for a living faith rooted in a vital encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of his students became active leaders in the Mennonite Brethren Church when it was founded years later in 1860. (8)

Ohrloff, however, could not for long boast to be the beacon in upholding and advancing spiritual and intellectual values. A schism occurred in Ohrloff's Flemish congregation. When its progressive Elder, Bernhard Fast, tried to introduce a number of innovations in his religious practices, three-fourths of his congregation withdrew and formed a separate organization, known as die Große Gemeinde (the Large Church). This withdrawal left Elder Fast with a small, but progressive minority in Ohrloff, while the conservative majority was henceforth centred in Lichtenau. (9)

The split that occurred in the Flemish Church of Ohrloff was not the first of its kind in Russia. Between 1812-19 a group of dissident members had withdrawn from the Flemish Church under the leadership of an ordained minister, Klaas Reimer. After considerable opposition -- to the point of persecution -- from the elders of the orthodox Mennonite Church, Johann Cornies intervened on behalf of the struggling group. Thereupon "the elders were compelled by the civil authorities to recognize the Kleine Gemeinde (Small Church), and vali-

date the functions of its unordained elder by a decree of the Supervisory Commission on January 28, 1843." (10) An attempt by Elder Janzen of Kronsweide, a Frisian Church in the Chortitza Colony, to have Reimer ordained as elder, was not successful. Janzen did not dare to defy the threats of the 'large congregation', as the Flemish Church of both the Old Colony and the Molotschna was called. The Kleine Gemeinde, therefore, had Reimer installed as elder by one of his fellow secessionist ministers. P. M. Friesen was of the opinion that the Kleine Gemeinde was "too narrow minded, too frightened, too isolationist, and too much opposed to education" to make a profound impact upon the total Mennonite brotherhood. He also believed that the rift of 1812-19, a clarion call to repentance, "had never made a profound impact" upon the Mennonite brotherhood. History was to repeat itself in 1860. (11)

Nowhere, however, claims John A. Toews, was moral and spiritual decline among the Mennonites better portrayed than in the land question. The mode of settlement, in keeping with government policy, resulted in large closed Mennonite settlements. Mennonites were expected to be model farmers. Their 175 acre holdings were not to be diminished in size. With a rapidly increasing population this policy soon resulted in a stratified society of landowners and landless, which in turn produced much bitterness. "The situation became most acute in the Molotschna with a ratio of 2,356 landless workers to 1,384 landed farmers in 1865". (12) The landless, known as Anwohner (neighbour), usually lived in the outskirts of the village, and had no voting rights at village meetings. Intermarriage between the classes was frowned upon. In this regard G. H. Lohrenz is quoted by Toews as saying: "The long period of strife between landowners and tenants largely destroyed the brotherly relationship between the two classes". (13) In reference to this topic Toews also quotes Robert Kreider as stating: "No problem in the Mennonite colonies created such misunderstanding and class-hatred as the land problem.....this conflict demonstrates how class and property interests soil the church as an

ethical community of brotherly love". (14) Ministers and elders almost without exception belonged to the wealthier class. This added a tragic dimension to this problem. After 1865 a temporary solution was found in the distribution of previously rented crown lands. A new and broader vision however, was demonstrated shortly thereafter by the oldest colonies, when they embarked upon a programme of establishing daughter colonies. Here the younger generations and the landless were settled on newly purchased tracts of land. In the course of approximately fifty years forty new settlements were established in the Ukraine, the Crimea, in the Caucasus, in South and Central Asia and in Siberia. (15)

As mentioned previously, the village of Ohrloff in the Molotschna enjoyed a brief period of cultural and spiritual leadership during the 1820's. This leadership role was soon to be taken over by another village, Gnadenfeld (Field of Grace). The 'Gnadenfelders' had a Lutheran background. They immigrated to the Molotschna as an organized congregation about 1834. As Lutherans, when still in Germany, they had held separate church services for edification, apart from and in addition to those of the church. Through Bible study they came to the realization that infant baptism has no scriptural background, and thereupon asked a Mennonite elder to baptize them. (16) P. M. Friesen says about Gnadenfeld, that it "became the centre for a religious movement of great warmth, the magnetic centre for those who called themselves 'brethren' long before the MB Church was organized. Many members of other Mennonite congregations formally joined Gnadenfeld because they sympathized with its position; but even more came as guest to the Sunday and festive services, especially to the Bible studies and mission festivals. Here too, private study groups sprang up, as did mission sewing circles. Gnadenfeld gave birth to the MB Church of 1860". (17)

One of the greatest contributing factors in the formation of the Mennonite

Brethren Church was the ministry of Eduard Hugo Otto Wüst, pastor of the Lutheran congregation of Neuhoffnung, a village near the city of Berdjansk, on the Sea of Azov. Pastor Wüst contributed greatly toward a renewal in the Mennonite churches of the Molotschna. To quote P. M. Friesen again, "the Mennonite Brethren Church must actually look upon Pastor Wüst as her second reformer". Although Menno had built the house in which we live on the 'one foundation', i. e., 1. Corinthians 3:11 - his motto- 'For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, our rural Prussian churches were eventually left with a moral formalism, albeit doctrinally and ecclesiastically correct. Wüst, on the other hand, strongly emphasized in his sermons the joyous message of justification by faith. If he overemphasized this doctrine, it tended to produce a wholesome counterbalance to Menno's somewhat melancholy theology, though it too was based on, and rooted in justifying grace. (18) "Wüst was a 'Moses'", says John A. Toews, "who led many people out of the bondage of a lifeless tradition and dead orthodoxy to a joyous assurance of a personal faith. But by training and experience he was not equipped to be the 'Joshua' to lead these redeemed people into the promised land of the believers' church. In his own congregation believers and unbelievers remained 'side by side'. He did not introduce believers' baptism, and remained a pedo-baptist to the end of his ministry. Like Luther, he found it impossible to bring his original vision into actual realization". (19) In his native Germany Wüst had been strongly influenced by Pietism, a movement that he represented and although his theology enabled him to revitalize the fellowship concept, he was unable to provide the Brethren with a New Testament Church concept. The German Baptists were probably of greater help to the Brethren in this respect than were the Pietists. (20)

The new life that emanated from Ohrloff, Gnadenfeld and from Neuhoffnung, the Lutheran village where Wüst was pastor, resulted in numerous conversions.

The converts formed an interesting conglomerate of Mennonites, Separatist Württembergers and Lutherans that came and remained together under Wüst's leadership. Common communion services were held in Wüst's church, and according to rumour, also in the Mennonite church at Gnadenfeld. Pastor Wüst became a popular speaker at Mennonite functions. People continued to meet for Bible study and prayer, and these Bible study cells, Bibelstunden, held in the homes, "became the cradle for the birth of the MB Church". (21)

It appears natural that upon the creation of a warm cohesive fellowship, that its adherents might eventually express the desire to celebrate the Lord's Supper more frequently than was the current custom in the Mennonite church. Furthermore, an additional desire, to fellowship at the communion table with believers only, could be expressed as well, for in the Mennonite churches of the period repentant and unrepentant members alike, were permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper side by side. However, although Elder Lenzmann of the Gnadenfeld Church was approached by a group which requested that he break bread more frequently according to Acts 2:46-47, he refused. "Thus it happened", says P. M. Friesen, that "in the fall of 1859, two weeks after St. Martin's, as a few brothers and sisters were gathered together in Elisabeththal in the home of Kornelius Wiens, that they broke bread". (22) The breaking of bread in the Mennonite church was the exclusive right of an ordained elder, and the act committed by the group in Elisabeththal was therefore regarded by the church hierarchy, as a presumptuous transgression against established church practice. Nevertheless it marked the first step in the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

However, yet another move was required to break the last ties that bound the 'brethren' to the mother church. A formal declaration of withdrawal from the established institution had to be composed, in order to sever completely the umbilical cord.

Such a paper, known as the Founding or Secession Document, was drawn up and signed by eighteen persons on January 6, 1860. The signatories to the Secession Document are the following:

Elisabethtal - Abraham Cornelsen, Kornlius Wiens, Issak Koop,
Franz Klaassen, Abraham Wiens
Lichtfelde - Martin Klassen, Abr. Wiens
Schardau - Daniel Hoppe, August Strauss
Rudnerweide - Jakob P. Bekker
Pastwa - Isaak Regehr, Andreas Voth, Jakob Wall
Liebenau - Johann Claassen, Heinrich Huebert
Ladekopp - Abr. Peters, Peter Stobbe
Mariental - Diedrich Klaassen (23)

The document presented to the existing hierarchy, enumerated the reasons for secession. At the same time it was highly critical of various abuses, both social and ecclesiastical, that existed in the Mennonite colonies at the time. The elders responded typically with a storm of protest and with threats. After a prolonged struggle, however, the fledgling church was granted official recognition by the Russian authorities on May 30, 1866. Six years after its birth the MB Church was launched on its course by officialdom. (24)

In regard to an evaluation of the Secession Document, the details of which are not given here, suffice it to say that J. A. Toews believes that "the charges brought against the church and its ministers were far too sweeping and too severe in character. There were still some devoted and deeply concerned leaders in the pulpit, and many fine Christians in the pews. -- It would appear that in the heat of battle, the brethren had temporarily forgotten the spiritual nurture they had received in the 'mother church'". (25) Concerning those who produced the document, P. M. Friesen says: "Generally speaking, the founders of the MB Church were neither intellectually nor spiritually well enough prepared for the task". (26) In considering the MB Church from a vantage point of a century plus later, one cannot help but be aware of the fact that the Lord has blessed in spite of all.

Symultaneously, yet independently, a new-life movement began also in the

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Chortitza churches, where religious and moral conditions had deteriorated to an even greater low. A fellowship centre developed in the village of Einlage. Through Bibelstunden (Bible studies) and the reading of Christian literature the group became well established here during the winter of 1859-60. In 1861 the Einlage Church established contact with its counterpart in the Molotschna. In Einlage, baptism by immersion was made a prerequisite for membership and a requirement for participation in communion from the beginning. March 11, 1862, is usually accepted as Founder's Day of the Einlage MB Church. (27)

Chapter II

- (1) John A Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, Pilgrims and Pioneers, Edited by A. J. Klassen, (Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches), Fresno, California, p. 19.
- (2) Jacob P. Bekker, Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church, Previously Unpublished Manuscript by One of the Eighteen Founders, English Translation by D. E. Pauls and A. E. Janzen, 1973, (The Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the Midwest), 1973, p. 14.
- (3) Toews, op. cit., pp. 15-18.
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Chapter III

Mennonite Life in Russia -- Rise and Demise 1789-1920

When the Mennonites of Russia heeded the call of Katherine the Great to settle the vast stretches of Novorossia, later known as the Ukraine, they did so because they looked upon this opportunity as providential. The Lord had provided. A century and a half later, when their way of life was wiped out by the convulsive forces of World War I and its aftermath, it was much more difficult to recognize the Lord's design. Their lot was not unlike that of Job, who in his affliction cried out: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord". Job 1:21. The Mennonite immigration into Russia in 1789 was marked by dire poverty, the emigration in the 1920's was a close parallel.

The basic life-style that the Mennonites created for themselves in Russia, was agrarian. Although the beginnings were difficult, prosperity beyond the remotest dreams of the early settlers, followed the pioneering years. The small crafts and industries, e. g., silkworm raising, gave way to grain production when Russia developed her Black Sea ports. The rich Ukrainian soil (chernozem), was particularly conducive to the growing of hard winter wheat, for which there was a ready market in Europe everywhere. Agricultural development in turn promoted limited industrialization, chiefly the production of farm machinery, and the processing of their own agricultural products, such as flour-milling. By the early 20th century the Mennonites of Russia had "seventy large steam-powered flour mills, factories -- whose combined output was 15,000 mowers and 10,000 plows annually, creameries and other industrial projects. Six percent of industrial production in Russia was carried on

by Mennonites. (1) James Urry makes a similar claim, which he illustrates with the following table:

Firm	Founding Capital in Rubles	Annual Production in Rubles	Number of Workers
Lepp & Wallmann	1,200,000	900,000	270
A. J. Koop	?	610,000	376
J. G. Niebuhr	?	450,000	350
J. J. Neufeld & Co.	250,000	350,000	200
J. A. & W. J. Classen	?	241,000	145
Franz & Schroeder	?	209,190	153
G. A. Klassen & Neufeld	?	200,442	140
J. Jansen & K. Neufeld	?	200,000	110
Totals	?	<u>3,160,632</u>	<u>1,744</u>

The eight leading Mennonite producers of agricultural machines, 1908. (2) Their production of machinery in 1911, says Urry, accounted for 6.2 % of total Russian production with an annual value of more than three million rubles. Urry also produces statistics to show the value of flour produced by the four leading Mennonite millers about the year 1914:

Niebuhr & Co., Alexandrovsk	3 million rubles	
J. J. Siemens, Yekaterinoslav	1.5 million rubles	
J. Siemens, Nikopol	0.8 million rubles	
Peter Unger, <i>New York</i>	0.7 million rubles	
Total	<u>6.0 million rubles</u>	(3)

Urry claims that it is impossible to calculate the exact value of Mennonite industrial concerns in Russia. However, that the industrial wealth, which accounted for 50 to 75 percent of total Mennonite assets, was in the hands of 2.8 percent of the brotherhood, is a good indicator of the unequal distribution of the residual financial resources within the commonwealth. Some Mennonites were very wealthy. (4)

In addition to the large industrial establishments, many smaller factories, workshops and commercial undertakings were scattered throughout the colonies.

The following table provides an indication of the types and numbers of entrepreneurial undertakings that existed during the first decades of the 20th century in the two mother colonies, Chortitza and the Molotschna. (Both colonies were named after small rivers on which they were located.)

Industry and Commerce in the two Mother Colonies Chortitza and Molotschna:

- windmills	105
- motor- and steam driven flour mills.....	73
- factories and larger work-shops	26
- brick yards	38
- stores and shops	95
- typographies (publishing houses)	2 (5)

Mennonite wealth in Russia, however, was based on land ownership. According to James Urry land owned by Mennonites in 1910 was estimated at 800,000 desiatin (1 desiatin - 2.7 acres), by 1914 this area had increased to 1,200,000 desiatin. About one third of this land was located in daughter colonies founded since 1890. The most productive land was to be found in the South, in the older colonies, where the price of land rose sharply between 1900-1914. Whereas a desiatin sold there for ca. 300 rubles around the turn of the century, it was worth 450 to 500 rubles per desiatin by 1914. Concentrated in southern Russia also were most of the khutors (estates) owned by Mennonites. In this area the Gutsbesitzer (estate owners) possessed up to 50% of all lands in Mennonite hands. The sizes of khutors varied. A few exceeded 5,000 desiatin, some comprised more than 10,000 desiatin. In 1910 the largest khutor was estimated as surpassing the 18,000 desiatin mark. Anyone owning 5,000 desiatin, qualified the owner to be considered as a large owner. In the Chortitza and the Molotschna areas there were about 273 landowners, owning a combined total of 212,139 desiatin. (6)

Because the subject of landownership was basic to the structure of the Mennonite commonwealth in Russia, it has been repeatedly investigated. Between 1914-20 information on this subject was compiled by Dutch Mennonites through

interviews and by collecting written reports. The compendium thus compiled was consequently translated into German and published. This report estimates that the land area owned and operated by Mennonites living in 365 villages scattered in the various colonies, plus neighbouring estates, amounted to 1,299,000 desiatin. In addition to this, the report points out, that exact information on land owned by individuals was not available from such provinces as Charkow, Saratov, Woronesh, the Don-area, the Kuban, Samara and others. The figures from these areas could therefore not be included. In view of this missing link the report concludes, that Mennonite land in Russia could be estimated at ca. 1,400,000 desiatin. (7)

With prosperity and wealth there emerged, fortunately, leaders who took a keen interest in promoting cultural as well as economic growth. Foremost among these was Johann Cornies (1789-1848), whom the tsar appointed mediator between the Russian government and the Mennonite people. To all intents and purposes, this position made him, as C. J. Dyck says, "director of the growth and development of the Mennonite communities in their economic and educational activities, thereby also influencing their religious life". (8)

Such eminence Cornies had not always enjoyed. By sheer superhuman effort, and phenomenal success, he rose from humble beginnings to great heights of prestige, wealth and position. In 1804 he set foot in Russia from Prussia as an immigrant lad, and when he married in 1811 he did not even own a house where he could take his bride. In a year's time this had changed, however, and Cornies took over a Bauernhof (farm) in the village of Ohrloff in 1811. Not only was Cornies a hard taskmaster, but he was blessed also with foresight and imagination, and the intuition to strike the iron while it is hot. From the outset his farming methods differed from those of the majority of his contemporaries, in that he diversified the types of agriculture he carried on. To ward off the dangers of drought, and resulting crop failures -- still prevalent at the time --

he combined grain production with the raising of livestock. As early as 1811 his flock of sheep numbered 250. He introduced Spanish Marinos in order to improve the flock. He rented crown land to provide ample grazing surface for his herds.

In 1830 success led Cornies to lay the groundwork for what was to become probably the most famous of his estates, Juschanlee, comprising an area of 3,500 dessiatin. The name was chosen from a small stream, on whose banks the model and experimental farm was established. After beginning here with animal husbandry, diversified branches of agriculture soon flourished there as well. Juschanlee became a station where farmers could buy -- very reasonably -- supplies ranging from breeding stock to seedlings for the orchard and seeds for the garden. The estate had a sprawling orchard of 2,200 fruit trees and 1,750 berry bushes. It also boasted 68,000 shade trees and a large horticultural nursery.

To the energy and imagination of Cornies there appeared to be no limits. In 1816 he turned part of the estate into a stud farm. By 1847 his horses numbered 500, and yet inspite of this most of the field work was done by oxen. His flocks and herds included more than 8,000 Merino sheep, about 200 cows of the Holstein variety, and he was also raising a British breed of hogs. Some minor industrial undertakings were to be found as well, such as bee-keeping, the raising of silk worms and the production of bricks and tiles. (9)

Cornies' industry and thrift did not escape the vigilance of the Russian government, upon whose initiative an agricultural society was formed. Because this Agricultural Society was not an elected body at first, Cornies was appointed life-long chairman. By virtue of this position Cornies was able to reach and influence every facet of Mennonite life. The Agricultural Society served as an umbrella organization that enabled Cornies to branch out into cultural spheres, as well as devoting himself to agrarian endeavours. In 1818

he founded a society for Christian education, an organization which over the years did much to improve primary education as well as teacher training, and the preparation of curricula for both secular and religious courses of study. Under the auspices of this organization the first Zentralschule (secondary school) came into being in Ohrloff in 1820. Shortly thereafter Halbstadt followed suit. The first Zentralschule in the Old Colony opened its doors to students in Chortitza in 1842. At this point in time the language of instruction in Mennonite primary (village) schools was exclusively German. This did not provide an opportunity for Mennonite children to learn the national language. The Zentralschulen were the first educational institutions that began to teach Russian. However, because they were not co-educational girls were still excluded from an advanced education. Not until the turn of the century were schools of higher learning established for girls. The diffusion of the Russian language became ever more prevalent among educated Mennonites during the second half of the 19th century. (10)

In addition to the erection of schools, which had to be financed completely by Mennonite capital, the flourishing economy made possible well-fare programmes unmatched anywhere in the Mennonite world at the time. Mutual aid, homes for the aged, orphanages, hospitals -- including a mental hospital, a school for deaf mutes, several girls' schools and a school of commerce for young men, were only a part of the vast provisions the communities made for their people. Following is a summary of schools and welfare institutions provided by the Mennonite colonies of Russia for their people:

Intermediate School of Commerce	1
Teacher Training Institutes	2
School for the training of Ministers	1
Zentralschulen (Secondary Schools).....	13
Girls' Schools	4
School of Commerce	1

Elementary Schools	400 (approx.)
School for the Deaf and Dumb	1
Hospitals	3
Hospital for Mentally Disturbed	1
Spa Hotel	1
Homes for the Aged	2
Orphanages	1 (11)

In addition to the institutions here listed, the brotherhood also supported contingents of its young men, who in lieu of military training worked a specified period of time in Russia's forests. During World War I some 12,000 Mennonite young men served either in forests or in the Medical Corps. The price tag for their support in 1917 alone was three million rubles. (12)

For the Mennonite colonies in Russia the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the Bolshevik Revolution marked the zenith of community development. Many Mennonites had become very much attached to their adopted homeland. They were patriots of the land that had opened its doors to them. At the same time, however, dark forebodings appeared on the political horizon. St. Petersburg was embarking upon a policy of nationalization and russification. The promises made to the Mennonites by Catherine the Great and her son and heir, Paul I, seemed to be blowing away by winds of change. Changes in the administrative boundaries, for instance, left Mennonites in some areas in the minority. Everywhere minutes at local municipal meetings had to be kept in Russian. Such innovations caused concern. The greatest concern, however, was caused by the requirement, that Russian would have to be taught in all schools. Many people feared that a process of assimilation might set in. From the decade of the 1890's the medium of instruction, with the exception of Religion and the German language, became Russian.

The climax of Mennonite reaction in response to the attempt at russification came in 1874 with the introduction of the universal military service law. This reversal of policy on the part of the Russian government caused 18,000 Menno-

nites to seek new homes in the United States and Canada, inspite of the fact that upon passage a section of the law did provide a means whereby they were permitted to perform an alternate service. For those who remained, involvement with Russians increased, but it was not enough to close the gap that existed between them. "The peasants and many Russian officials", says Dyck, "were jealous of Mennonite achievements, piqued also no doubt by a certain Mennonite hauteur and condescension which implied their feeling of superiority. These attitudes, together with Mennonite wealth, brought great difficulty to the colonies with the coming of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. As German speaking people the Mennonites were suspect as enemies of the state in its war against Germany; as prosperous farmers and businessmen they were suspect as enemies of the revolution." (13)

In the light of these events it is not surprising that the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 proved fatal for the Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia. Twilight descended not only upon the empire of the czars, but upon that unique life-style, on that state within a state that had taken shape in every Mennonite colony in Russia. If the Russo-Turkish War of 1781-92 had made the Mennonites its beneficiaries by pushing Turks and Zaporoshjia Cossaks out of the Lower Dnjepr and Volga regions to make way for settlers from Western Europe, history had now thrown its gears into reverse, and the Mennonites became the victims of World War I (1914-18), and of the consequent Bolshevik Revolution (1917-21). Military action helped shape their destiny in both the 18th as well as the 20th century.

The cataclysmic events that descended upon Russia in 1917-18 did not only threaten to annihilate Mennonite life in Russia, but in March of 1917 it brought down the throne of Nicholas II with surprising ease. Following this the government first fell into the hands of moderate socialists under Alexander Kerensky, who, subsidized by England and France, kept Russia in the war. The urban masses,

however, demanded peace, the withdrawal of Russia from the war, and a more revolutionary social policy. This policy favoured the Central Powers, who smuggled Lenin, (Vladimir Ulianov) secretly into Russia. Thereupon, the Bolsheviks under Lenin concluded peace with Germany, on March 3, 1918. By this agreement Russia lost one third -- 62 million,--of her population, one quarter of her territory, one third of her crop lands, twenty-seven percent of her income and more than half of her industries. She was left defenceless. (14)

Russia now descended rapidly into a nightmare of anarchy, civil war, famine, and enemy occupation. German and Austrian forces occupied the Ukraine until the general collapse of Germany and the Central Powers in November 1918. The breakdown of Germany annulled the provisions drawn up in March at Brest-Litovsk, and the Mennonite colonies, who had benefited from the protection by German occupation forces, suffered bitterly thereafter throughout the ensuing civil war. In this bitter struggle White Czarist forces opposed Lenin's Red Bolsheviks. The antagonists devastated the colonies, and settlers were left helpless pawns at the mercy of roving brigands.

David G. Rempel reflects upon this period of Mennonite history and refers to it as "one of the bloodiest chapters of the Russian Civil War." Gerhard P. Schroeder, who like Rempel lived through these eventful days, says that events, as they occurred at that time, "were part and parcel of a series of peasant partisan movements during the years 1914-23. Of the numerous movements brought forth initially by the November Revolution of 1917, intensified later by succeeding upheavals in this area (southern Ukraine) during 1918 and 1919 -- none reached the extent and degree of significance, than the one commonly called the Makhnovshchina, a movement which took its name from its chief leader, Nestor Makhno." (15) Schroeder describes the Makhnovshchina as a "period when everyone from the lower strata of society with a real cause of suffered injury, or an imagined grievance, had license to avenge himself." (16)

Makhno, a peasant, became leader of an anarchist army, commonly known as the Makhnovzy. With his hoardes he roamed the steppes of the Ukraine during the years of the civil war 1918-21, while Russian armies of varying ideologies were fighting for the upper hand in a country where the government had been overthrown. The slogan on the flag of the Makhnovzy was: 'Anarchy is the mother of all order'. In passing judgment they knew only one sentence: shoot ! The army of the Makhnovzy was recruited chiefly from the ranks of the poor Russian peasantry. They regarded every well-to-do person as an enemy of the working masses. They opposed all political parties, even the Communists, who in their estimation were not sufficiently radical. (17)

From his home in the village of Guljai-Polji (Field of Pleasure), Makhno led his terrorist regiment into the surrounding neighbourhood. Here were located many Mennonite estates and prosperous villages. In his youth Makhno had worked as herdsman for these wealthy farmers. Terrorist activities had put him behind bars, but upon the overthrow of Nicholas II in 1917 many political prisoners were released, among them Makhno. He was then to become "the most influential, and for a few years the most powerful of all brigand leaders the Russian Revolution produced". (18) With his army he descended upon the rich hinterland of Guljai-Polji, where he requisitioned from estate-owners and villagers alike, horses, wagons, money, food-stuffs, clothes etc. Local bands of bandits joined him to swell the ranks of his army. Together the hoardes carted away from the estates anything that pleased their fancy. What they could not take was destroyed. (19) All too frequently gruesome murders were perpetrated, frequently in the presence of the nearest of kin.

The Mennonite colonies that had the misfortune of being overrun by the army of Makhno, suffered untold hardships during the occupation. The heaviest blows, however, fell upon Sagradovka, a colony of the Molotschna, and on Chortitza with

its daughter-colony, Nikolaipol. The list of murder victims in Sagradovka, in November 1919, shows 214 names. The 16 villages of the Chortitza colony suffered severe devastation from September 21, to December 22, 1919. In the village of Eichenfeld (Nikolaipol area), 81 men and 4 women were murdered on October 26, 1919. Add to this the victims of a few villages in the vicinity, and the list surpasses a few hundred. (20)

Schroeder's figures about the dead at Eichenfeld are somewhat lower than those given by Peters, namely: 71 men and 5 women. "Among the slain", he says, were 6 non-residents of the village, but a group of itinerant 'tent-missionaries'. The Zeltmission, or Tent Mission, Schroeder explains, was organized "in Moscow shortly after the March revolution of 1917 by several Mennonite servicemen under the leadership of J. J. Dyck. The provisional government's decree of complete religious freedom, including the right for anyone to carry on evangelistic propoganda, had shorn the Orthodox Church of its monopoly in its sphere of religious activity. Dyck and his men were highly successful in their effort to carry the Gospel to the ordinary folk in the street, to peasants, workers and soldiers. After the Bolshevik seizure of power, Dyck and followers shifted their activity to cities, towns and villages in southern Russia, and carried them out with remarkable success despite the aggravated situation brought on by the civil war.

"In the late summer of 1919 Dyck and assistants came to the Nikolaipol district to carry on evangelistic work among all Mennonite churches. On the day of the tragedy they happened to be in Eichenfeld in the midst of conducting an evangelistic meeting in the village school building, when the bandits commenced their grisly act of senseless killing, about noon on October 26, 1919. The brigands, whose numbers had been increased the day before, systematically slaughtered every male inhabitant above the age of 16 that they were able to lay hands on. The bandits proceeded from house to house carrying on their

gruesome deed of generally hacking the adult and teen-age males to death with their sabres". (21) Schroeder, a secondary school teacher at Schoenfeld, a village not far from Guljai-Polji, was one of many caught up in the eye of the storm. Providentially he was spared from the clutches of the henchmen, thus being able to provide a witness to posterity. Of considerable interest in this regard is the fact, that the widow of J. J. Dyck (now Mrs. Katharina Swartz), emigrated to Canada in 1924, and became one of the 18 charter members of the Molotschna Mennonite Brethren Church, the mother of MB churches in Ontario.

The Makhnovzy did not only rob and kill. They brought disease as well, a deadly typhus epidemic. In the Chortitza area almost the whole Mennonite population succumbed to it, with an approximate mortality rate of 11-15 %. The Makhnovzy themselves died like flies. (22) Of this period Schroeder says: "Plunder, torture and murder dealt the Mennonite population a stunning blow, from which recovery seemed all but impossible". (23)

Another survivor of the holocaust in the Ukraine was David G. Rempel, a native of the Chortitza area. After emigrating to the United States in the 1920's he devoted himself to the study and teaching of Russian history. In an attempt to analyze the causes of the Makhnovshchina, he comes up with some possible answers. Rempel believes that basic to the problem of brigandage was the agrarian question. The land-hunger of the Russian peasant is well known. It was an ulcer that had festered over centuries. Following the October Revolution of 1917, which appeared to loosen all former social bands, the land-hungry peasants throughout southern Russia commenced to seize land from their wealthy neighbours under the slogan 'plunder the plunderers'. This seizure of land was halted, however, when in March 1918 the Ukraine was overrun by German occupation troops following the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The new Ukrainian regime, supported by German bayonets, attempted to deprive the peasants of their recently acquired holdings. These endeavours were often accompanied by cruel

punishments on the povstantsy (uprisers). Those who were involved in these altercations, including Mennonites, were to pay dearly after the collapse of the Central Powers, and the subsequent withdrawal of German and Austrian forces from the Ukraine in November 1918. The defeat of the Central Powers annulled the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and the Ukraine reverted once again to Russia.

Disrespect for government, says Rempel, was a further cause to fuel the flames of anarchy. The czarist regime had collapsed ignominiously, Kerensky's lethargic provisional government was not one to instill obedience to law and order, and the slogan 'plunder the plunderers', which had been preached by the Bolsheviks (Reds or Communists) previously, was again picked up by the peasantry. However, once the Bolsheviks had firmly entrenched themselves, and in turn began to requisition grain, cattle and horses from the peasants, the latter concluded that all government is bad and must be opposed. Oppose they did in the form of brigandism. By the fall of 1920, however, the Bolshevik government was in a position to liquidate all forms of opposition. In the end the Red Army turned upon the Makhnovzy.

Rempel believes furthermore, that "the unbridled excesses of the Makhnovshchina rested, perhaps in part, in the tradition of lawlessness which had characterized this one-time frontier region for centuries prior to the abolition of the independence of the Zaparozhian Cossacks." Rempel speculates with the idea that Makhno, although himself no Ukrainian, may have dreamed of resurrecting the headquarters of the Zaparozhian, or Dnjepr Cossacks.

It was pointed out earlier, that the Makhnovshchina was extremely fortunate in its hinterland of large settlements of prosperous Mennonite villages and of many khutors (individual estates) belonging to Mennonites, Lutherans and Catholics, all of whom by Russian -- or other European standards, were exceedingly wealthy, and their owners had long been the envy of the Russian peasant. It was from these people that Makhno requisitioned and robbed the wherewithall to

clothe, feed, transport and mount his armed men and his large camp following. The collapse of his entire movement in the last months of 1919 and the early months of 1920 can be ascribed to a very considerable degree to the fact that the sources for the sustenance in food and materials, had been utterly exhausted. (24)

Although the Mennonite colonies located in more remote areas had not been bled white, as had those of the Ukraine, the victory of the Red Army and the establishment of an atheistic regime, signalled the death-knell for the Mennonite commonwealth in Russia generally. The writing on the wall was clearly visible.

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Note: Professor David G. Rempel was born in Nieder Chortitza. He was educated in the Chortitza Zentralschule and Teachers' Seminary. Later in America he attended several colleges and universities, and received his doctorate in history from Stanford University, Stanford, California.

During the fateful years 1918-20 he was a student at the Teacher Training Institute in Chortitza. He observed and experienced first hand a number of the tragic events related by Gerhard P. Schroeder in his book: Miracles of Grace and Judgment.

Chapter IV

The Emigration Process - Part I

"The Russian Mennonite people could hardly have been more fortunate in their choice of representatives. They are very efficient and faithful workers for the noble cause." (1)

The overthrow of Kerensky's regime in 1917 inaugurated a period of suffering for the people of southern Russia, and for the Mennonite colonies there in particular, that is "almost unequaled among any civilized people in modern history." (2) The German occupation of the Ukraine during most of 1918 brought some form of ~~temporary~~ relief and security to the colonies, but the withdrawal of the occupation forces more than ever plunged the Ukraine into total chaos. The Civil War between Bolsheviks and Tsarist sympathizers, and the Makhnovschchina, ravaged still further an already bleeding land, and plunged the population into the depths of despair. It is estimated that no less than two thousand two hundred Mennonites perished in Russia during the post-war years as a result of war, famine and epidemics. (3) In Chortitza, the administrative center of the Old Colony, with a population of ca. seven hundred, nearly all the people had succumbed to typhus. One hundred and fifty died. "Organized life was completely paralyzed." (4)

Meanwhile the Civil War raged on. By the summer of 1920 General Wrangel made a last desperate attempt to regroup the remnant of Denikin's shattered forces, but it was to no avail. The Red Army appeared on the battlefield as the undisputed winner. Wrangel's men thereupon, withdrew to the Crimea, and so via Constantinople sought refuge abroad. Makhno's henchmen died like flies from the typhus epidemic they were spreading, and when the Red Army turned on the residue, Makhno himself fled to western Europe and finally died in Paris.

But the frightful devastation of war had not only ravaged the Mennonite villages, it had completely dispirited those who survived the holocaust. The fundamental issue facing survivors at this time, was sheer physical survival.

+ To corroborate statistics see: Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 37. (paragraph 4)

The question was: "How?" Thoughts of emigration had already surfaced during the course of the war. Now they they became ever more prevalent. As early as 1918 the German colonists were already considering a return to Germany en mass. The ~~...~~ twenty-five thousand Siberian Mennonites at one point tried to negotiate with their Dutch counterparts for a loan sufficient to resettle them all in the Dutch East Indies. (5) This scheme, however, proved impossible.

The desire to emigrate could be attributed at least in part to the fact that through their thrift and prosperity, the Mennonites had become the objects of envy and hatred by their Russian neighbours. Because of their cultural connections with their former homeland, they were frequently looked upon as aliens. Concerning this, Dietrich Neufeld, a teacher in Chortitza, makes the following notation in his diary on March 2, 1920: "We Mennonites are aliens in this land. If we didn't realize that fact before the war, we have had it forced upon us during and after the War. Our Russian neighbours look upon us as the damned Nymtsy (Germans) who have risen to great prosperity in their land." (6)

In spite of the utter devastation and havoc wrought in the mennonite villages, life would go on, and broken lives would have to ^{be} mended. For a basically rural people, it was essential to get the agricultural machine rolling again. The absence of draft animals, however, proved to be an insurmountable obstacle in any attempt to revive agriculture. The great war had taken many of the best horses, the revolutions had reduced the numbers still more, and the lack of feed during the hungry years claimed a large number of those animals that remained. Hence unconventional modes and methods of plowing had to be improvised, in order to bring even a partial acreage under cultivation. P. C. Hiebert, at that time a member of the American relief team working in Russia, describes the situation thus: "People hitched up anything they could -- oxen, a few camels, many milk cows, and all sorts of combinations of these." (7) Dietrich Neufeld's diary

has the following notation: "March 1, 1920, -- "Last fall the fields could not be worked because of the Anarchists; now they remain idle for lack of workers." (8)

Not only was there a lack of draft animals. ~~Another reason~~^{why} the fields could not be worked, ^{was} because they were too dry for lack of rain. During 1921-22 a series of drought-stricken years followed on the heels of one another, producing a natural catastrophe of immeasurable dimensions. This calamity in the wake of the cumulative effects of war, banditry and epidemics, produced the worst famine in Russia's history. South Russia had often experienced both drought and famine before, but under stable political conditions these had not been serious. In the early twenties, however, conditions were not normal. "The loss of livestock and horses, without which farming operations could not be carried on; the heavy grain requisitions demanded for export, leaving very little surplus for an emergency, and often not even enough for next year's seeding; the physical weakness of both man and beast; the careless management of many of the larger estates, resulting from the replacement of industrious farmers by inefficient city-bred managers; the collapse of the whole transportation system; and above all the hopelessness of it all -- all this now, together with two years of hot winds and drought, produced a combination that spelled disaster for nearly a third of the whole Russian population." (9) Small wonder, says C. Henry Smith, that as a result of these cumulative disasters, the mennonites should again seek a way to some other promised land. This land of promise, however, would have to be found, and the mode and method of realizing such a move would have to be worked out.

In addition to coping with physical suffering, a further dimension enlarged the post-war problems. The new economic order, based on a philosophy of pure materialism, squarely opposed the administrative and religious life-style of the mennonites. The question confronting every man woman and child was: "Was there any role open to the mennonites in the new Russia? was it possible for the

Mennonites to retain a sense of identity, or would they face forced assimilation? How would nationalization and the redivision of land, as proposed by the new government, influence the traditional lifestyle?" (10) Such and similar questions demanded an answer.

In order to deal with the spectrum of problems facing the brotherhood, the Molotshna settlement called a meeting at Rückenau in 1919. The assembly voted to send a delegation to North America and western European countries in order to acquaint their Mennonite brethren with conditions in Russia, to explore emigration possibilities, and to evaluate potential settlement areas. This delegation became known as the Studienkommission (Study Commission). Its elected members were A. A. Friesen, chairman, B. H. Unruh, secretary, both teachers in Halbstadt schools, and C. H. Warkentin. On January 1, 1920, the Study Commission accompanied the defeated and retreating Wrangel army and left Russia via the Crimea and Constantinople. (11) It was this commission that first brought to the attention of their American brethren and to the outside world, news of actual conditions as they existed in Russia at the time. The Rückenau proceedings are memorable for another reason as well, for they "marked the first step in the creation of the organizational framework for facilitating the later emigration." (12) The Studienkommission arrived in Europe in April of that year, and in New York on June 13. They visited Mennonite congregations Holland, Germany and Switzerland, as well as in the United States and in Canada.

The contact that had thus been established between the Mennonites of Russia and those of the West was but of short duration. The reason for the ^{Sudden} breakdown was the almost non-existent postal communication between Russia and the West. Following the Civil War almost no letters left Russia. This proved to be an extremely frustrating turn of events, especially for B. B. Janz, who at this time was rapidly emerging as spokesman for the Mennonite brotherhood of Russia. Finally, however, a letter from Janz, dated November 20, 1920, reached B. H. Unruh,

who was now living in Germany, via German diplomatic mail. Unruh, a member of the Studienkommission, had meanwhile returned from America and taken up residence in Karlsruhe, Germany, from where ^{he} continued ^{to espouse} the Mennonite cause by virtue of his contacts with the brotherhood in Russia, as well as with German diplomatic circles. The channel of secret communication established between Janz and Unruh via diplomatic mail, proved to be a tactical masterstroke, for it assured henceforth an uninterrupted flow of correspondence with Germany and North America. This unimpeded stream of communication was of the utmost importance in furthering the cause of future emigration. (13)

The most pressing and urgent problem that had to be dealt with in 1920 was famine --the question of sheer physical survival. Janz knew that bread was available in North America, but how could it be brought to Russia? Having re-established communications with the West, and North American ^{Mennonites} having been informed of the plight of their co-religionists in the East, ^{the brotherhood} responded to the cry for help by forming the Mennonite Central Committee in July 1920 for the purpose of sending aid to Russia. To carry out this noble intent proved to be no quick nor simple matter. The first attempt to reach the Ukraine with food supplies via Constantinople was unsuccessful. Not until August 1921, a year later, did a special M. C. C. agency, American Mennonite Relief (AMR), under the direction of Alvin J. Miller, gain admission into Russia from the west.

Meanwhile another pressing problem facing the brotherhood, was the plight of many youths of military age who were being conscripted into the Red Army. To extricate them would not be a simple matter, especially in view of the stance many had taken during the period of civil anarchy when the Selbstschutz was formed for self-protection against marauding bands and gangs. In order to bring to the attention of the authorities that Mennonite youth were traditionally enabled to perform an alternate, non-military service, the Verein Mennoniten Sudrusslands (VMSR), or Union of South Russian Mennonites was formed

on February 19, 1921, in the village of Alexanderwohl. B. B. Janz was elected chairman. His task was to negotiate with the Soviet government for the release of Mennonite youth from the Red Army. "As chairman of the new Union Janz was to plead the cause of Mennonite pacifism before the Soviet regime." (14) Janz accepted the position of spokesman for the brotherhood only on condition of a decisive stand on non-resistance. He got what he demanded. The principle of non-resistance was reaffirmed.

In addition to extricating Mennonite youth from the Red Army, Janz and his colleagues of the VMSR turned their attention to other matters of urgent concern. The VMSR was the agency by means of which they hoped to approach Soviet authorities on behalf of the brotherhood. Soon they realized, however, that although the organization was permitted, the VMSR had no legal status, and therefore would not be recognized when attempting to make official presentations. It therefore became evident that it would be highly desirable to have an organization ^{based} on broad economic lines, an organization capable of confronting and dealing with most any problem Mennonites might be called upon to deal with at the time -- among others the economic reconstruction and rehabilitation of their villages in the Ukraine.

With the intensification of the famine the news of Miller's arrival in Moscow brought hope to the populace of the famished Ukraine. When Janz went north to meet Miller, he stopped at Kharkov to determine whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be interested to have a relief organization distribute food in the Ukraine. To his amazement he was authorized by the ministry to invite Miller to the Ukraine for the specific purpose of negotiating a contract for the entry of American aid into the region.

"As it turned out Miller's presence in Kharkov and his talks with Ukrainian

authorities gave Janz the first satisfactory contact with the Ukrainian officials. During the negotiations which led to the signing of a relief contract, Miller, at Janz's prompting, offered AMR aid in the economic reconstruction of the Ukraine by supplying tractors to replace the horses lost in the revolution and the civil war. If, with AMR help, the Mennonite Union could become an agency for reconstruction, a government endorsement and recognition of its activities might follow. The strategy was well founded.

"A subsequent interview served to focus further attention on the energetic Union and its willingness to participate in rebuilding the Ukraine. Some six months later (April 25, 1922) the Mennonite Union, VMSR, was recognized by the Kharkov government. Official pressure forced a name change: the agency now became Verband der Bürger Holländischer Herkunft (the Union of Citizens of Dutch Lineage) -- VBHH. According to its charter the newly legalized organization would work towards restoring the Ukrainian Mennonite colonies to their former level of prosperity. As such it was granted a broad range of economic concessions which provided the Mennonites with a unique opportunity to survive as an economic and cultural group. Janz had achieved a primary objective in his programme." (15) B. B. Janz and Philipp Cornies were the main leaders of the VBHH.

Although the immediate purpose of the VBHH was the revival of agricultural prosperity of the Ukraine, Janz nevertheless had more remote objectives in mind. His was a discerning mind, and he saw only too clearly that any thought of remaining "a collective state within a collective state, and thus retaining control of compact land areas, was doomed to bitter disappointment." (16) The VBHH was eventually bitterly attacked in the press and in 1926 completely liquidated. In the intervening time period, however, it provided the channel whereby its chairman, B. B. Janz, was able to carry on his diplomatic maneuvers concerning

the mass migration of his co-religionists.

In the meantime, as the food crisis became more acute, the gloom of famine deepened. Help was slow in coming. In sheer desperation therefore, Janz wrote to the AMR: "Please forget about condensed milk, chocolate or similar things -- just bread, bread, bread." (17)

Regarding the suffering caused by hunger, Gerhard Schroeder, a teacher at Schönfeld says: "The mental effect was terrible....In the evening you go to bed hungry. It takes a long time for you to fall asleep because of the gnawing thought of hunger, of helplessness, of being destitute. You are perishing... you are going down...you have to die...slowly. You are getting weaker and weaker.. These thoughts drive you almost to insanity." (18)

Finally in April 1922, the first shipment of food arrived. By May the American kitchens, as the distributing stations became known, were feeding twenty five thousand persons per day. The peak distribution was reached in August, when forty thousand rations were handed out daily. This programme of feeding the hungry, although gradually phased out as need declined, was continued for three years. (19)

The food received in the American kitchens saved thousands from an early grave, but understandably it was not enough to meet the total needs of the famine-stricken population. In order to supplement American rations, many were forced to barter away household furnishings at the black market. In the following passage Gerhard Schroeder describes not only this practice, common at the time, but illustrates as well the inflationary spiral prevalent at the time. He says: "The food we received from the American soup kitchen was not enough. In Alexandrovsk I sold our best set of dinnerware and other things we had treasured, for fifteen Million rubles." (20) "In the afternoon I walked to Einlage, about five miles from Jhortitza, and from there I took the train to Alexandrovsk just

for one purpose, to sell four pounds of butter, which the next morning brought me two hundred twenty thousand rubles a pound. Many people at this time were dying from hunger." (21)

As previously mentioned, the negotiations between AMR and the government at Kharkov included an offer of economic aid to the Ukraine in its economic reconstruction ^{programme} by supplying tractors to replace horses lost during the civil war and revolution. ^{Outside help was essential, for} "the people were too far down to rise again without outside help," is an observation made by P. C. Hiebert and Orrie O. Miller, AMR workers actively engaged in relief operations in Russia. Furthermore, the hopelessness of the situation in the Mennonite colonies of the Ukraine is graphically illustrated by the following set of statistics prepared in 1922 in preparation for the initiation of the tractor programme: "In settlements where the drouth has not been so severe -- New York, Memrick, Gruenfeld and Sagradovka -- there is 1 horse to every $4\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 persons. In Gnadenfeld and Chortitza Volosts there is 1 horse to every 7 persons. In Nicolaipol Volost, 1 to $8\frac{1}{2}$ persons, in Halbstadt volost 1 to 12 persons. The extreme case on record is Lindenau, a village in the Halbstadt Volost, which has only 3 horses for a population of over 500." (22)

In order to assist in the reconstruction of the agricultural capabilities of the Ukraine it was decided to ship and distribute fifty tractors among the colonies, to purchase and resell on credit horses, ^{to provide on the same} teams sheep for the production of wool, to supply seed grain, and to encourage various home industries. (23) The grand total outlay for the fifty tractors, which arrived in two shipments, amounted to \$30,796.94 (24)

When the tractors arrived they broke up the Ukrainian soil not only for Mennonite farmers, but for Ukrainians as well. In referring to the work being

performed by these machines, B. B. Janz said in a letter: "The first twenty five tractors surely are doing a great work; not through great speeches, but with sharp and shining plowshares do they write the work of love in the hardened Russian soil." (25).

Thus the AMR and the VBHH pursued a policy designed to contribute toward the economic rehabilitation of the Ukraine. It was a policy dedicated to the reconstruction and restoration of Mennonite villages to prosperity. At the same time however, Janz was committed to emigration, and as early as December 17, 1921, had broached this subject to the Central Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. As Moses demanded of Pharaoh the release from Egypt of his enslaved people, so Janz argued with the Soviets that his people in their one hundred and thirty year sojourn in Russia, had fulfilled their obligation as model farmers. He requested that they now be permitted to return to the land of their origin, Holland, or to their relatives in America. In view of Russia's total population their numbers were minimal, and would not pose a substantial population loss. (26)

Obviously the VBHH's operational policy was a duality of irreconcilable opposites. In aiding the reconstruction of the colonies it was demonstrating loyalty on the one hand, whereas the requisition to emigrate implied that improvement was impossible and a fruitless effort. For Janz "such a dedication to opposites was dictated by prevailing circumstances." (27)

In the prevailing circumstances Janz was convinced of only one alternative for Mennonites: emigration. His conviction was based on recent losses of cultural, economic, and above all of treasured religious values. Janz was convinced that within the framework of materialistic communism there was no room, no possibility for future existence of a life-style as Mennonites had come to know it. On the one hand, therefore, Janz continued to press with diplomacy,

tenacity and sometimes cajolary his goal of emigration, while simultaneously continuing to encourage reconstruction, knowing full well that there would always be those who would prefer to stay.

"The conviction that emigration was the only viable solution for the Russian Mennonites, became the sustaining ideology undergirding Janz the diplomat. Something about his quiet dignity exerted an unusual influence on an officialdom often more impressed by brazenness and emotional appeal. Though he represented one of the smallest minorities in Russia, he established repeated contacts with the highest levels of government in both Kharkov and Moscow.

"As a negotiator Janz had several excellent qualities. His analytical mind quickly penetrated complex issues. If convinced of the honesty and necessity of a given tactic, he pressed his view with a persistence bordering on stubbornness. In a critical encounter he instinctively pressed his advantage just short of the breaking point. Frequently he confronted the same officials again and again until he obtained the desired terms." (28) Another reference to Janz, the negotiating diplomat follows: "Rev. B. B. Janz is the man who, more than anyone else, has borne the burdens and fought the battles of our brethren in the Ukraine against immense odds. He accomplished single handed what was impossible for larger groups. Through his extreme simplicity and modesty, and his untarnished reliability, he has by the help of God won the good-will of many of the officials even against their own intentions." (29)

The Mennonites of the Soviet Union living beyond the boundaries of the Ukraine, had also formed an organization: the Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein (All Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union), under the chairmanship of P. F. Froese with C. F. Klassen as vice-chairman. Moscow became the headquarters of this union, as Kharkov was that of the VBHH. The AMLV first met in 1923. Shortly thereafter they were also granted a charter

by Soviet authorities. Like that of its sister-organization the chief objective of the AMLV was to work for economic reconstruction, but at the same time, though unofficially, it gave its attention to the prospects of mass emigration. (30)

The Studienkommission delegated to the United States and Canada in early 1920 to investigate resettlement possibilities, had in the intervening time never lost sight of its commission. In order to furnish the Kommission with further directives, a meeting was held in Ohrloff on February 7, 1922. At this gathering the idea of emigration was unanimously accepted, and the commissioners in America were instructed to work and plan accordingly. The report prepared by this meeting was signed by Philipp Cornies and B. B. Janz. (31)

The directives to the Studienkommission were to investigate settlement opportunities for about one hundred thousand Mennonites. Of special concern were religious freedom, agricultural possibilities and a favourable economic and cultural climate. With these goals in mind, various countries were considered, such as New Zealand, South Africa, Latin America, Mexico, various Dutch colonies, the United States and Canada. Germany and its colonies did not come into consideration due to conditions there following her recent defeat in World War I.

After duly considering settlement possibilities in the areas mentioned, all were dismissed as unsuitable except the United States and Canada. A. A. Friesen, chairman of the commission, had favoured English North America as a possibility for resettlement when still teaching at the School of Commerce in Halbstadt, and in preparation for such an eventuality had at that time begun to study the English language. His headquarters were at first in Philadelphia, and later at Bluffton College, Ohio, where he had a temporary teaching assignment.

When the possibilities of a mass migration to the U. S. A. came under scrutiny it was learned that the restrictive immigration policy, adopted toward the end

of the nineteenth century had been still further tightened when it was feared that "millions of refugees" from war-torn Europe were about to descend upon the United States *after World War I.* (32)

Friesen, therefore, turned his attention to Canada, where he took up residence in Rosthern, Saskatchewan in the spring of 1922. In this Prairie town the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization was born on May 17, 1922. It was this body that was to play the leading role in the drama of immigration and colonization in Canada of some twenty thousand Mennonites. (33)

An initial obstacle to Canadian immigration were Orders-in-Council issued on May 1 and June 9, 1919, prohibiting from entry to Canada Mennonites, Doukhobors and Hutterites. These Orders would have to be rescinded, if Mennonite immigration were to be realized. It was decided, therefore, that a delegation was to approach the national government for this purpose.

The national elections of 1921 brought the Liberals under Mackenzie King to power. King, a native of Waterloo County, was well familiar with Mennonites, the pioneers of Waterloo County. The delegation dispatched to Ottawa in March 1922, received a friendly and sympathetic hearing. On June 2, 1922, the Orders were repealed, and the way for Mennonite entry into Canada was cleared. The new government adopted a liberal immigration policy in which it was joined by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The C. P. R. was concerned about the vast areas of unsettled land on the Prairies. E. W. Beatty, President of the company, and Col. J. S. Dennis, Director of the Department of Colonization and Development for the railway, gave leadership in these matters. They called on the Canadian government to create a special Ministry of Immigration and Colonization. The door for prospective immigrants had been opened. The details would have to be worked out.

If the eastern pylon of the massive rescue operation that was about to be

realized was B. B. Janz, his western counterpart was David Toews, whom Janz described as "the greatest Good Samaritan and philanthropist of his time." (34) Toews was qualified to become an international Mennonite leader by virtue of his background. He was born on February 9, 1870, in the Trakt, a settlement in the Province of Samara, in Russia. Here his parents had settled as Prussian immigrants. In August 1880 the family joined the ill-fated chiliastic movement led by Claaß Epp, to Samarkand across the barren unknown stretches of Turkestan. Epp's obsession was the promise of a bergungsort, a place of refuge for Christians to escape the horrors of the **Great** Tribulation, which according to the scriptures is to take place on earth following the rapture of the church. By 1884 the Toews family was among those who were disillusioned by Claaß Epp. By October 1884 they were in Kansas, U. S. A.

In due time young Toews entered the teaching profession, which led him via Gretna, Manitoba, to Rosthern, Saskatchewan. After some years of teaching in Rosthern and environs, Toews was approached to become involved in the immigration movement. Albeit with some reluctance, he accepted the chairmanship of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization on June 2-3, 1922. Regarding this move he says in his memoirs: "I cannot say that the new arrangement did not appeal to me, and I was tempted by the prospect of a different kind of work, especially because I would be able to do this from home." (35)

The rescue operation of twenty thousand Mennonites was the work of a team of dedicated and outstanding men, but it was Toews as chairman, "who in crucial moments made the difficult decisions. He was a reluctant leader at first, but once he had accepted the call and put his hand to the plow, he never looked back. When only faith and visions could clear the mountains in the way, he was the man who committed himself and the Mennonite brotherhood to do the impossible. For this he was both hailed and hated." (36)

J. J. Thiessen, a Board member, in an undated report of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, says the following about Toews: "He very capably served as chairman of the CMBC^x from the very beginning to April 4, 1946..... Other faithful workers supported him, but he was always the real soul of the immigration work." (37)

An almost insurmountable problem in the immigration saga, was the task of transporting the immigrants from Russia to Canada because the people were too poor to pay the transportation costs because of their recent *impoverishment*. Had the Mennonites of Russia been able to migrate before the war, finances would have been no problem according to J. J. Thiessen. Collectively they were wealthy. In 1914 the average Mennonite in Russia, including women and children, was worth three thousand rubles. After the war they were destitute and needed both transportation and settlement credits. (38) For this reason it was necessary, therefore, to work out a financial arrangement with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company to transport the immigrants on credit. For this purpose a delegation appeared in Montreal at the office of Col. J. S. Dennis on March 31, 1922. Dennis promised that everything possible would be done to work out such an arrangement.

As soon as Toews became chairman of the Board he wired Dennis in May, and asked him for the outline of a possible transportation contract. At a meeting in Regina on June 2, 1922, the principles and conditions of moving three thousand Mennonites from Russia were discussed, and a tentative oral agreement was arrived at, although Dennis had not yet reached the full concurrence of his company. This concurrence within the company was not entirely easy to achieve, however, it was finally decided to grant passage credit. "Dennis later explained to Toews, that the C. P. R. would not have considered a contract with any other religious organization, with the possible exception of the Salvation Army." (39)

^x Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization.

Having received the assurance of credit, it remained for the Board to ratify the agreement. At the July session of the Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada, meeting in Winkler, Manitoba, Toews asked the conference delegation for permission to sign the contract. Being confronted with the responsibility of actually shouldering this staggering load, the conference remained silent. Toews approached the conference on the matter three times with the same result.

In addition to an apparent desertion of Toews by the brotherhood, this matter gave rise to a considerable amount of dissension in the various local churches regarding emigration. It also engendered a good deal of of opposition toward Toews. Even the Rosenort Church, of which he was an Elder, was not free from division. There were those, however, who supported Toews at this time.

It appears fortunate for the cause of immigration that, about this time, Jakob Kroeker, originally of Russia but later of Wernigerode, Germany, happened to be on a speaking tour of Canadian churches. This man very warmly and persuasively espoused the cause of the Mennonites of Russia. His arguments were so convincing, that the core of opposition to Toews appeared to have been overcome, and some of the leading men threw their support behind Toews.

When the written contract from the C. P. R. arrived, it unfortunately proved to be less favourable than the Board at first had been led to believe. An adult fare was \$140.00 instead of \$100.00, and the terms of payment had been substantially reduced. Furthermore the phraseology of the document was couched in rather ambiguous terms, drawn up between the Mennonite Church of Canada (the Church), and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (the Company). A Mennonite Church of Canada as such, was actually non-existent. It was a collective term, loosely lumping all Mennonite churches under one umbrella. This inaccurate terminology became an offensive aspect of the contract, and Toews, as the "Mennonite Bishop of Canada" had to bear the brunt of the offence. (40)

The reaction of the Board to the severe terms was such, that Toews and others were delegated to Montreal to attempt to procure better terms from Col. Dennis. Before their departure, however, a wire arrived from Dennis, warning them not to come to Montreal without a signed contract. *At that time also* it was learned that the Russian government had granted passports to three thousand Mennonites from the Ukraine, while a wire from B. B. Janz called for transportation facilities for two thousand seven hundred ready and waiting in Odessa. With events moving so fast and furiously, there remained no alternative but to accept such terms as the C. P. R. offered, and on July 21, 1922, David Toews affixed his signature to "das verhängnisvolle Dokument", the ominous document, in the name of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. In conjunction with the signing, C. Henry Smith quotes Toews thus: "I did this hoping that the C. P. R. would not carry out the contract as it read. When I came to Montreal, I told Col. Dennis that the contract had been signed, but that we knew that we could not carry it out as it read." (41)

Just when tangible results seemed to be within grasp, discouraging setbacks developed. The CMBC had signed the contract, and the C. P. R. was ready to dispatch two steamers to Constantinople in order to transport two thousand seven hundred to three thousand people to Canada. At this crucial juncture word was received that cholera had broken out in the Ukraine, and that the port of Odessa had been placed under quarantine. Under these circumstances, coupled with unstable political conditions in the Dardanelles, it was not possible to reach the Black Sea port. Although alternate routes to the Baltic were immediately suggested, another unforeseen difficulty arose, in that Canada demanded a certificate of medical fitness of each prospective immigrant, as a condition of entry into the country.

The Canadian government required the C. P. R. to have medical doctors at points of departure in order to examine every prospective settler for contagious

diseases, especially trachoma, not uncommon among Mennonites at that time. No person who was crippled or mentally deficient was to be accepted for immigration by the medical examiner in charge. The Russian government, however, would not permit medical examiners to be stationed at border-crossing points, for Russia was determined not to accept any medical rejects. The wrangle that arose over this matter ended any hopes of emigration from Russia in 1922.

Neither did the outlook for emigration during the early months of 1923 hold forth much cause for optimism. In Russia a new set of emigration regulations were to be implemented. These regulations had been issued by Moscow, which was curtailing the independence heretofore exercised by the Ukraine. As a result many of the previous arrangements would have to be re-negotiated. New emigration rules stipulated that Mennonites henceforth apply for visas on an individual basis rather than in a group. Janz was informed that beyond the three thousand no further exodus would be permitted ~~to the time~~ ^{being}. The government seemed to be under the impression that only three thousand wished to leave. Medical rejects still had no place to go. The prospects were gloomy indeed.

Then word reached Moscow that Germany was prepared to accept the medically unfit. B. H. Unruh, together with the Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe, had succeeded in persuading the German government to transfer medical rejects to Lechfeld, a former prisoner of war camp. Here they would be treated until such time as Canada saw fit to accept them. Meanwhile, on May 7, 1923, arrangements were complete for the movement of emigrants to Riga on the Latvian coast, where they would board C. P. R. steamers for Canada.

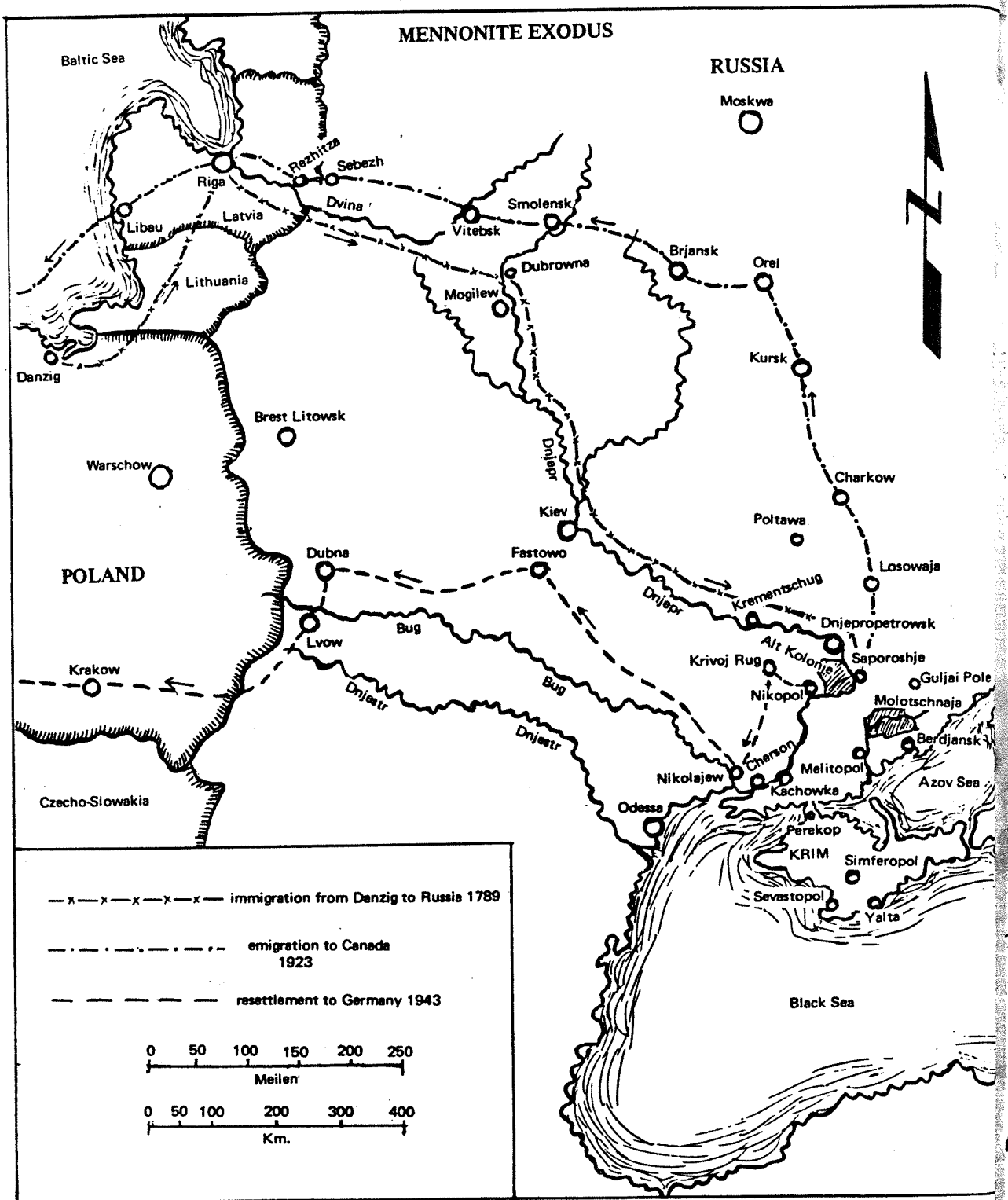
Thereupon preparation for the movement of emigrants began immediately. The first train with seven hundred twenty six people left Chortitza (Old Colony) on June 22, 1923, and crossed the Latvian border at Sebez on July 1. This group arrived at Quebec on the Empress of France on July 16, and the new

arrivals were welcomed at Rosthern, Saskatchewan, by their Canadian co-religionists on July 21. Altogether four groups left Russia between June 22, and July 24. 10 per cent of the first group were declared unfit, and a total of almost seven hundred of the 1923 group were transferred to Lechfeld. (42)

On February 22, 1924, the Board met in order to consider a new contract for that year. For this purpose David Toews, E. S. Hallman and A. A. Friesen were delegated to Montreal to negotiate with the C. P. R. By May 1, Janz was informed that the Canadian Government was willing to receive five thousand emigrants on credit as well as two thousand cash passengers.

If the Chortitza colony had had its turn in 1923, then the Molotschna was to have its turn in 1924. Accordingly on June ²³ 17, the first group left from Lichtenau and disembarked from the steamer Minnedosa on July 17, at Quebec. When immigration formalities were completed the following day, the immigrants felt that at last they were a "free people in a new land." (43)

Of the five thousand ^{and} forty eight Mennonite immigrants to arrive in Canada in 1924, the first contingent of ca. one thousand remained in Ontario. Here they were received and cared for by their co-religionists of Swiss origin through the mediation of S. F. Coffman. In this group were contained the roots of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario.



Einwanderung und Auswanderung der Mennoniten Russlands.

Die Karten wurden von den Brüdern Johann, Heinrich und David Neudorf, Saskatchewan, für historische Zwecke angefertigt. Mir hat sie mein Schulkamerad Joh. Neudorf zur Verwertung zugestellt. Mit dem vorliegenden Buch soll hier jetzt den Brüdern öffentlich ein herzlicher Dank ausgesprochen sein.

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Chapter IV

- (1) From a letter written by P. C. Hiebert to A. A. Friesen, and quoted by Epp, op. cit., p. 65.
- (2) C. Henry Smith, Smith's Story of the Mennonites, Fifth Edition Revised and enlarged by Cornelius Krahn, (Faith and Life Press, Newton Kansas), 1981, p. 314.
- (3) Dyck, op. cit., p. 141.
- (4) Smith, op. cit., p. 315.
- (6) Dietrich Neufeld, A Russian Dance of Death, Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine, Translated and edited by Al Reimer, (Hyperion Press, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, for the Mennonite Literary Society and the University of Winnipeg) 1977, p. 63.
- (5) Ibid., 317.
- (7) P. C. Hiebert and Orie O. Miller, Feeding the Hungry, Russia Famine 1919-1925, (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Mennonite Central Committee), 1929, p. 296.
- (8) Neufeld, op. cit., p. 63.
- (9) Smith, op. cit., p. 316.
- (10) John B. Toews, With Courage to Spare, The Life of B. B. Janz (1877-1964), (Published by the Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America), 1978, p. 23.
- (11) Epp, op. cit., p. 46.
- (12) John B. Toews, Lost Fatherland, The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921 - 1927, (Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Kitchener, Ontario), 1967, p. 50.
- (13) Toews, op. cit., Courage, p. 26.
- (14) Ibid., p. 24.
- (15) Ibid., p. 27.
- (16) Smith, op. cit., p. 325.
- (17) Toews, op. cit., Courage, p. 28, Quoted from B. B. Janz to the Dutch and American Relief Organization, Ohrloff, December 23, 1921.
- (18) Schroeder, op. cit., p. 201-2.
- (19) Smith, op. cit., p. 320.
- (20) Schroeder, op. cit., p. 219.

- (21) Ibid., p. 211.
- (22) Hiebert and Miller, op. cit., p. 295.
- (23) Ibid., p. 293.
- (24) Ibid., p. 303.
- (25) Ibid., p. 301.
- (26) Toews, op. cit., Fatherland, pp. 67-68.
- (27) Toews, op. cit., Courage, p.32.
- (28) Ibid., p. 34.
- (29) Hiebert and Miller, op. cit., p. 406.
- (30) Epp, op. cit., p. 47.
- (31) Ibid., p. 48.
- (32) Ibid., p. 69.
- (33) Ibid., p. 76.
- (34) Ibid., p. 81. Taken from: "Die Grundlage der großen Auswanderung aus Rußland in den 20ger Jahren", Mennonitische Rundschau, (August 30, 1961), Seite 2.
- (35) Ibid., p. 82, From: David Toews, "Memoirs", p. 8.
- (36) Ibid., p. 92.
- (37) Ibid., p. 81, From : J. J. Thiessen, in an undated report of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization.
- (38) Ibid., p. 115.
- (39) Ibid., p. 111.
- (40) Ibid., p. 112-3.
- (41) Ibid., p. 115, David Toews, in the first of two articles written for C. Henry Smith, p. 3.
- (42) Ibid., p. 143.
- (43) N. N. Driedger, The Leamington United Mennonite Church, Establishment and Development 1925-1972, (Printed by D. W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., Altona, Manitoba, Canada), 1972, p. 17.

Chapter V

The Emigration Process - Part II

The mass movement of Mennonites from Russia to Canada was launched in 1923, and in 1926, with the dissolution of the VBHH by the Russian government, the movement as such, was to all intents and purposes, officially terminated. Some hundreds of fortunate souls were able to follow their brethren during 1927 and 1928, but this was due only to the framework established by B. B. Janz while chairman of the VBHH. With the introduction of the first Five Year Plan by Stalin in 1928, the movement ground to a complete halt. In 1929-30 another desperate attempt to leave the country was made by thousands, but this movement no longer proceeded through sanctioned channels, and for ca. three quarters of those involved, the outcome was nothing short of catastrophic.

In 1923 a group of 2,759 from the Chortitza area (Old Colony) comprised the first eschalons. These emigrants were destined exclusively for the Prairie Provinces of Canada, chiefly for Saskatchewan. In 1923 the people were not yet required to obtain individual passports; a certificate signed by the chairman of the VBHH was sufficient permission to enter Canada.

The launching of the emigration movement was a mammoth undertaking. It put onerous demands and responsibilities upon the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. In order to get the movement off the ground, as well as to keep the process in motion during the following years, the Board had to promise that the immigrants would not become public charges in Canada, and that doctors' and medical fees arising from sickness and possible hospitalization would be the responsibility of the Board for at least five years. Therefore, the Board had to agree to medical inspections of the emigrants while in transit, because the Russian government would not permit Canadian medical personnel to enter Russia for reasons of medical selection previous to leaving the country. Furthermore,

the Board had to assume financial responsibility for all expenses accruing from the treatment of diseases while in transit. For the purpose of treating those who were medically unfit to proceed to Canada, detention centres had to be found, for Russia was unwilling to accept medical rejects once they had crossed her borders. Through the mediation of the Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe, the efforts of Benjamin H. Unruh, and the help of the German Red Cross, such a Durchgangslager (transit camp) was found in Lechfeld, a former military drill ground near Augsburg in Bavaria. Atlantic Park in Southampton, the last European point of departure, became another well known detention centre. In 1923 a total of 661 persons, nearly 25% of those emigrating, were transferred to Lechfeld. Maladies responsible (for the illness) were: whooping cough, malaria, fractured thighs, tuberculosis, measles, physical birth defects, but mostly trachoma. (1) Reports of these detentions caused fear and apprehension among those remaining in Russia, but were also considering emigration. Canadian government officials, as well as Mennonite leaders, began to wonder whether all Mennonites in Russia were riddled with disease.

Because of the impoverished state in which most Mennonites in Russia found themselves in the 1920's, the majority were not in a position to finance their own transportation. For that reason the Canadian Mennonite Board had therefore contracted the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for credit transportation. This was, no doubt, the greatest of the responsibilities that the Board shouldered, for although its members knew from the outset that it would be impossible for them to meet their contractual obligations, they knew also, that the success and the continuation of the immigration process would depend particularly on the promptness of meeting the initial financial obligations to the Company. The pivotal point in continuing the rescue mission was the arrangement of a new contract for 1924, and this in turn, was also inextricably linked with prompt contractual compliance.

Soon after the immigrants had begun to arrive, the statements of indebtedness to the C. P. R. were not slow in following. At a Board meeting on September 27, Toews disclosed that the total statements received for the Reiseschuld (travel debt) amounted to \$164,943.98, and that the first instalment of \$68,067.24 was due on October 23.

The immigrants of 1923 were destined mainly for Saskatchewan, where their host families provided them with food, shelter, and if possible with an opportunity to work. Many went into the harvest fields where crops and earnings were good. Immigrants were expected to pay their full earnings toward the defrayal of their debt immediately. At the same time, however, beside encouraging the immigrants to pay as much of their debt as soon as possible, various other methods were employed to obtain sufficient funds in order to satisfy the expectations of the C. P. R.

Many immigrants began paying their transportation debt at once. Payments from Saskatchewan came in better and faster than from Manitoba, where a smaller number of immigrants had gone. However, the amounts paid were not sufficient to satisfy requirements. Toews was therefore obliged to solicit loans and gifts from various sources in order to attempt to meet the Board's first obligation. "On October 23, he sent the available funds of \$22,500 . On October 24, another \$3,500 were sent. On October 26, Col. Dennis replied and expressed his pleasure at the amount paid, at the same time drawing Toews' attention to the fact that the amount due on October 23, was actually \$17,186.98, a further amount of \$7,535.81 being due on November 26. Dennis stated that 'the payment made in excess of the first amount due, will have the effect of convincing our executive of the good faith of your organization in carrying out your contract with us.' Although the first payment was on time, all further payments were late." (2)

Although the question of a future contract rested upon prompt payments in accordance with the agreement for 1923, Col. Dennis wrote Toews on January 4,

1924, "We will be glad to discuss a further contract with you to that end, but before I can hope to obtain authority from our executive to do so, it will be necessary that further payments should be made on account of amounts outstanding under the existing contract." (3) This statement would indicate that payments had fallen behind contractual agreements.

Toews did what he could to remedy the situation. Every available penny was turned over to the Company. Such payments were generally accompanied by the notation: "I trust I shall be able to send more in the near future." (4) This intense effort on the part of the Board to meet terms of payment, frequently resulted in its being unable to defray administrative expenses at home. At times Toews had to forego his salary for months at a time.

Meanwhile desperate brethren in the Soviet Union were clamouring for further possibilities to emigrate. The Reiseschuld in Canada, however, became a threatening barrier to this end. To facilitate further immigration into Canada, Toews, the great bridge-builder (Pontifex Maximus) appealed for loans in order to reduce the debt sufficiently to enable him to sign a further contract.

To this end the Board met on February 22, 1924, to consider a new contract for that year. Consequently David Toews, E. S. Hallman of Ontario and A. A. Friesen, formerly of the Studienkommission, were delegated to Montreal to work out such an arrangement with C. P. R. officials. President Beatty agreed to provide transportation for another 5000 immigrants that year. The terms of payment as laid down by the C. P. R. were again such, that they were entirely beyond the bounds of what the Board was humanly able to muster. To the amazement of Toews, however, the Company was willing to take the risk, and Toews accepted their terms. On April 15 the new contract was signed. (5) It was upon the terms of this agreement that the nucleus of the later members of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario entered Canada.

Back in the Soviet Union, Janz had learned during the fall of 1923, that

there was to be no further emigration that year. This was an obvious blow for him. His perseverance and determination to keep the ball rolling, would not permit him to keep inactive, however. Janz, the inovator, therefore began to explore another avenue of possible escape. Realizing that many Mennonites were still able to finance their own passage, he enquired of A. R. Owen, C. P. R. representative in Moscow, about the possibility of the Canadian government accepting such people. In spite of much bureaucratic red tape, both in Ottawa and in Moscow, details dealing with self-financed emigration were cleared away by mid February 1924. Those who needed credit, or even half credit, were still able to obtain it, but henceforth everyone would have to apply on an individual basis for permission to emigrate. (6) As a result of individual emigration, as opposed to long lists of names being presented to authorities, three categories of emigrants emerged, "cash, credit and half-credit". (7)

Word of the ratification of a new contract (April 15, 1924) reached Janz on May 1, 1924. During the preceding months he had sensed an apparent dormancy in emigration fever, caused no doubt by lack of evident action. When it became clear, however, that things were going to happen, "a widespread stirring turned to a widespread impatience". (8) The wire that Janz received from Canada stated, "that the Canadian government was prepared to receive 5,000 immigrants on credit as well as additional colonists able to pay their own way". (9) This was good news indeed. Hurried preparations got underway immediately.

Complications and frustrations, however, were not slow to cloud the days ahead with moments of deep anxiety. Moscow's increasing antipathy toward mass-migration was becoming ever more discernible. Janz had cause for serious concern. He was aware of Kharukov's hostility as well. It was evident that the "Mennonite exodus, once sanctioned as an emergency measure designed to alleviate the famine, was no longer desirable." (10)

However, in spite of the difficulties Janz was encountering, preparation to

emigrate were proceeding. As 1923 had been a year chiefly for Chortitza and the Old Colony, so 1924 belonged to Halbstadt and its environs in the Molotschna. The first escalation, destined mainly for Ontario, was scheduled to depart from Lichtenau on June 23. A few weeks earlier, however, Moscow refused to sanction the exit permits for this group, unless Kharkov agreed to their re-confirmation. Furthermore, 79 Mennonite refugees in the Donetz were being denied exit permits as well.

Earlier that year the Soviet government had changed its policy regarding medical inspection of emigrants, so that by the spring of 1924 Canadian medical teams were permitted entry into Russia, and all emigrants were examined by these teams before leaving the country. Thereby it was hoped that potential medical rejects would not leave Russia, and another Lechfeld could thus be averted.

In order to ensure that the full number of persons permitted to enter Canada would be enabled to emigrate, a supplementary list^{had been} drawn up of people who could take the place of those rejected. At this critical point in time Kharkov refused to approve the supplementary lists. Desperately Janz searched for a solution. In the Donetz case the matter was solved by appealing to the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars, who granted the exit permits to the 79 initially rejected, but the other supplementary lists containing some 453 names were returned to Janz with the explanation that in the future no group emigration involving lists would be tolerated. It was June 14 ! In nine days the first group was scheduled to depart. Emigration was at an impasse !" (11)

In desperation Janz, the Moses of the Mennonites, wired both the GPU passport department and also a certain Peter G. Smidovich of the Central Executive Committee in Moscow. Through previous associations with religious non-conformists, Smidovich had apparently gained some degree of interest and sympathy for religious minorities. Fully aware of the audacity of his move at this time, Janz waited anxiously, wondering what reprisals might result from his

latest move. The answer came "terse and to the point. The emigrants could leave on June 23 !" In his memoirs Janz recalls the incident thus: " 'My small quarters became a hallowed place of worship!' ". (12)

All difficulties having thus been cleared away, the first eschalon was ready to leave Russia. This group originated mainly in the Halbstadt area of the Molotschna. It was escorted to the border by J. J. Thiessen, a later member of the Board at Kosthern. The train that was to convey the emigrants to the Latvian border, from whence Thiessen would return to escort later groups to the same destination, was assembled at the railway depot in Lichtenau. It consisted of 52 cattle cars, which had to be thoroughly cleansed of manure and other filth. Armed with pails and brushes, Mennonite women scrubbed until the cars were clean and fit to be inhabited. Four to five families were generally assigned to a car.

The departure from Lichtenau was touching. "On Monday, June 23, 1924," recalls Nurse Mariechen Braun in her diary, "we embarked on our journey. Previously our belongings had been transported by wagon to the Lichtenau railway station, where a long train of 52 freight cars awaited us. The cars had been thoroughly scrubbed and equipped with upper and lower bunks for sleeping. A host of friends and relatives of the 1200 emigrants had assembled at the depot to say their last farewells. Before embarkation began we gathered in the Lichtenau church for prayer. Then we returned to the station and boarded the train. Twenty two people were assigned to our car." (13)

Peter J. Rempel, a fourteen-year old lad at the time, recalls the names of the people in that car. They were: the Rev. Jacob Friesen family of seven, plus an aunt. Rev. Jacob Friesen became the first minister in charge of the Mennonite Brethren congregation when it was organized the following year in St. Jacobs. Other occupants were the John G. Rempel family of six; Mr. Rempel being charged with the responsibility of 'overseer' of that particular car

while in transit. After the organization of the Mennonite Brethren congregation in 1925, Mr. Rempel became one of its first deacons. Further members of the party were three Fehderau siblings, Nikolai, then a young man of 18, his sister Mary Fehderau and Katharina Dyck, widow of missionary Jakob Dyck, one of the men so cruelly murdered by the Machnovzy in Jasykovo. Nurse Mariechen Braun, her elderly parents and another Mrs. Braun with her son Hänschen, comprised the motley human composition of one of the 52 cars of the train.

All passengers had to provide themselves with enough food for a 6-8 day period. To this end they had brought Reshi Tweeback (rusks), meat balls, Schinkiflesch (smoked ham), Kilki (dried noodles) and other foods not readily perishable. Many had brought semovars (Russian tea-making machines). Whenever the train stopped long enough at major stations to permit people to get off for a while, everyone ran for keepyatock. (hot water), which was available at all large railway depots.

The freight cars had all been equipped with upper and lower bunks, so that everyone had a place to sleep. In the centre of the car stood either a table or a large chest, which was used by the passengers when eating their meals. The only plumbing facility was a pail in a corner, screened off by a curtain. For obvious reasons the train was therefore obliged to stop at suitable spots, when everyone scrambled to find some secret or private spot. In order to facilitate old and young to get in and out of the rather high freight cars, a set of provisional wooden steps had been fabricated for this purpose. Because the windows in the cars were

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few in numbers, small in size, and high up -- out of reach from the floor, the big sliding doors were kept wide open during the entire journey. Mennonites in Russia, as in Canada, loved to sing, and many a melody ^{these doors to} ~~was~~ ^{and} ~~truly~~ compete with the rhythmic clatter of wheels on the shining band of steel below. (14)

Concerning the departure from Lichtenau, Mariechen Braun continues to relate: "June 23 was a hot day. At sunset, the embarkation being completed, our train began to move slowly out of Lichtenau. Those who remained behind began to sing Zinzendorf's hymn Jesus, still lead on. ^(Jesus, geh voran, auf der Lebensbahn) Tears flowed freely. It was not easy for us to take leave of our home-land. Strange feelings filled my heart. I shall probably never forget that moment fraught with emotion, when we cut ties with the country we had loved, and had considered our home." (15)

Jacob Bartels, another member of the same eschalon, describes the departure as follows: "June 23 was very significant for us. The time was at hand for us to bid our last farewells to the old homeland. We were deeply convinced that we would never see it again. All ties that had -- and still bound us to our country -- now had to be severed.

"Many came to see us off. A last handshake -- tears were shed. For the majority the parting had something of the finality of death in it. This was a parting for life. The last embraces over, the emigrants boarded the cattle cars. When the signal to depart was given, the crowd remaining burst into song, voices choking with emotion, tears streaming. Even as the train rolled into the night, many an Auf Wiedersehn (see you again), was clearly audible in the distance. Thousands, Mennonites and Lutherans alike, had come to see us on our way. I believe many pitied us, while others envied us. We were convinced, however, that we were acting in accordance with God's plan. After all, we owe it to our children to look for a better country.

"In spiritual matters," Bartels continues, "the future in Russia is bleak.

with all means at their disposal the authorities work to win the youth for Communism. We are concerned about the welfare of our children. In this matter we also ^{trust} our Heavenly Father to guide us." (16) Jacob Bartels, who arrived in Canada a month later, settled first in Hespeler and later in Virgil, where he was instrumental in launching the building of Eden Christian College, the first Mennonite Brethren High School in Ontario.

At Feodorovka the train from Lichtenau was switched to a N-S track. From there, the course followed was due north to Orel, at which point we continued in a north-westerly direction toward the Baltic coast. In the intervening ~~stretch~~ ^{stretch} the train stopped at various stations for shorter or longer periods of time. "At Alexandrovsk, now Zaparoshye," Bartels relates in his diary, "we stopped for an hour. This gave us an opportunity to do some shopping at the local farmers' market. I could not resist the temptation to buy a pound of fresh bacon for 20 kopecks per pound (100 kopecks to the ruble). This bacon was a real treat, for I had not eaten any in years. It was very tasty indeed, but later I was to pay dearly for this indulgence. First of all, mother (his wife) scolded me royally for such extravagance, and furthermore, I am firmly convinced that I contracted Malaria as a result of eating the uncooked meat. This caused me a great deal of discomfort, not only during the voyage, but later on in Canada as well." (17)

About the stop in Alexandrovsk, Nurse Braun left the following notation in her diary: "We had a 2-hour stop. The Sisters (nurses) Selma and Magda of Bethania Mental Hospital came to the station to say good-bye. I was able to spend only a short time with them before I was called away to attend to the sick. My five-year practical nursing experience was of great value at this time, for there were people on the train who needed medical attention, and I was able to help. One of my patients was a woman who had lost twins the day before our

departure. She had been brought to the train on a stretcher. There were seven patients in all. -- Shortly before we left Alexandrovsk Dr. Isaak Thiessen of Bethania also came to say good-bye." (18)

The diaries of Braun and Bartels enable us to follow the progress of the first eschalon of 1924 from day to day. "An hour after leaving Alexandrovsk," Bartels continues, "we arrived in Slavgorod, where a large crowd had assembled at the railway depot. These people had come to say farewell to the emigrants, for many in the crowd had close relatives among those leaving the country. This time, however, no good-byes were permitted. After a short whistle stop of two minutes, the wheels of the iron horse were again set in motion. This caused an agonizing cry of grief and despair from those remaining behind. Eyes clouded with tears, wistfully followed us, as our chugging train slowly vanished in the distance. We saw the frantic waving of shawls and handkerchiefs. After this incident there were no further stops at railway stations for some time.

"On our way through Kharkov at 2 in the morning, on June 25, we passed through the main railway terminal without coming to a halt. Were the authorities trying to push us through the sluice-gates as smoothly, quietly and unobtrusively as possible, so that the inhabitants of the land might not learn of our departure for foreign shores? This is understandable, for if the government is determined to keep a firm hold on its people, it is necessary to keep them in the dark.

"Kharkov is a very important junction in the Russian railway system. Several lines cross at this point. Besides converging at a union terminal, every line has, in addition, its own depot. Seeing that our train rolled very slowly through the brightly illuminated streets, we had an opportunity to see the city by night. For those of us who had travelled very little, that was an event of some importance.

"Finally, at a freight terminal on the outskirts of the city, we stopped to

refuel, but in half an hour the wheels were again in motion. It really seemed to me that the authorities were anxious to get us across the border as quickly as possible. From here on we did not stop again until we came to Belgorod, where we were given 3/4 of an hour, which gave us an opportunity to wash for a change." (19)

The journey through Russia continued via Kursk and Orel. Bartels describes the beauty of the Russian landscape en route. "Northern Russia," he says, has a great deal of scenic beauty. Had it been possible, I would have wrapped up many a view and tucked it in my pocket for a keep-sake. After all, this is the land of our birth," he muses. "As we observe the landscape gliding by, we see stands of beautiful conifers -- long needled pine and majestic, graceful fir. They huddle together in smaller and larger clumps and groves. In lower areas quivering aspen and slender birch replace the coniferous growth -- a panorama never to be forgotten.

"We really had a wonderful Heimat" (native land), so Bartels continues his soliloquy. "But we have become strangers in Russia. How sad! We have been sorely disillusioned. *Материнка Россия* (Mother Russia - an endearing term) has cast out her children -- and they are going. But there is a purpose in everything. May God grant us grace to be better witnesses for him in our new country." (20)

In her diary Nurse Braun also refers to the beauty of the Russian landscape. She mentions colourful wild flowers and fern growing in profusion along the railway embankment.

By Sunday, June 29 the emigrant train approached the town of Sebezh near the Russo-Latvian border. Nurse Braun's diary reports the event thus: "On Sunday, June 29, at 3 a. m. we arrived at Sebezh, the border-crossing point, where all our baggage was to be opened for a last inspection. When I awoke,

it was raining. Our car had a leak in the middle of the roof, and through this hole the rain dripped rhythmically onto the table underneath it. The sound of continuous dripping awakened some of the members of our party. Kolja (Nick) Fehderau and I began to write letters. (The days in northern Russia are very long at this time of year.) The others slept. I prayed that the Lord might give us good weather. Mrs. Friesen did the same while still in bed. By 7 a. m. the rain had stopped.

"Near Sebezh the train halted beside a beautiful lake, where we were permitted to disembark and set up our semovars. What an unusual sight to see those charcoal fires in the Russian tea-brewing machines spewing out clouds of belching smoke and steam. When tea or coffee had been brewed we all ate breakfast on the grassy carpet, under the canopy of heaven. The rains had disappeared. Mother nature had received a thorough scrubbing.

"Breakfast over, the area became a gigantic laundry, followed by the preparation of dinner. The women of our car decided that we should share a common meal, each family contributing something. Mrs. Kempel made Ploomimos, a sweet-and-sour fruit soup, Mrs. Katharina Dyck (now Swartz) cooked Kilki and Schinkiflesch, (home made macaroni and fried smoked ham), and I prepared Rehrei, an omelette cut into chunks. Manya (Mary) Fehderau set the table, which had been brought out of the car for this purpose. Our entire group enjoyed a delicious meal in the open." (21)

On crossing the international boundary, Bartels makes the following notation: "As we approached the Russo-Latvian border, excitement in our train mounted, for everyone feared the difficulties the Russians might impose on us at this point. We were anxious to get out of the country as quickly as possible. Personally I had an inner compulsion to get out into the fresh air and walk and walk in order to gain some measure of composure. In the meantime we approached Sebezh.

"The countryside around Sebezh is beautiful. The town is located near a small picturesque lake. Trees dot the rolling terrain and hillsides. The soil is sandy and productive. When the train came to a halt we were permitted to get out, but orders were not to venture too far. Many of our people swam in the lake, many women laundered the children's clothes and spread them on the shrubbery to dry. Finally, after waiting all day, the custom's inspection began at 6 p. m. All our belongings, trunks, suitcases, crates and boxes had to be removed from the train, set out on the rail-embankment, and opened for inspection. The examination, however, was superficial. A bargain had been struck with the officers beforehand. In an hour and a half the job was completed, and we were permitted to reload.

"By 11 p. m. we were heading for the international boundary and the notorious Red Gate. Invariably in front of this gate, the train made one last stop in Russia. An invasion of ruffian-soldiers followed. ^{fellows} These helped themselves to anything that pleased their fancy, including the home-made, self-fabricated sets of wooden steps used during the journey to get in and out of the cattle cars. Finally the train jerked, and after spewing out much abusive language, the Reds disappeared. We were able to breathe freely. Slowly we then proceeded through the Red Gate, and as we emerged on the western side, we knew that we were a free people. We had passed from Russia into the Baltic state of Latvia. The feeling of relief was indescribable. It has to be experienced." (22)

Braun describes the experience of traversing the international boundary thus: "A huge red gate has been erected to mark the international boundary between Russia and Latvia. Passing through this gate has taken on a symbolic significance. It symbolizes the passage from bondage to liberty. For us this momentous hour struck at 4 a. m., on Monday, June 30, 1923. Russia lay behind us." (23)

When the emigrant train arrived at Rehjizah, the first station in western

Europe, we were astounded by the friendly greeting we received by the uniformed men on the platform," reports David Mathies. At this point the emigrants observed their first service of Thanksgiving to Almighty God for a gracious deliverance from oppression. Rev. Jacob Wiens, one of the early ministers of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Kitchener, conducted the worship service. Here too, trains had to be changed, for the railway gage narrows according to west European standards. Here the emigrants were given their first morsel of food on foreign soil, a bowl of soup with pork and a piece of bread. They were also provided with a lapel badge bearing the letters: C. P. R.

While in Latvia, everyone had to undergo a thorough cleansing process. Clothes were disinfected, men, women and children had to bathe. Women's hair was carefully combed and checked for lice. People had to appear again before medical examiners and checked for physical defects. Those who were not considered to benefit to proceed, were detained. When this screening process had been completed, the group was ready to proceed to Libau, for embarkation on the steamer Marglen.

This steamer, a converted troopship, had been transferred to Britain by Germany as part of the reparations payment after the first World War. Consequently, instead of individual cabins, the sleeping quarters were large dormitories, separate for men and women. Many of the emigrants became very sea-sick, for the weather was stormy, and the Baltic rough.

According to seamanship tradition, the crew of the Marglen made a valiant attempt to entertain its passengers from Russia. At a concert, which turned out to be somewhat of a talent-show, a choral group from Halbstadt was asked to sing the czarist national anthem. Nikolai Fehderau, then 18 years of age, relates in an interview, that he objected, fearing that the emigrants could possibly be branded Russian monarchists, which in turn might jeopardize the continuation of the emigration process. After all, had not his mother and other family members remained in Russia? His objections were not shared by others, however, and

the czarist national anthem, a beautiful hymn, was sung, fortunately with no known negative repercussions.

Due to individual initiative and interests among the emigrants, a few members of this eschalon had for some time in the past embarked upon the study of the English language. Such efforts now came to fruition in various ways while en route. In an interview, Peter J. Rempel recalls that his father was able to interpret for the ship's doctor, as well as for the tuck-shop operator. The diary of Jacob Bartels also refers to the elder Rempel as having interpreted on his behalf when he was desperately hungry for onions during a spell of sea-sickness.

The entire sea voyage from Libau to Quebec City was an overpowering experience for the Mennonite emigrants, many of whom had spent their lives mainly behind the plow in the undulating steppes of the Ukraine. Cleaving the mountainous waves of the stormy Baltic Sea, meeting and passing sleek, majestic ships, listening to the droning of the hollow fog-horn warning of impending danger, seeing the merrily twinkling lights along the distant Danish coast to star-board ~~made~~ singular, lasting, and indelible impressions.

Of particular interest to the Mennonite emigrants was the passage through the Nord-Ostsee Kanal, the popular waterway connecting the North with the Baltic Seas. Nikolai Fehderau recalls that because of former cultural ties with Germany, he was deeply impressed by this 9 hour passage, because they were now in fact passing through German territory. German newspapers brought on board ship at the eastern terminal, the city of Kiel, were eagerly bought by the emigrants, who had for so long been cut off from the western world. Everywhere the eyes might rove, advanced German technology was very much in evidence, such as a railway bridge spanning the canal at a height, that ships passing by underneath it were not required to lower their masts, or the lock that raises ships at the western end ^{of the canal} to the level of the North Sea.

Docking and re-loading in the Belgian port of Antwerp was another unique experience. The Marglen discharged her human and other cargo, which was being transferred to the ocean liner Minnedosa, riding at anchor. Bartels calls the Minnedosa "a stately ship, a floating town, ca. 650' by 75', larger than the Marglen. "Tomorrow", he continues, "all emigrants are to appear before a commission of Canadian doctors. Our people are excited, wondering what will happen." (24)

About the port of Antwerp, Bartels records some interesting observations. He mentions a lofty church spire with a bell-carillon. "Twice a day, morning and night, we are treated to an hour-long concert. As the rich tones float across the harbour, one is invariably transported into a worshipful frame of mind. Judging from its spires and other fine buildings, Antwerp must be a very beautiful city. Here at the harbour we are also impressed by the huge cart horses in use. These animals are much larger and stronger than any our people have ever seen. The hustle and bustle of the waterfront remind me of the activities of an anthill." (25)

Southampton on the southern coast of England, the next port of call, "completely overshadows Antwerp," in Bartel's estimation. "The former is at least twice the size of the latter. Hundreds of ships drop anchor here while still at sea, for the harbour facilities cannot accommodate all at the same time. The Minnedosa took on about 20 train car-loads of mail, 200 dressed hogs for passenger consumption en route, and some 100 additional passengers. Loading facilities were very efficient, chiefly mechanized. In contrast to Antwerp we saw very few horses here.

"It was July 10 when we left Southampton, and that same day we docked briefly in Cherbourg, in France. Here too, several hundreds of passengers boarded. The following day, now heading westward toward America, we sighted Landsend with its famous lighthouse off the coast of Britain. It would be interesting to speculate how many lives these immensely strong beams may have saved through the years. Likewise, we too have been placed in this dark world, so we may let our light shine in a dark place. -- As we leave Europe behind us and face the

west, we shall have to recondition our thinking and our attitudes, in order to be able to adapt ourselves to our new homes in a new land." (26)

Apparently the minnedosa encountered rough seas on its north Atlantic run, for Bartels reports that 50-foot waves caused the boat to roll, making many of the passengers sea-sick. "Since early yesterday we have seen no snip, nothing on these high seas," he says. "It seem as if we have been forsaken on this vast ocean with its waves, wind, and driving rain. Yesterday we saw a school of snarks.

"Sunday, July 13, -- another stormy day. The wind hurls the huge waves across the deck, making everything slippery and wet. At 11 a. m. we met a large ocean-liner travelling in the opposite direction. When the snips were opposite each other they sounded their respective sirens in greeting. It was but a momentary recognition, for in no time the other ship was gone and out of sight. How symbolic of our journey on the sea of life. Often we meet and part, never to meet again.

"Monday, July 14 -- a dull, dreary day, so cold that no one ventures out on deck. Our people are depressed. During the night we passed through dense fog. The fog-horn sounded incessantly, keeping everyone awake. Toward evening we sighted whales. Because of the cold I could not go on deck, so I explored the interior of the snip. Among other interesting things I discovered bath tubs -- a great experience -- a bath for the son of a Mennonite farmer !" (27)

A few days later Bartels continues his report thus: "Although we are again enjoying sunshine, the air is icy. For some hours now gulls have been following the ship. This is a sure sign that we are approaching land.

"Wednesday, July 16. This morning we entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence. To starboard the coast of Canada is faintly visible. The weather is anything but pleasant -- strong winds --and a mixture of rain and snow is falling. Tomorrow all immigrants are to appear before the medical commission, and later in the afternoon, we are due to arrive at our destination, Quebec City." (28)

"Thursday, July 17. Rain and fog, but the distant coast of Canada is approaching -- our future home"! writes Nurse Mariechen Braun.

"Again all immigrants had to appear before a medical commission. Those with health problems were segregated for treatment.

"About 9:30 p. m. we entered the harbour at Quebec City. What an impressive view with all its twinkling lights ! Slowly we steamed along until the sleek Minnedosa berthed alongside her designated peer. It was almost a ceremonious entry.

"The following day, Friday, July 18, 1924, we disembarked and set foot on Canadian soil. The arduous sea voyage lay behind us. In Quebec the immigrants were divided into two groups, 300 were destined for the Canadian Prairies, and 900 for Ontario.

"In the large immigration hall our travel documents were once more examined, and every head of a household as well as every single adult had to sign a promisory note, Schuldschein, acknowledging his or her indebtedness for transportation charges to the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, and had to assume responsibility to repay this debt to the said board in the shortest possible time period." (29)

The immigrants destined for Ontario, were headed for Waterloo, where their co-religionists of Swiss origin had made extensive preparations to receive them. Bishop S. F. Coffman and Chris Fretz from Vineland had proceeded to Quebec City with Daniel Enns and other members of the Canadian Mennonite board to welcome the new arrivals. Coffman and Fretz utilized this opportunity to interview the newcomers in order to select suitable recruits to operate their greenhouses and farms. They were looking mainly for families with grown-up children, and for people with special skills. Thus it happened that a few families headed for Ontario went to Vineland, some went to Markham, but the greatest majority by far precipitated upon Waterloo.

This unprecedented descent of hundreds of destitute people upon Waterloo, on Saturday, July 19, 1924, created problems of major proportions. Careful planning, however, had preceded their arrival, and the countless details that had to be solved in preparing and caring for the newcomers, were worked out by a committee of Swiss Mennonites, headed by Ira Bauman, a member of Erb St. Mennonite Church in Waterloo.

The Mennonites from Russia were distributed among their Swiss counterparts, who offered them accommodation and employment on their farms, sometimes for as long as a year. Assisting Mr. Bauman in the placement committee were Jacob Snider, Noah Snyder, Moses Munsberger and many others. (30)

Following the arrival of the immigrants from Russia, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record on Monday, July 21, 1924, carried the following headlines: "Unexpectedly Large Quota of Mennonites for County". A few excerpts from the article carried by the record that day, may be of interest: "875 Russian Mennonite immigrants of German descent arrived in Waterloo on Saturday afternoon bringing all their worldly effects that they were able to save from the despoiling hand of the Soviet with them. -- They arrived on two special trains from Quebec, where they landed on Friday. -- The trains pulled into Waterloo over the Canadian National Lines one about 1:15 and the other an hour and a half later.

"The trains were switched to the Erb Street crossing, where the willing hands of Waterloo County Mennonites assisted them in carrying their effects to the church yard on West Erb Street. On their arrival there they were allowed to rest after which one country's newest were given a substantial lunch of sandwiches and hot coffee. Included in their lunch were small raisin squares and doughnuts, which delicacies the children in the party sampled with keen delight and satisfaction.

"There was not the slightest semblance of squalor or dirt which is usually associated with European immigrants. Every person was clean, and the women, particularly, were quite neat, tho their clothing had seen better days. --

-- the men were strangely clothed, some wearing the remains of Russian and German army uniforms, while the familiar British khaki was also worn. Practically all wore army style caps. Some wore high Cossack boots while others had only wooden clogs fashioned in Japanese style. many wore simple sandals." (31)

For the people of Waterloo the arrival of the Mennonite immigrants from Russia was a unique event. Many curious spectators lined the route along Erb Street from the railway crossing at Caroline to the church yard at Dunbar Road. For the David Mathies, who were among the immigrants walking the four short city blocks, this event was extremely humiliating. "Neck to neck and shoulder to shoulder the crowd lined both sides of Erb Street, and we walked between these casemated walls as sheep driven to some predetermined destination." (32) The destination for which this stream of humanity was heading, was none other than the yard of Erb St. Mennonite church. "Here a large throng had gathered to welcome the 'Russi Leit' and to take them to their homes. At first official words of welcome were spoken from a raised platform by the chairman of the reception committee, Rev. Ira Bauman. Rev. Jacob Wiens of the Brethren Church, a former Tiege, Molotschna, resident, responded on behalf of the immigrants and thanked the hosts for the warm welcome and gracious reception. It was a relief for the ~~Swiss~~ Mennonites to learn that the Russian Mennonites could speak German, that they acknowledged God, and that they appeared clean and decent. (Apparently few people had any inkling about what type of people would come out of Soviet Russia.) Before going their separate ways, the newcomers enjoyed coffee and pastry on the yard of the church. " (33)

Gerhard Enns, another immigrant in this group, recalls his first impressions of Canada thus: "As we passed through Toronto we saw many cars on the streets, and I said to someone near me, At this rate we will also be able to find employment in Canada. It was never our intention to remain on a farm permanently." (34)

Many of the immigrants were well educated people with degrees or diplomas

from various Russian institutions as well as from seminaries and universities in Germany and Switzerland. When the call for a typist was suddenly sounded on the premises of St. Church, while the process of allocating the newcomers was in progress, Gerhard Enns volunteered his services, and was thus able to assist in typing documents required at the time when immigrants were matched with the labour requirements of their respective hosts. At a somewhat later date, Enns, who had studied some English in Russia, was able to assist his host-farmer in reading an English letter, which the latter could not understand. Concerning the kind of reception the Mennonites from Russia had been given by their Swiss hosts, Enns answered: "They were magnanimous. They received us with great kindness."

On the host-farm the Enns family of 6 lived in the Dodi-house. The farmer supplied the family with all the necessities of life, and when Enns on one occasion bought a bag of sugar, his host was offended. When there was not enough work on the farm during the winter months, Enns resorted to the knitting of stockings, which he did with the aid of a borrowed machine.

With the return of spring many immigrants turned their eyes to the rich grain-producing areas of Canada's prairies, while those who preferred not to till the soil, found jobs in the industrial cities of Ontario. Enns remained in the twin-cities and began to work at Dominion Tire Corporation for 10-15 cents per hour. The elder son, a lad of 12, had no agricultural ambitions. His desire was to pursue an academic career. After learning basic English at St. Jacobs' Public School, young Jake Enns continued with rapid strides through High School and McMaster University, until at age 25 he was ready to embark upon a teaching career in secondary education. (35)

Similar to the pattern of the Enns story, runs the tale of the majority of those who carried their small bundles of tangleles along Erb Street on that Saturday afternoon in July of 1924. Swiss Mennonite farmers looked over the labour market available on that day, and picked and chose families as they suited

their purposes. Peter B. Zehr, farmer in the vicinity of New Hamburg, required a family of four. He was led to Mrs. Margareta Mathies with two adult sons and a daughter-in-law, who promptly got into his car and left for the Zehr farm at the breakneck speed of 25 miles an hour. Meanwhile, at the farm, Mrs. Zehr had been filled with qualms of apprehension as to the kind of people that might descend upon their home. What a burden was lifted from her troubled mind when she learned, that the arrivals had no lice, spoke a German dialect that they could understand, and were clean and respectable people. Realizing that she had nothing to fear, Mrs. Zehr quickly disappeared for a short period of time. When she returned, she disclosed that she had changed the inferior bed linen, which she had initially put on the beds of the guests, for some of her very best. When the Zehrs learned that the Mathies family was able to sing, they asked to be entertained. The guests gladly complied. In four-part harmony the quartet sang German hymns, some of which were familiar to their hosts. When requested, a few Russian numbers followed as well. The hosts were delighted. In spiritual matters a close bond of fellowship was soon established also. (36)

In like manner as the Ennses and the Mathies were cared for, so the two train loads of immigrants, which had arrived on the premises of Erb Street Mennonite Church, were quickly and efficiently allocated among their Pennsylvania Dutch cousins. Of the ca. 1200 immigrants who had disembarked a few days earlier from the Minnedosa at Quebec City, the vast majority were thus distributed among the Pennsylvania Dutch farmers of Waterloo County and environs. In Toronto a small number were transferred to another train bound for Vineland, while a small group went to Markham (Bishop Thomas Reesor), (37) where they too were received by Swiss Mennonite families. Approximately 300 were bound for the Canadian West. Efficiency and good organization in the distribution of the new arrivals was evidenced by the previously prepared lists of homes and farmers who were willing to accommodate immigrant families. Every attempt was made to match the labour

requirements with the availability of the human labour market. When once again the hush of twilight descended upon the church yard at the corner of Erb Street and Dunbar Road in Waterloo, the newcomers and their hosts had somehow been matched.

Notes and Bibliography

Chapter V

- (1) Epp, op. cit., pp. 142-3 also 168-70.
- (2) Ibid., pp. 147-9.
- (3) Ibid., p. 150. Dennis quoted by Epp from a letter to David Toews on January 4, 1924.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Ibid., p. 151.
- (6) Toews, op. cit., Courage, p, 44.
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- (19) Bartels, op. cit., p.22.
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- (21) Braun, op. cit., p. 6.
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- (24) Bartels, op. cit., p. 36.
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- (29) Braun, op. cit., pp. 19-21.
- (30) Albert and Greta Hunsberger, A Brief History of the David Eby Church and Erb St. Mennonite at Waterloo, Ontario from 1851 - 1976, no publisher given, p. 13.
- (31) Kitchener-Waterloo Record, July 21, 1924.
- (32) David and Anna Mathies, in an unpublished interview at new Hamburg, Ontario, 1980.
- (33) Driedger, op cit., pp. 19-20.
- (34) Gerhard Enns, unpublished interview at Labor Manor, St. Catharines, Ontario, 1980.
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) Mathies, op. cit.
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Chapter VI -

Early Beginnings

1924 - 1935

Acculturation is not a simple matter. Nor is it likely to be completed in a short period of time. For the Mennonites from Russia the process of adjusting to Canadian ways was slow and gradual. It began on the farms of their hosts in Waterloo County and environs.

The task of allocating ca. 900 immigrants ^{on July 19, 1924} before nightfall, was not altogether simple. A committee headed by Noah Bearinger of Elmira, had been charged with matching the requirements of the local farmers with the availability of a somewhat unusual supply of manpower. Not all who came were able to work. There were elderly folk, and little children. There were widows, who were obliged to work and look after their children at the same time. There were the children of school-age, and the professionals who knew very little or nothing about farming, but all immigrants had to commit themselves to agricultural labour for at least one year.

Before the day was over, however, Noah Bearinger and his committee had completed their assignment of allocation and distribution. That this process on occasion, and for some individuals, was fraught with painful anxiety, is but to be expected. Just what these fears and worries may have been, can perhaps be appreciated more readily by permitting those who were involved, to relate some of the experiences they encountered.

The account left by Nurse Marichen Braun is able once again to throw light on the proceedings that occurred on the Erb Street Church yard on that Saturday afternoon in July, 1924. "In the centre of the premises," she reports, "a platform had been erected. From this podium some of the local ministers and members of the reception committee welcomed us. When this ceremony was completed, our names were written on little slips of notepaper, for the 900 newcomers were to be lodged before nightfall. Soon an elderly man approached me and asked my name.

when I answered, 'Braun', he replied: 'Then I've found the right party. Are your parents here also?' 'Yes', I answered, pointing to my parents. He instructed us to follow him to his car, for he had to go home.

"An unexpected complication arose at this time, however. In disembarking from the train, my father had set a box, containing all our documents, on the ground, and had forgotten to pick it up before he walked away. All I could do, when I learned what had happened, was to send a silent prayer up to my Heavenly Father. In the meantime my parents would have to go without me, while I stayed behind to look for the missing box. At the thought of leaving me, my mother was filled with apprehension and anxiety. She shed tears when I was left behind -- alone.

"As the afternoon wore on, the church premises became increasingly empty, for every farmer there took home the people assigned to him. As I stood there, I watched while one buggy after another left the grounds. At that point a woman approached me and asked, 'Where are you spending the night?' I replied that I did not know. 'If no one will take me in', I said, 'I'll put my head on these benches and cover myself with this blanket that I carry.' That made the woman laugh, but I did not feel like laughing at all. Tears welled up in my eyes. I felt very lonely and forlorn. My parents were gone, and here was I. Quickly the woman responded, however, 'You will come with me.' But my box had not yet been located, and she could not wait until I had found it. A certain Mr. Shantz, her neighbour, was there also, and he promised to wait for me. She then told him, 'When you find the box, bring this girl to my house'.

"When the church yard was fairly well cleared, I made another round of the premises, but to no avail. At that time I decided to return to the place where we had disembarked early that afternoon. Mr. Shantz solicitously asked his wife to accompany me, for 'The Russian girl could lose her way', he said.

Together Mrs. Shantz and I went toward the spot where we had left the train. Mrs. Shantz thought I might be walking too far, but I insisted that, I must find the place where we disembarked. And lo and behold, when we got to the spot, I found the missing box imbedded among the weeds beside the railway tracks, where my father had deposited it. The documents had not been tampered with; they were untouched. Needless to say I was very grateful, and sent another silent prayer up to my Heavenly Father; this time a prayer of thanksgiving.

"By this time dusk was gathering. I put my few belongings into the Shantz automobile, and those kind people took me to Mrs. Good, the woman who had offered to provide me with night lodging. When Mrs. Good saw me, her first question was: 'Hast du deine box gefunden?' (Have you found your box?) Thus I learned the English terminology for what we in German know as Schachtel. The kind Mrs. Good continued: 'When I came home I prayed immediately that the Lord might graciously lead you to the lost article. For my frayed nerves and pent-up emotions her words were balm indeed. How grateful I was for this warm reception.

"And this was not the only gracious gesture I experienced at that time. After having deposited me and my few belongings, Mr. Shantz slipped a five dollar bill into my hand, with the remark: 'Otherwise I would not be able to sleep tonight'.

"By this time I was weary to the point of sheer exhaustion. It was so good therefore to be ushered into a quiet room, to enjoy the luxury of a bath, and to ^{give} thanks for the Lord's wonderful help and provision.

"The following morning Mrs. Good telephoned my parents, who were only ten miles out of the city. Upon hearing my voice, my father cried tears of joy. He was so overwhelmed, that he had difficulty speaking. My parents had been deeply concerned about me.

"After breakfast the Goods took me to church, where I was again shown great kindness by many people. They were friendly, and I was given a warm reception. I was invited to participate in the communion service. Such was my first Sunday in Canada." (1)

A month later the Kitchener Daily Record referred to the first eschalon of immigrants by singling out two of its women. "Two graduate nurses", so it said, "are among the newcomers. Miss Olga Friesen, daughter of Jacob Friesen (who a year later became first minister in charge of Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church), is stationed at the home of Ira S. Bauman, West Erb Street, while Miss Maria Braun is at the home of Gilbert Bergey, New Dundee. It is the hope of the Mennonites here to obtain work for these nurses, who come here expertly qualified."(2)

The recollections of a young man of eighteen, Nicholas J. Fehderau, concerning the proceedings that Saturday afternoon at Erb Street Mennonite Church, are not unlike those of Nurse Braun's. He recalls, that as he stood there by himself, waiting, hoping to be approached by someone, ~~he saw~~ one buggy after another leaving the grounds, and still he stood there with no ~~place~~ to go. While others were being whisked away, he appeared to be overlooked. His sisters Manja (Mary) Fehderau and Mrs. Katharina Dyck, had gone to work for the Wisimers in Breslau, but who would take him in, he wondered.

Finally Bishop Ben Shantz of Freeport approached the young man, and asked: 'Kannst du GÄule dreiwe und Kühe melke?' (Can you drive a team of horses and milk cows?) Although young Fehderau had been a student all his life, he now went to Freeport to perform any farm-chores required of him, with the exception of milking -- which turned out to be a fiasco.

When Fehderau arrived at the Shantz farm, he found to his consternation, that he really had no clothes suitable for barn-duty. The following day, Sunday morning at 5 o'clock, young Fehderau embarked upon his stable-chores in ^asuit and dress shoes. Thereupon the family took him to church, but there he did not experience the cordiality and friendship that so impressed Nurse Braun in Kitchener. On the contrary, Fehderau went unnoticed. For him there were no handshakes nor words of welcome.

Young Fehderau remained on the Shantz farm until the mangels had been harvested.

After an initial remuneration of \$25.00 for the first month, the wages were raised to \$30.00. Following the completion of harvest duties, however, he was expected to work for his keep. ~~But being obligated~~ to pay his transportation debt as quickly as possible, the prospect of working for board and room was not very attractive. Therefore he began to look around for other means of employment, which he found shortly afterwards as kitchen help at Freeport Sanatorium, where he received \$30.00 a month. His new duties consisted of peeling potatoes, making toast, and similar jobs. He was free every second Sunday, as well as every Wednesday afternoon. He continued working at Freeport until May 1925. In the meantime he was able to discharge his transportation debt to the

Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. (3) Thereupon he joined his sisters, who had

found work in Kitchener.

Long before the ^{newcomers had started the} trend of drifting into surrounding urban areas, however, ^{to meet} the need for the new arrivals with their own countrymen became increasingly evident. Not only were such meetings desirable for reasons of spiritual edification, but the immigrant had to meet other immigrants. He needed an opportunity to socialize with his acquaintances, friends, and occasionally with family members, who were all too often scattered far and wide across the neighbouring countryside.

Hence gatherings for Bible study were convened in the homes at an early date. It so happened at one such meeting in September 1924, at the home of Rev. Jakob W. Reimer in New Dundee, that the desirability of coalescing the immigrants into a corporate body, a church, was first expressed and discussed. Bible studies were conducted during the fall in spots such as Baden, St. Jacobs, Breslau and New Dundee.

Wherever the newcomers had been lodged, they attempted to adapt themselves to the customs of their new surroundings. The generosity of the hosts to meet the needs of their proteges were recognized unequivocally. Not only did the host farmers provide for the physical well-being of the immigrants. An attempt

to provide them with spiritual nourishment was made as well. To this end the newcomers accompanied their hosts to their respective local churches, but on this level a feeling of cohesive unity was not to be attained. The language problem presented an unbridgeable barrier. Although the Pennsylvania-Dutch dialect was to some extent intelligible to the newcomers, the adoption of much English terminology prevented the "Russian" Mennonites, who were accustomed to High German, from benefitting from these worship services spiritually. During the late summer of 1924 the local committee in charge of immigrants, decided to arrange for special services for immigrants to be held in High German. Moreover, these meetings were to be conducted by immigrant ministers, and were to be held in various Mennonite churches in the K-W area every second Sunday. "These services", according to Fast and Enns, "were much appreciated. All immigrants worshipped together under the leadership of Mennonite Brethren ministers, since ministers of General Conference affiliation had, by coincidence, gone west upon arrival in Canada. But a feeling of regret was felt by most, that these services could not be conducted with greater regularity. This was not possible at that time because all immigrants were dependant upon their hosts for transportation to such services. As a result of these limitations a large group of the Ontario immigrants decided to move to western Canada in February of 1925. The main stimulus for this move was the news that immigrants in the West had established and regularly conducted worship services in the mother tongue. To worship God with one's own people, outweighed all other considerations at that point, and surely was reason to marvel. For it meant that most families would have to make additional loans of money in order to make the trip. Their debt to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company had not yet been paid." (4)

As newcomers continued to descend upon the twin cities Kitchener-Waterloo to seek employment and take up residence, a nucleus of immigrants coalesced. It is not surprising, therefore, that a concerted effort was made to weld this enlarging flock together into an organized entity. Members of the Mennonite

brethren and of the Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood found that they had much doctrinal ground in common, a circumstance of which they had been fully aware in Russia. Whereas the Mennonite Brethren traced their beginnings to the 1860's, the Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood was a considerably younger movement, its roots going back to the early years of the 20th century. Doctrinally the Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood also made membership in its ranks conditional upon a genuine conversion experience. Its mode of baptism was by immersion, however, it did not make this form a prerequisite to membership. If a previously baptized candidate was satisfied with the baptism he had received, he was accepted on the basis of the confession of his faith, without rebaptism. Concerning such matters as the Lord's Supper and the general attitude toward believers of other denominations, the Brotherhood took a more liberal stance than did the Mennonite Brethren. For that reason the new movement became known in Russia as Alianzgemeinde (Alliance Church). This open and spontaneous attitude of the new church had made it very popular in the Molotschna especially, but in other Mennonite colonies in Russia as well. Many from the ranks of the Mennonite Brethren, as well as from the Kirchliche Churches, joined the ranks of the Alianz.

When the post war revolution in Russia instituted an atheistic government, the religious freedom of the Mennonites was severely restrained. In sharp contrast with this curtailment of religious liberty, a yearning for a deeper spiritual life was at the same time brought into focus. Religious revivals were sparked in the villages of the Molotschna. In large numbers people accepted the Lord. In villages where there were no church buildings, private homes were turned into meeting houses. Here gathered adherents of all shades of Mennonite denominations to participate in Bible discussions that were led and attended by all affiliations. This broad spectrum of representation proved to be of great mutual benefit. The contrast between post-war poverty and the riches of spiritual blessings united the children of the "Heavenly King". Differences that had existed between many

congregations, were lowered. Many hands were clasped in a spirit of brotherhood. Such was the spiritual background of many of those who emigrated to Canada and settled in Ontario in 1924-6.

This spiritual atmosphere of the former 'fatherland' had now been transplanted to Ontario, where on May 25, 1925 in the village of St. Jacobs, at the home of Rev. Jacob P. Wiens, the first Mennonite Brethren Church in Ontario took shape. It was placed under the leadership of Rev. Jacob P. Friesen, who in turn was to be assisted by Rev. Jacob W. Reimer, Rev. Jacob P. Wiens and Rev. Peter Goertzen, who formed the Altestenrat or church council. The background of the eighteen signatories to the charter of organization was partially Mennonite Brethren and in part Alianz. These two groups decided to amalgamate under the name: Molotschna Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde (Molotschna Mennonite Brethren Church). The term Molotschna was to be reminiscent of the liberal stance of the Brethren and Evangelical Brotherhood Churches of the Molotschna Colony during the early decades of the 20th century. (5)

In addition to naming the new church Molotschna Mennonite Brethren Church, it was also referred to as Mennonite Brethren Church of Kitchener. Of the 18 signatories to the articles of organization, 16 names are still extant: Rev. Jacob P. Friesen, Rev. Jacob P. and Maria Wiens, Rev. Jacob W. Reimer, Gerhard Dueck (Dyck), Gerhard J. Enns, Johann G. Rempel, Isaak Sawatzky, Johann Lorenz, Lena and Anna Dick, Katharina (Dick) Swartz, Marichen Braun, Maria Fehderau, Mrs. Peter Friesen, Mrs. Henry Braun. The two remaining signatures have been lost.

At the organizational meeting a constitution was formulated, which specified:

- I. Laymen are also to be elected to the Altestenrat (Council of Elders or Church Council), as well as clergy. Deacons are to be members of this body. (1. Tim. 5:17)
- II. The leading minister of the congregation is to be elected by the congregation from the Church Council.

- III. For every business meeting a chairman and a recording secretary are to be elected.
- IV. As a matter of principle the church accepts into membership only persons who have been spiritually regenerated, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and testify to this fact in word and deed. Persons seeking membership are to be given an opportunity to testify to the church concerning their personal relationship to God.
- V. The church considers baptism by immersion scriptural, and practices this mode only. It will, however, also accept into membership persons who have been baptized by a different modus on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, providing such persons conform to stipulations as specified in No. IV, for the following reasons:
1. - because the spiritual relationship of the children of God is superior to the uniformity of a symbolic act. (compare Romans 2:28 and Galatians 6:15-16).
 2. - because Christ prayed to the father for the unity of all believers (John 17:20-23), and died so that he might bring together all the children of God scattered abroad. (John 11:51-52).
 3. - because all children of God are members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19), are in communion with God the Father and with his son Jesus Christ (1. John 1:3), and have all been united by the Holy Spirit into a glorious entity (1. Cor. 12-13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.").
- VI. The church permits all brethren and sisters in the Lord, who have been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and whose daily life testifies to the Lordship of Christ, to partake of the Lord's Supper, because it is the Table of the Lord (1. Cor. 10:21). Such persons should inform the Church Council of their intentions before the service. Strangers to the church should declare their personal relationship to God before the church in a public testimony. (6)

Thus was launched the Mennonite Brethren Church in Ontario. Yet another ten years were to 'slip under the bridge', however, before the Kitchener chapter would be able to claim a church building its own. In the meantime worship services were held as heretofore on alternate Sundays in St. Jacobs at 10:30

in the morning, and at Bethany New Mennonite Church, corner of Lancaster and Chapel Streets in Kitchener at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. (7) As the concentration of Mennonite immigrants in the Kitchener-Waterloo region increased, so also grew the membership of the fledgeling congregation. Those who were attracted to the Twin Cities came from diverse places, not only from the surrounding areas. They came from Canada's Prairie Provinces, where some found life extremely difficult. This was particularly so for such as had no aptitude nor inclination to work the soil. There were those who continued to arrive from various spots in Europe. The kind of life these people found on arriving in this area, was captured and portrayed vividly by Katharina (Dyck) Swartz, in a letter written in 1926 to close relatives living in Siberia, relatives who were weighing the pros and cons of a possible exchange of the Russian home for one in Canada.

"In order to give you an idea of this place", the letter reads, "I shall describe for you our manner of life. Kitchener is a city of approximately 30,000 inhabitants. It has 170 factories, and is, therefore, fully regarded as an industrial city. In the morning, when we go to work, there hovers over the area, where most of the factories are located, a thick, grey cloud of smoke. This is because the chief source of fuel in this area is soft coal, which is cheaper. Some distance removed from the factories are the residential areas with the most beautiful villas. In summer these are beautified by an abundance of flowers. We live on the main street, along which electric trolleys run, as well as many automobiles. The traffic creates a great deal of noise, but the compensation for this is the fact, that this is cheaper to live here, and what is most important for us -- we are close to our factories. We live in four rooms on the second floor of a house. We heat our flat with a heater fired by coal, but for cooking we use natural gas. The rent for these quarters is \$20.00 monthly. For a five-room house one would pay \$25.00 - \$30.00 or more.

"As I mentioned previously, we all work in factories. Lise works with me in a factory that produces the finest of shirts for men. Both of us are employed in the department where the shirts are ironed and folded. wages are calculated on piece-work basis, from 3 to 28 cents a dozen. In this type of work everything depends upon speed. I have been working in this factory for almost two years now, and I turn out about 25 dozen shirts a day. Lise began only about four months ago. Manya (Mary), my younger sister, works in another shirt factory. Kolja (Nicholas), who makes rubber boots in a rubber footwear factory, earns up to \$5.00 a day, but such periods are of short duration only. Generally he makes from \$3.50 - \$4.00. Mother, and

Lise's Hanny, are at home. Mother has to prepare dinner for us, and Hanny goes to Kindergarten. All schools up to university are free. The state makes every effort to enable the people to acquire an education. The High School building in Kitchener, for example, is a huge edifice which probably cost about one and a half million dollars to construct. Here one can learn anything one wishes to learn, either during the day or at night. Most people work in the factories during the day, but in the evenings, for a fee of \$1.00, one can learn such trades as dress-making, cooking, basket-weaving, bookkeeping, stenography, lathe-operation, carpentry, blacksmith-work and many other skills, for in that school one can find the newest technical devices and machines, as well as good teachers. We went there twice a week to receive English instruction. Yesterday was the final programme. There were assembled about 225 students, a real international gathering. At first the students were tested. The best ones in the group received medals for excellent achievement. (I was one among the elite.) The remaining items on the programme consisted of oral readings, recitation of poetry, speeches and the like. All this was done to a select audience of about 900 persons, among whom were some of the most prominent local teachers and ministers, as well as members of the town council. Would you not agree that this is a fine example of genuine liberty, equality and fraternity? Yes, we enjoy complete liberty here.

"Generally speaking, we Mennonite immigrants have a good reputation in this region. May we live up to that reputation! Last night most of the participating Mennonites received awards. In Kitchener and environs there are about 250 'Russian Mennonites', mostly our acquaintances from Halbstadt, Tiede and other villages of the Molotschna. There are also many ministers here, such as J. Janzen (Tiede), J. Reimer (Rückenau), J. Wiens (Tiede), J. Friesen (Halbstadt), Peter Klassen (Spat) and a few others. We meet on Sundays for worship services, we also meet for Bible study. There is very little socializing. There is no such thing as visiting someone and having a cup of coffee, because everyone is working. Whoever does not work in a factory, goes out on day labour, doing laundry, or cleaning houses. Some of our women, who in Russia used to engage three maids, are now working for a daily wage. In this regard western Canada is different. There they don't have the job market that we have down here. In our area it is easy for women to find work, but for men it is often very difficult, because women perform the same jobs that men do, such as making rubber footwear, or tires for automobiles. One young woman we know makes fifty rubber tires daily, which nets her four dollars. The factories in this country work on a contract basis, producing goods according to orders placed by firms or governments. When commissions or orders are large and frequent, operations continue day and night. During such spurts of activity additional help is hired, but when the contracts are completed and no new ones in sight, employees are laid off without mercy or regard. Naturally, every factory experiences a slack period now and then.

"You asked about the availability here of dry-goods and other consumer products. I chuckled to myself when I thought of the huge stores stocked to overflowing. Naturally, quality goods are expensive. A good dress sells for at least \$10.00, but I also have some everyday dresses for

which I paid 80 - 90 cents or in the range of somewhere from one to two dollars. These dresses are made of gingham and last a long time.

"Agriculture in this area is mainly of the mixed variety. The soil is mostly heavy clay, often full of heavy pebbles (glacial till). For that reason it has to be fertilized. The farmer, therefore has to make sure that his barns are filled with live-stock. The wealth of the local farmer depends on the size of his manure pile. Wheat is raised, as a rule, only for one's own requirements, such as feed for poultry and livestock. The eggs, milk and butter thus obtained provide additional income for the farmer's coffers. Horses are used by some farmers in road construction.

"Very few of our people take up farming here. The farms are too expensive, and life on a farm is very difficult. But there are many Pennsylvania-Dutch farmers in the neighbourhood. They are very different from us. Many are very wealthy.

"Well, I believe, that I have given you an accurate description of our life here. For women it is easy to make good wages, but they have to work hard, very hard, for their money. On the other hand, you can enjoy peace and quiet, and the prospects of enjoying a lovely home after a few years.

"In making the ultimate decision concerning emigration, I wish for you the Lord's guidance and blessing, for anyone emigrating should be sure that such a move is of the Lord. For those who have this assurance, it will be easier to weather the difficulties of acculturation." (8)

To what extent the persuasive power of the writer of the above letter was responsible in engendering a positive response from its recipients, is not known, but at 6 P. M. on July 26, 1926 the Peter Isaak family from Omsk in Siberia, arrived at the Grand River Railway Station on Queen Street in Kitchener.

Looking back to this event, daughter Sara recollects: "A week later we attended the worship service at Bethany Church on Lancaster St., where the Mennonite Brethren congregated under the leadership of Rev. Jacob P. Friesen. It was a dull and rainy day when we went to church for the first time in Canada. A mixed quartett, consisting of Lydia Friesen, Liese Huebert, Kolja (N. J.) Fehderau and Heinz (Henry P.) Riediger, provided special music, while Susie Rempel accompanied the congregational singing on the piano. Rev. Jacob P. Friesen preached. We carried our own hymnals, the Dreiband, a book without music, which we had brought from Russia." (9)

The following week the family left for Vineland, where they worked all summer

on the fruit farms. When they returned to Kitchener on October 20th, the Mennonite Brethren had moved into new premises at 40 King St. East, where they rented a large hall on the third floor of an office building. In these makeshift arrangements the congregation was able to assemble every Sunday morning and evening for worship services, but during the week the premises were out of bounds to them, for it was then the meeting place of a group of spiritualists.

The fact that the hall was accessible to the Mennonite Brethren on Sundays only, made it very difficult to carry on a weekly calendar of church-related activities. Choir rehearsals had to be conducted in private homes, as was the case of Bible studies also, and also church council meetings.

Concerning interior decor, the hall was anything but attractive, in fact quite the contrary was the case. An eerie, almost sinister atmosphere pervaded the salon, which was able to seat about 200 occupants. To aid them in conducting their practices of the occult, the spiritualists had darkened their meeting chamber by draping windows and doors with black curtains. "Fortunately they found our presence in the hall discomfiting", recalls Sara Issak, "and after some time of joint-occupancy, to everyone's relief, they vacated the premises." "We learned", says N. J. Fehderau, "that since we became joint-occupants, the spirits were no longer as active in the hall as they had been formerly."

With the removal of this impediment, the life of the fledgeling congregation could henceforth unfold and develop without restriction. To be sure, it was no easy matter for the older members to climb two flights of steep stairs every Sunday morning - and perhaps evening - in order to reach the sanctuary. Furthermore, having reached the third floor, young and old found themselves engulfed, on warm summer days, by a stale and stifling atmosphere from which there seemed to be no escape. The hall faced south. To ventilate by means of opening windows was unthinkable, for should an electric tram decide to

rattle by on King Street, it was sure to drown and submerge completely, whatsoever was being said or sung at that time. Yet, inspite of these handicaps, those who recall those days agree, that the Lord blessed the congregation, and that the members experienced manche Segensstunden -- many moments of blessing.

It should not be forgotten at this point, that of the immigrants who arrived in Ontario in 1924, only a nucleus remained in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. The majority settled in areas that held out the most promising economic prospects for them, areas such as New Hamburg, Hespeler, Pelee Island, Essex (Leamington), Port Rowan and Vineland. In due time, affiliated church branches, called stations, were organized by those who settled in the various places. The stations were administered and controlled by the mother church in Kitchener, until such time as the various stations requested autonomous status.

The focal position that the Kitchener church occupied for some years, placed on it the onus of providing spiritual nurture and Bible teaching for the affiliated stations. Heavy tasks were shouldered and carried out during this period of its history by the three ministers, Jacob P. Friesen, Jacob W. Reimer and Jacob P. Wiens. This system of organization gave rise to much travel to and from the various stations, for Kitchener was responsible not only for providing speakers for the affiliates, but on its shoulders also lay the task of bringing together former members of the Mennonite Brethren and those of the Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood. Common doctrinal ground had to be sought for the newly amalgamated organization. To these endeavours of the teaching brethren the Lord added his blessings, with the result that common doctrinal ground was found and established within a relatively short period and with a minimum accompaniment of stress and strain. (10)

As the Molotschna Mennonite Brethren Church, so its Sunday School traces its roots back to 1925. Bethany Church, Lancaster Street, graciously opened

its doors to the newcomers. It offered to harbour within its own organization additional classes taught in German for those unable to speak English. The Mennonite Brethren were encouraged to elect from within their own ranks, teachers. This offer was accepted. Thereupon three classes were formed, one for men, one for women and one for children; Johann G. Rempel, Katharina (Dyck) Swartz, and Manya (Maria) Fehderau were put in charge of the respective classes. Seeing that the children were recruited from both Mennonite Brethren and General Conference background, their numbers were large -- and increased rapidly. It became necessary shortly thereafter, therefore, to sub-divide the children's class, the very small ones being instructed by Nurse Marichen Braun, who meanwhile had re-located from New Dundee to Kitchener. Thus the German Sunday School classes carried on as an integral part of the indigenous organization at Bethany Church on Sunday mornings, whereas the German worship services for adults, were conducted in the afternoons.

By the fall of 1926, when the Mennonite Brethren began renting a hall in which to meet independently, the number of children enrolled in Sunday School had increased to the extent, that new staff had to be recruited, the adult classes, on the other hand, were for some time dissolved. An additional teacher and superintendent in one person, was found in H. H. Janzen (11) who with his wife Katharina and baby son Rudy, had emigrated from Russia and arrived in the Twin Cities late in 1925. Although at that time not yet members of the Mennonite Brethren community, they felt drawn to them, and joined their membership on August 22, 1926. (12) Although the superintendency of the Sunday School was an office held by Janzen for a short period only, it proved to be the spring board from which he would launch out into the depths of a long and fruitful ministry.

The senior clergymen of the molotschna Mennonite Brethren Church, Friesen, Reimer, and Wiens recognized the latent potential in Janzen as well as his

ardent desire to plumb the depths of God's inspired scriptures. Beginning in 1927, when he preached his first sermon, a delineation which lasted exactly ten minutes, Janzen was encouraged to teach and preach whenever and wherever possible. When Janzen laid aside the Sunday School work in the spring of 1928 in order to assist the elder brethren with the preaching ministry, David Quapp took up his duties, until he in turn handed the reigns over to Abram J. Dick in September 1928. Dick carried on the supervisory work of the Sunday School with great dedication until 1948, when he received a call to take up an assignment in Sao Paulo, Brazil. (13)

As the enrollment increased and the Sunday School expanded, new teacher-recruits stepped into the ranks. In April 1927 Sara Isaak joined the staff, and Peter J. Rempel in 1930. According to Manya Fehderau, "Peter was an answer to prayer". In the meantime, with the proliferation of the molotschna Mennonite Brethren Church through its various stations, such as Leamington, Vineland, Hespeler, New Hamburg and Port Rowan, this branch of the church mushroomed.

In reminiscing about those early days, Sara Isaak recalls, that the Menno-Brethren Sunday school in Kitchener, and the United Mennonite Sunday School in Waterloo, did many things together, and met frequently. After celebrating the first Christmas festivities in Canada together in 1924 under the joint leadership of Rev. Jacob H. Janzen and Rev. Jacob P. Friesen, the respective Sunday Schools continued a mutual exchange visit before Christmas to view each other's final rehearsal. Rev. Jacob H. and Mrs. Janzen were both keenly interested in the work of the Sunday School, and therefore it is perhaps not surprising that the first initiative to convene a convention for Sunday School teachers came from them. Initially it was an undertaking on a small scale, but a productive step in the right direction.

Following this first attempt to bring Sunday School teachers together for

instruction and mutual edification, it became an annual affair. Outstanding speakers and pedagogues were invited on such occasions to acquaint the assembled teachers with efficient methods of instruction, as well as increasing their awareness of the importance of child evangelism. Such conventions soon became an annual affair. Travel during the 1930's was expensive, however, and this, combined with a dearth of money, due to frequent periods of unemployment, made transportation somewhat of a luxury. Perhaps such circumstances are reflected in the mood expressed by the molotschna M. B. Church at a business meeting on October 5, 1930 when it recommended that its Sunday School teachers attend the convention in Essex at the expense of the congregation, but that the church would permit only one car to be hired for the trip.

A few years later, in the fall of 1933, the M. B. Church in Kitchener hosted a Sunday School teachers' convention in connection with a short-term Bible course conducted by Rev. Abram H. Unruh, Principal of the Bible School in Winkler, Manitoba. The convention was again a joint effort with the United Mennonite Church of Waterloo. A letter describing some of the proceedings at the conference offers a glimpse into the times and conditions of the 1930's.

The convention, writes Sara Isaak, was chaired by a member of the U. M. Church of Waterloo, Henry J. Janzen, father of Kitchener's H. H. Janzen, while the inevitable Musterlektionen (model lessons), were provided by two Kitchener teachers, Sara Isaak and Wanya (Maria) Fehderau. Whereas the Fehderau presentation proceeded with clock-work precision, Sara Isaak was not quite as fortunate. During her presentation, two somewhat humorous interruptions threatened to disrupt the smoothly flowing thought process of lesson-theme development. Somehow, a wee kitten unobtrusively found its way up the stairs, and quietly made its way to the front. Consternation suddenly gripped the struggling teacher, when from the corner of her eye she became aware of the tiny quadruped vying

for the attention of her class. The day was saved, however, by the gallant intervention of superintendant Abram J. Dick, who quickly removed the obnoxious little creature. Similarly, a small child from "seemingly nowhere" attempted to make its way to the front, only to be unceremoniously intercepted by another resolute teacher.

In the wake of the model lessons followed the Sunday worship service, with a sermon preached by the Rev. Jacob H. Janzen of the U. M. Church of Waterloo. Then, at long last came the inevitable dissection and discussion of the model lessons. Needless to say, the teachers survived the criticism.

If the morning could boast a full programme, the afternoon was no less crowded. Two lectures were presented on "The Child", by J. H. Janzen. These were followed by A. H. Unruh, who spoke on "The Good Sunday School Teacher". After the lectures a meal was served to ca. 34 teachers in attendance. For this purpose five tables had been set in the hall of the third floor at 40 King Street East.

Supper being completed, there followed a business meeting, when suddenly the electric power failed, plunging the hall into darkness. The search for candles in drug stores along King Street netted some positive results. A petroleum lamp was also obtained from a nearby German Club, but electricity was not restored that evening, with the result that the convention guests had to grope their way down two flights of steep stairs, somewhat in the style of a torchlight procession. To everyone's relief no one left with a broken collar bone, however, a local Twin City resident catapulted down part of the last stairway somewhat faster than expected.

The Bible course taught by A. H. Unruh was concluded the following week. When it was over, those participants who worked at Forsythe's presented Unruh with a shirt and two ties. The recipient was pleasantly surprised with this token of appreciation. However, the shirt was not the only thing

that he took back to Winkler. There followed him also three of the Sunday School teachers from Kitchener, Abram Dick, Anna Teichroeb and Tine Rempel. Those who stayed behind gallantly stepped into the breach to close ranks for those who were privileged to enrich their lives, so that they in turn would be enabled to enrich the church upon their return. (14)

Concerning the five-month term that the Kitchenerites spent in Winkler, Anna Dick, wife of Abram J., said in conversation: "That was during the depression. My husband was unemployed at the time, but I was able to obtain domestic work for five dollars a week plus board and room. We could not both afford to go to Winkler, therefore I encouraged my husband to go, knowing how much he craved this opportunity. From Winkler he wrote in glowing terms, commending the spiritual tone of the Bible School. He was so impressed, ^{by what he saw and heard} that he dubbed Winkler the 'capital' of Canada." Of his work in Sunday School, Anna Dick commented: "He gave it all he had." Sara Isaak summed up her evaluation of Dick's service in Sunday School thus: "Not only did he do much to establish the Sunday School as a viable organism of the church, but he also nurtured it by always striving to provide manuals and other aids for the teachers, that would improve the effectiveness of their instruction, as well as enable them to proceed independently in their lesson preparation and presentation. The enthusiasm he exuded in programme preparation and execution, as well as his work with the Sunday School choir, was recognized and appreciated by colleagues beyond his own congregation." (15)

At this point it might be of interest to take note of a decision made on October 8, 1934 by the Mennonite Brethren Church of Kitchener, to send two cars to the Sunday School convention in Leamington, -- this instead of one car, as in 1930. (16)

However, it was not the Sunday School only that was blessed with dedicated workers. Equally devoted in the service of God and man were those

in charge of the music programme of the church. Singing in four-part harmony was a tradition among Mennonites from Russia. This custom was now transplanted from their former home on the steppes of the southern Ukraine to their newly adopted homes in Canada. The Molotschna Mennonite Brethren Church was fortunate to have within its ranks Gerhard J. Enns, a former choir conductor from Halbstadt. At an early date in the life of the new congregation Enns was approached and asked to start a choir. Enns accepted the challenge, and thus became the church's first choir conductor. Concerning this event he says: "To me was given the task of assembling a choir for the purpose of enhancing the beauty of the worship service. In weakness, but by the Grace of God, I tried to fulfill this obligation and started a choir, which I conducted. N. J. Fehderau, one of my successors, was at that time a very faithful choir member." (17)

Conducting a choir in those days was not easy. Frequently Enns worked night-shift, which then obviously prevented him from being present at rehearsals. Furthermore, during the time when the hall at 40 King East was not accessible to the Brethren during the week, choir-practice had to be conducted in the homes of the members. But in spite of these handicaps the choir carried on, and by 1928, when Enns laid down the baton, it had a membership of eighteen persons, six male and twelve female voices.

When Gerhard Enns stepped back in 1928, Henry Wiebe, a member of the choir, assumed its leadership. During the course of the next few years the size of the choir increased still further to twenty six. It began to sing at worship services every Sunday morning, instead of every second Sunday. The choir sang with enthusiasm and for the sheer love of singing. When after the short span of a few years Wiebe felt led in March 1931, into another sphere of service, the choir was left for a second time sans leadership.

Thereupon, in the same month, in March 1931, the Church Council approached

Nicholas J. Fehderau with the appeal to assume choir directorship. In retrospect, Fehderau recalls the incident thus: "I was not prepared to make a hasty decision, so I asked for time to consider the matter. After a considerable inner struggle and prayer, I turned down the offer. I felt that I lacked the qualifications to assume such a task. In the meantime the choir held a vote among its own numbers and elected me their leader. Various members of the choir and of the congregation approached me and attempted to persuade me to take on the choir leadership. The Church Council also repeated its previous request. Finally, after much prayer and a long inner struggle, I consented. My contention in accepting the offer was, that if the Lord assigns a task, he will also provide strength and ability to go through with it." (18)

For N. J. Fehderau this was a momentous decision. It was the beginning of a fruitful and productive ministry of song that was to continue until 1958.

To pause for a brief examination of Fehderau's reflections on the choir of those days, as well as of the times when he assumed his office, is both interesting and enlightening. He tells us that the choir members were not trained vocalists, and that the music used at first was, therefore, simple. At that time he selected songs from Liederperlen, a book brought from Russia. In this book the melodies were notated in numbers, written on four lines corresponding to the voices required in four-part harmony. The numbers ranged from 1 - 7, corresponding to the sol-fa syllables, high do starting all over again on 1. The Liederperlen consisted of three volumes, which contained an excellent repertoire of German songs. However, as the choir increased in size, the shortage of the numbers of available copies of these books soon became apparent. To alleviate the shortage, Fehderau began to duplicate music by using a hectograph, which method he exchanged with a Gastettner in 1946. Of the songs he duplicated during the 28 years he served as conductor,

940 were in the German language, notated with numbers. The individual song-sheets were then clipped into a special binder, with the result, that in the course of time there was accumulated a four-volume collection, with an aggregate number of 1,258 pages. When Fehderau began to use the Gastettner, he also switched from numbers to notes when duplicating music. By this method another 171 songs were collected in a 391 page volume. The total number of songs thus produced by him was 1,649. (19)

With an augmented repertoire of songs at its disposal, the choir under the direction of N. J. Fehderau launched forth upon its first spring concert. Sara Isaak recalls with great pleasure the musical selections sung in praise of the creator, as: "O großer Gott, wie herrlich ist dein Werk", "O Welt, du bist so wunderschön", "Wenn der Frühling auf die Berge steigt", and "Die Wasserströme frohlocken".* The last number was particularly well received, and on numerous occasions the choir was requested for a repeat performance. With the approach of autumn, melodies in minor chords extolled the beauty of dying leaves, but such mournful dirges were invariably followed by the assurance of the resurrection of life after death.

The highlight of all annual festivities, however, was Christmas. While still worshipping at 40 King Street, East, the choir attempted its first cantata: "Bethlehem". It was a great success. Congregation and choir were moved by the love of God, so dramatically portrayed by the message in song.

It was precisely this message of the constraining love of God, that motivated N. J. Fehderau and the choir "serve the Lord with gladness, and to come into his presence with thanksgiving." Ps. 100:2. To quote the conductor's words: "It is important that we perform the Lord's work with joy. The Joy of the Lord is to be our strength. We in the choir considered our chief

obligation to the church to be our service of song on Sunday mornings. With very few exceptions, we were on the job. For this we praise the Lord. He gave health and strength to perform the task of helping to create an atmosphere of praise and worship." (20)

Also constrained and motivated by the love of God to service, was a small group of women in the church. The first of a number of women's organizations, the Tabea Verein, was begun in 1930 at the home of Mrs. Elisabeth (Peter) Isaac. Three other women, Mrs. Liese (John) Dyck and her mother Mrs. Maria (Jacob) Fehderau, and Mrs. Anna (Peter) Hildebrandt collaborated with their sister Elisabeth Isaac to form a Verein, a club. At this point in time the women had no clearly defined goal in mind, except the desire to serve the Lord. They prayed for clarification of direction. They trusted the Lord to guide them, and thus began a programme that has continued to function to the present day.

When the first women began to meet, they spent their time at various crafts that were raffled from time to time. Growth in numbers was slow at first, but within a year a sizeable group was gathering. Funds, to undertake any major communal project, were not available, therefore the women had to be inventive. They brought little bits of cotton print to the meetings and stitched them into quilt-patterns. Similarly pieces of woollen material from the mills at Hespeler found their way into comforters. These blankets were distributed to needy families. -- Sometimes, for a change of pace, the women enjoyed a cup of coffee with each other when they met. Thus, by giving of their time and what means they had, the women felt richly blessed and rewarded.

From its inception the M. B. Church of Kitchener was concerned about an effective modus operandi in dealing constructively with its youth. That the

young would learn to be actively engaged in church -related activities, if given the means and the opportunity to do so, was a goal the elders hoped to achieve. With such a goal in mind, leading church members were give the task from time to time, by the Church Council, to draw up a programme that would arouse in the young an interest in the church, in their fellow man, but first and foremost in the Lord Jesus Christ. The most commonly used channel to attain such goals, appears to have been the generally popular 'Jugendverein' (Christian Endeavour).

In order to get a clear concept of the aims and goals of this organization, we shall here bring in translation the words of H. H. Janzen, who, at a youth conference, held in Kitchener on August 22-23, 1936, spelled out in that lucid way as only he could, a definition of the various aspects and purposes of Christian Endeavour (Jugendverein), as he saw them --

- a) leading or bringing youth closer to Christ
- b) to buttress youth in its struggle against sin
- c) to enable youth to love God's Word, and to enable it to understand Holy Writ better
- d) to train youth to do the work of the Lord
- e) to engender in youth, and to foster in it, a Christian spirit of community (21)

Probably all church leaders of the time agreed, that the Jugendverein was an organization that lent itself admirably for youth participation in dramatic and musical presentations, which offered to the younger generation an opportunity and an outlet for self-expression, and the much needed possibility of service to mankind. Church records make sporadic refernce to such church-related service, e. g., 'The young people of Kitchener are invited to New Hamburg to present the Deklamatorium: die Endzeit (a declamation, entitled: the End Time) (22) ; or Rev. Isaac T. Ewert has been elected to head Christian Endeavour and Abram J. Dick as deputy (23); or Kornelius (John) Rempel reports on the state of the treasury of Junior-Endeavour. (24)

If the leaders of the church were concerned about drawing the young people into avenues of Christian service, they were no less keeping their eyes open for young men in the church who demonstrated preaching potential. A lay ministry was still the accepted norm in the Mennonite Church, although there were those, like Jacob Friesen and Jacob Reimer, who had studied theology in Germany. Salaried ministers among Mennonites from Russia were at that time unheard of. Ministers were expected to provide for their own livelihood, besides preaching the Word on Sundays.

Under such circumstances it was little wonder that the older brethren were ever searching for new recruits, for such as would be willing and able to step into the ranks of those, who were ready to lay down their office.

H. H. Janzen, who joined the Mennonite Brethren on August 21, 1926, became such a candidate. Jacob P. Friesen, minister in charge of the M. B. church in Kitchener, fondly referred to Janzen as his 'spiritual son' (25). The regard the men had for each other, was mutual. After a day's work at Fischmann's Spring Company, he frequently knocked at the door of his spiritual mentor to discuss pressing problems in the church, or to receive clarification and help while attempting to extract the unsearchable riches of the Bible. In Russia Janzen had attended Zentralschule in Ohrloff and spent a year at the Kommerzschule in Halbstadt, but he lacked formal theological studies. It is natural, therefore, that the young Janzen should look to Friesen, the veteran theologian, as upon a spiritual father. A touching anecdote, regarding these two stalwarts of the faith, is the story of Janzen kneeling at the bedside of his dying friend, receiving his blessing by the laying on of hands. (26)

Being unable to obtain formal Bible training in Canada, where Janzen arrived a penniless immigrant in 1925, he began a very intensive private

study of the scriptures. His textbook was the Bible, his study was his work-place at the Fischmann Spring Co., where Janzen stuffed mattresses for eight years. The Bible was always accessible on a nearby window-sill, and whenever there happened to be a lull in the routine of labour, the time was gainfully utilized. (27)

During the initial years in Canada, Janzen garnered much biblical knowledge from the saintly Jacob W. Reimer, one of the founders of the Mennonite Brethren church of Ontario. Reimer was, at that time, living in Kitchener, and Janzen thus had the opportunity to benefit from his expository delineations on the Book of Revelations. In 1928 Reimer left Kitchener for the Canadian West, where he continued his expository sermons on John's apocalypse for many years.

As one after another the older ministers in the church vacated their posts, younger men stepped into the breach. Janzen was launched on his ministry when he became Sunday School superintendant in 1926. By 1927 the church called him to preach, and ordained him on April 7, 1929. Of this singular occasion in the life of M. H. Janzen, Katharina, his wife writes: Jacob Wiens started the service with a scripture from Matthew 4:12-17. Jacob Friesen's sermon was based on Acts 6:8. Then, with the laying on of hands, they prayed over us. The songs of the choir suited the occasion. In closing the service, the congregation sang a hymn on the theme: How should I remain idle in view of an abundant harvest? II. Timothy 2:3 was a scripture given us for a special remembrance by Jacob Wiens, and Henry Wichert brought greetings in the name of the deacons with Psalm 23. (28)

Just a few months prior to Janzen's ordination, another young ministerial family destined to leave its mark on the M. B. Church of Ontario, arrived in Kitchener. This was the Isaac T. Swert family from Waldheim in the Molotschna.

The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia called Ewert to the ministry of the gospel. When he reached Kitchener, he had arrived in the metropolitan area of the Ontario M. B. churches. From here the various affiliated 'stations' were supplied with speakers. Ewert, as others, found an abundance of work in the Lord's vineyard. For some years he served the affiliated stations of Hespeler and New Hamburg on alternate Sundays. On April 16, 1933, he was ordained ^{by} Rev. Hermann Konrad of Kitchener and Rev. Abram H. Unruh of Winkler, Manitoba.

The migration movement of Mennonites from Russia to Canada during the 1920's reached its climax in 1924-6. Although a trickle of immigrants continued to arrive in this country through 1927-8, ^{By that time} the movement had very considerably slowed down. With the introduction and implementation of the First Five-Year Plan by Stalin, the emigration machine ground to a complete halt. This was a severe blow to the thousands of Mennonites left behind in Russia. Then, once more, in sheer desperation, a last-ditch effort was made in 1929 by some 20,000 to extricate themselves from the bondage of the 'Red Star', but only one out of four succeeded in their bid for freedom. Among those assembled in the suburbs of Moscow during the winter of 1929, was Dietrich J. Klassen and his young family. They had arrived in Moscow from the Chortitza area of the Old Colony. The Klassens belonged to the fortunate 25 per cent permitted to traverse the 'Red Gate' at Sebez. They, after various detentions and a quarantine en route, the family arrived in Kitchener on April 5, 1930.

After a period of hard labour on the Clemmer farm north of Waterloo, the Klassens moved to the city, where they shared a large house with the Abram Dicks and some others. This house, located on Du Pont Street ^{in Waterloo,} opposite the Forsythe Shirt Factory, was reputedly haunted. As a result no-one wanted to live in it. Ghost stories, however, did not frighten Abram Dick, who had

settled in the Twin Cities in February of 1928, after spending three years on Pelee Island. When Dick became Sunday School superintendant in the fall of 1928, his office demanded his presence at 40 King Street East, in Kitchener at 9 o'clock in the morning, that time of day when ^{on Sundays} the old electric tram had not yet been mobilized for its daily runs through the Twin Cities. Not having any private means of transportation, Dick had no other recourse but to walk from his home on Du Pont Street in Waterloo, a distance of ca. 5 miles.

Immediately upon his arrival in Waterloo, Dietrich Klassen also became actively engaged in the life of the local Mennonite Brethren congregation. During the first two winters in Canada, he, together with deacon John Dick, father of Abram Dick, visited all the members of the church. This gave him the opportunity to become acquainted with the people, and it enabled him to understand the problems of the local church. As an itinerant speaker the visitation programme was extended, when he preached in the various affiliated stations. Following such an extended period of practical involvement, D. J. Klassen was ordained to the ministry on April 5, 1931. Jacob Friesen and Gerhard W. Reimer of Leamington performed the act of ordination.

A year later, in January 1932, poor health compelled Jacob Friesen to lay down the responsibilities of his office. The church in Kitchener, thereupon, chose H. H. Janzen to succeed Friesen.

At this point in time, Janzen believed that the various M. B. churches of Ontario were ready to unite into a corporate body for common action. Therefore he presented this question to the Kitchener church, requesting it to consider the desirability of forming a provincial conference of M. B. churches for the purpose of inter-congregational interaction. The church in Kitchener accepted the idea, and delegated Janzen and Henry Penner to act on its behalf regarding this matter. (29)

Negotiations on the subject proceeded favourably, and by July Janzen was able to report to the church, that the conference would presumably be called 'The Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches', and that application had been made ^{for} government recognition of this body. (30) Shortly thereafter, on August 28, 1932, at another congregational business meeting, H. H. Janzen reported, that the creation of the Ontario Conference of M. B. Churches had been completed. By the granting of Letters Patent on July 8, 1932, this new organization was established. The five brethren who applied for the Letters Patent were: H. H. Janzen, H. Penner, and G. J. Enns of Kitchener, A. Teichroeb of New Hamburg, and H. Wiens of Hespeler. In view of the fact that membership in the conference was not automatic, the congregation in Kitchener decided to join the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches with all its baptized members, ^{decided} and that it was henceforth to be known as Kitchener Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde (Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church). At this time the membership of the Kitchener church stood at 144. The brethren H. H. Janzen, H. Penner, G. J. Enns, A. Teichroeb, and H. Wiens acted as directors on behalf of the conference until such time as election of officers could take place at the next general assembly of the Ontario M. B. churches. ^{Nov. 19 + 20, 1932 in Kitchener, Nov. 16, 1932} (31)

H. H. Janzen was elected first moderator of the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Conference. In this capacity he was expected to travel frequently, to be in contact with, and to visit the various member-churches in the province. In order to finance these travel needs, and to assist in defraying other expenses arising from conference related work, the church in Kitchener decided to raise the familiar head-tax, which it had imposed upon its members from the beginning, from 25 cents to 30 cents per member.

At this time Janzen was still working at Fischmann's Spring Co., stuffing mattresses, for the financial support that he received from the church was

^{smaller} only partial and sporadic. In order to be able to support his growing family, however, the income from his factory job was essential. As his work load on congregational plus conference levels increased considerably, Janzen found it impossible to carry on the additional burdens as well as factory work. Concerning this episode of his life, his wife says: "In 1934 he put aside permanently his job in the mattress factory. There was much work to be done for the conference. He carried on a copious correspondence, which required much letter writing. In his spare time he carried on his private study of the scriptures. many a late hour was devoted to this end. We two were happy in our work. We were conscious of living in a free country, where we were at liberty to live according to our faith". (32)

Katharina Janzen also speaks about her husband's ministry to Russians living in various parts of Canada and the United States. She says: "While teaching among the russians, my husband had to buy many a teaching aid, which we really could not afford, but he needed ^{the} books. But the Lord supported us 'with his ravens', partially by the congregation, partially by individual church members, and partially by means of the itinerant ministry, especially that to the russians." ~~When the monthly stipend that the Kitchener church paid Janzen was raised to \$75.00, it appears to have enabled him to lay down his factory job and to devote himself entirely to his ministerial duties.~~ (33)

In the spring of 1934 the Lord saw fit to spread a pall over the M. B. congregation in Kitchener, when on March 20, he called unto himself his servant, Jacob P. Friesen, organizer, and first minister in charge of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Kitchener. ^{Friesen} was a graduate of the Theological Seminary near Hamburg, ~~in~~ Germany. Having returned from there to Russia, he served as teacher of religion and German Grammar at Morija, the Nurses' Training Centre in Halbstadt. When he came to Canada in 1924 he first went to Vineland. Via the Village of Conestoga he finally settled in Kitchener, where he became one

of the fathers of the M. B. church, as well as its first pastor. Throughout his ministry ^{in Kitchener} he opened his home for the weekly Bible study, for which purpose he had fabricated a number of simple benches, without back-rests, in order to accommodate those who attended. These benches were set up in the living-room during the study period, and put away again when the meeting was over. (34)

This was the man whom H. H. Janzen regarded as his spiritual father. This was the man whom Dietrich Klassen referred to as 'ein sehr lieber Mensch', (a very dear person). Funeral services for Rev. Jacob Friesen were held in Bethany Church, Lancaster Street.

^{But} not only did the Lord call away his servants; he also provided. Recorded in the minutes of a congregational business meeting on August 6, 1934, we find: "The church is happy to welcome Brother Bernhard Boldt, a teacher." The Boldt family came to Ontario from rural Manitoba. As a minister of the gospel and teacher, B. B. Boldt was soon involved in the Lord's vineyard. Shortly thereafter H. H. Janzen mentions him in an article to the Rundschau: "Again I am deeply involved," he says, "in the work of our evening Bible School. I am working together with the dear Brother B. B. Boldt, who came to us some time ago, I presume by the Lord's leading, from Kronsgart, Manitoba. The Lord has sent us 44 students. For these people, eager to learn, we are very grateful. We are fully aware, that for most of them it is a great achievement to devote their evenings to the school. May we be able to offer them something that will enrich their future lives. (35)

An event of great rejoicing occurred in the history of the M. B. church in Kitchener, when it became possible to buy a church building in the fall of 1935. After having spent ca. nine years in make-shift surroundings, it was electrifying news indeed, when at a congregational business meeting on July 7, 1935, the church was informed of the impending sale of a small church building at 53 Church Street. A commission of five men: Johann G. Rempel, Gerhard Enns, Henry Penner, Jacob Bergen and John J. Rempel was elected,

and authorized to initiate negotiations toward the end of purchasing the building.

A few months later, on October 6th, the commission reported its findings. It had offered \$3,500.00 (a very considerable sum for the immigrant congregation -- at that time), and at the same time the commission asked for sufficient leverage to raise the offer to \$4000.00, should this become imperative. Hesitancy and timidity cautioned to avoid haste. In view of *prevailing* depressed economic conditions *prevailing at the time*, and in view of the fact that the congregation was composed of recent immigrants, who but a few years ago had lost all their property in Russia, the warning to exercise extreme caution was not surprising.

The majority of church members, however, ardently desired a church building in which to worship. When a secret vote was taken, as to whether or not the congregation were willing to pay \$4000.00, the resulting decision must have been favourable, for this was the price finally accepted by the owner.

Some light can be shed on the difficulty of financing a project of such major proportions, by examining the method ^{used to obtain} the required sum of \$4000.00. To begin with, it seems that the congregation had no more than \$750.00 in total. Obviously the remaining sum would have to be procured somehow. At a congregational business meeting on October 30, 1935, Johann G. Rempel moved, that the trustees handling the transaction be empowered to negotiate a loan from a certain Mr. Cleghorn for the sum of \$3250.00, the balance required to complete the deal. The motion was seconded by Jacob Kutz, and passed by the congregation. Following this, the meeting agreed unanimously to adopt the following resolution:

"To authorize the borrowing of Three Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars from William G. Cleghorn on the credit of Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church property to secure the repayment thereof.

The congregation of Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church hereby

authorize the Trustees of the said Church to borrow the sum of Three Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars on the credit of the said Church from William G. Cleghorn with interest at five per centum per anum payable half yearly for the term of five years and upon such other terms in all respects as the Trustees may agree upon with the said William G. Cleghorn to secure repayment thereof and the interest thereon by a mortgage of the real estate of the said Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church, which mortgage shall contain such covenants and agreements and be under such terms as the said William G. Cleghorn may require. The above loan of Three Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars is to be used for the purchase of property to be used as a meeting house for the congregation of the said Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church.

Passed this 30th day of October, A. D. 1935.
C. Rempel, Secretary " (36)

Shortly thereafter the purchase was completed. The Mennonite Brethren of Kitchener had a 'home'.

H. H. Janzen refers to the purchase thus: "During my absence the congregation has bought a church. For nine years we have assembled on the third story of a building which lies along the main thoroughfare of the Twin Cities. How often we sighed, when every 15 minutes the electric tram clattered by on the street below, interrupting the continuity of the sermon.....In response to our prayers, the Lord has now given us a small church on a quiet street. To Him be the glory ! With great enthusiasm the congregation shouldered this project, both, the transaction of purchase, and later on the cleaning and decoration." (37)

The move from 40 King Street East to 53 Church Street in late autumn of 1935, brought to a conclusion an important chapter in the formative period of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church. From its inception a metropolitan centre in miniature, it had served as the focal point for the Mennonite Brethren body in Ontario, from Essex County in the south to Reesor in the north, dispensing and dispatching speakers to whomever and wherever required. A great stride forward in its development was taken in 1932, when the Ontario Conference of M. B. Churches was formed. *Thereby a certain degree*

of autonomy was achieved by the various stations (churches), in that membership in the provincial corporate body was a matter left to the decision of each local congregation.

The Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church embarked upon another new venture of faith in 1935 by purchasing a house of worship. In buying the building, chiefly with borrowed funds, the church took a step of faith, trusting Him who is faithful. And while the financial transactions were yet being forged by the trustees, the pastor, H. H. Janzen, was already looking beyond the confines of a mere provincial organization to a much wider and extended union with brethren of the faith on a national and international scale.

Notes and BibliographyChapter VI

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Chapter VII

Pioneering in Hespeler - 1924 to 1953

Whereas the immigrants of the Kitchener-Waterloo area began to meet independently of their hosts for worship services soon after their arrival in Canada, this was not the case in the Hespeler region. The nucleus of the future Hespeler Mennonite Brethren Church for some time worshipped with the Old Order Mennonites.

On Saturday, July 19, 1924, A. J. Shantz of Fisher Mills (Hespeler region) was one of many farmers who arrived at Erb Street ^{Alena} Church in Waterloo, in order to pick up a family that he could use on his farm. On the church premises Shantz came face to face with Jacob J. Bartels, whom he took home. On his farm at Fisher Mills Shantz had prepared a little house, which was ready and waiting for its new occupants, a family of six. Kay Peters, a daughter of the Bartels family, fondly recalls their induction into the Canadian way of life. "When we entered the kitchen of the little house," she mused, "a steaming hot meal was on the table waiting for us. After our gracious host had ushered us into our new home, he closed the door behind him, and left us to ourselves. Overwhelmed by this hospitable gesture, father offered a prayer of thanksgiving I shall never forget." (1)

Also concerning this initial period in Canada, another daughter, Anne, recalls: "Life on the Shantz farm was busy and well organized. It was a haven of refuge for our family after having drifted aimlessly from place to place during and after the Russian Revolution." (2) Chores in the barn and on the field, or helping in the busy Shantz household, daily occupied the various members of the Bartels family. Katherine and Jake, the older children, attended Maple Grove School, a mile and a half away. From their English text books at school, they loved to try words of the new language on the rest of the family, and young Anne loved to hear stories in transla-

tion from the readers used by her older brother and sister.

The house assigned to the Bartels had two rooms downstairs.) The main room was furnished with a big wood-stove, a dry sink, a large cup-board, a table, a bench and chairs. It was kitchen and living-room combined. Adjoining it was a bed-room for the parents. This contained a large bed, a big metal-covered chest and a wicker hamper. The chest had served to transport all the family's earthly possessions from Russia to Canada -- bedding, a few articles of clothing, and the treasured family photos.

A flight of narrow steps led to the **second floor, to** the bed-rooms of the children. The larger of the two rooms was shared by the three girls. In winter time it was heated by the stove-pipe, which ascended from the kitchen-range through a hole in the floor, and thus into the chimney. It provided just enough heat to take off the sharpest chill. The smaller room, assigned to Jake, was unheated.

When the Bartels had lived on the Shantz farm for about a year, other immigrants from Russia began to trickle into the area. These newcomers were also accepted into the fellowship of the ~~Swiss Mennonites, and although~~ the mennonites from Russia participated in the services and sang the hymns, the exercise lacked depth of meaning for them, because the words were strange and not totally comprehensible. (3)

Nevertheless, in his day to day contacts with the local farmers, Bartels appears to have won their confidence, ^{one of them,} for Anson Groh, responded to his plea for a loan to finance the emigration of his sister and her family from Russia. This generous gesture on the part of Anson Groh enabled the Abram Wall family of Schoensee in the Molotschna, to make a bid for freedom and the west. ~~Before~~ this was possible, however, the Wall family had to contend with a tremendous hurdle, the dreaded trachoma.

Finally, when the green light was given, the Wall family of six embarked upon the long journey to Canada -- a journey which required 18 months to complete. The story of this family was that of many other immigrants who were being detained along the way for longer or shorter periods of time. Tina, the last of the clan to enter Canada, recalls the following: "We arrived in Moscow, only to be kept back. Six weeks in Moscow -- in winter time -- during the Christmas season -- is a long time indeed." (4)

On January 9, 1926, the family was permitted to proceed, only to be held back for another 17 days in Riga. In England there was a repetition of such a procedure, but this time with the prognosis that the projected stay would be of six-month duration. Charges for this detention would amount to a dollar per day per person, with the proviso that the family would be returned to Russia, unless payment were forthcoming. This put the Wall family, traveling on borrowed money, in dire straits. Where was the additional money to come from? Surely it was a great relief for them when at this critical juncture, David Toews, Chairman of the Canadian Board of Colonization, appeared in England, and assured the Walls that the Board would assume the additional payments on a loan basis. Restitution to the Board would be expected later on in Canada. He assured them that there would be no deportation to the U. S. S. R. Furthermore, Toews was also able to negotiate for the immediate departure to Canada of the parents, whereas the four children, Abram, Tina, Lena and Anna -- ranging in ages from 19 to 4 years, remained in Southampton. In Atlantic Park, as the camp for detainees was called, the Wall children settled into their barracks, only to find themselves to be out a few among many of their kind. To adjust to their new circumstances and surroundings was but a matter of time. By doing laundry for others, and sewing for themselves, they passed the time. Of this period, Anna, the little four-year old, recalls: "I had lots of friends." At Christmas time in 1926 there were in

Southampton ca. 200 Mennonite detainees. (5)

The residents of Atlantic Park slept in close proximity, in large halls of what used to be barracks during World War I. It is not surprising that sickness and disease could not be contained, especially among children. When an epidemic of measles swept through the Park, 17-year old Tina became deeply concerned about the health of her little sister. Many children who contracted measles were hospitalized -- and many died..... An additional concern of the Walls, at this time, was their mounting debt. This was a considerable psychological burden.

Finally, after a seven-month *detention* at Atlantic Park, the four-year old Anna Wall was declared fit to proceed to Canada. But how was this to be done? To hold her back until the older siblings could be released, might cause other complications. It was decided, therefore, to send Anna across the Atlantic in care of other immigrants.

In preparation for the long sea voyage, brother Abram fashioned a little wooden suit-case. Into this little case went the few earthly possessions the child owned, including ten apples, one for each day of the trip -- for so they had calculated the projected length of the voyage. Solicitous Tina sewed an address label unto the sleeve of Anna's coat, and with tears in the eyes of *apprehensive Tina*, little Anna was shipped off to Canada on September 4, 1926.

From the United Kingdom Tina immediately notified the parents in Canada of the imminent arrival of their youngest daughter. In Canada, however, as time passed on, no sign of Anna appeared. This caused great anxiety on both sides of the Atlantic.

While the older members of the family went through a period of agony and distress, little Anna had but one concern. Quite oblivious of the consternation she was causing while en route, *she* was concerned merely about the fact that she was running out of apples. Storms at sea prolonged the voyage,

a contingency that had not been taken into consideration when the apples were allotted.

This meant that eventually she was not able to have an apple a day, as she had been instructed. Little Anna happened to be travelling on an old ship which was making its last run across the Atlantic. Taking this into consideration, engine problems on the high seas were perhaps to be expected, with resultant delays and unmet schedules. After churning the cold waters of the stormy Atlantic for 16 days, ^{however} the old boat was finally able to discharge its cargo, human and otherwise, in Quebec City. From here it was off to Kitchener and a re-union with her parents, who were at that time, living and working on the farm of Anson Groh in the Hespeler region. Some months later, when Abram and Lena arrived in March, and Tina in May of 1927, the Abram Walls were once more a family unit. (6)

In the meantime the Bartels had rented a farm from A. J. Shantz in another area close to Hespeler, Beaverville. Other immigrant families began to join them in this neighbourhood. This group began to meet for worship services in the large living room of the Bartels home. The Abram Wall family also joined the small assembly. They came by buggy in summer and with a cutter in winter. In view of the fact that there was no minister in the vicinity, a sermon was usually read by one of those present. Sometimes a visiting minister from the Kitchener church, H. H. Janzen or Jacob P. Wiens, came by trolley car to preach to the group. Thus the nucleus of the Hespeler Mennonite Brethren Church gradually took shape.

In 1928 the Walls moved in with their relatives, the Bartels, and occupied the back part of the large farm home. In this farm house was born not only the future Hespeler M. B. Church, but the Sunday School as well. It was begun when the cousins Margaret Bartels and Lena Wall felt that their young sisters should become acquainted with stories of the Bible. In looking back at these beginnings, Anna Wall recalls: "I loved listening to Bible stories

and memorizing verses from the Bible." (§)

The mere handful of Mennonite Brethren families living in Beavertdale eventually became a closely knit unit. When employment opportunities in the various industrial concerns of Hespeler beckoned in that direction, five families bought houses there in 1929. Among them were the Bartels, the Walls and the Schoenkes. (§) In Hespeler, church services continued to be held in the Bartels home, whereas the Walls, just around the corner, opened their doors to the Sunday School. (4) Years later, as more families settled there, the congregation moved to a rented hall above a store on Main Street.

Although the Hespeler group had met for divine services for a number of years, it was not until December 20, 1930, that the group decided henceforth to record its proceedings and to keep minutes of the various business meetings held. H. H. Wiens, who had joined the group in 1927, was thereupon elected chairman, and Jacob J. Bartels, secretary. (10) From there on, until the dissolution of the congregation 1953, minutes of congregational meetings were meticulously kept.

A decision of major importance in the life of the group in Hespeler, was arrived at on December 26, 1931. At a congregational meeting held on that date, the agenda for the forthcoming general meeting of all Mennonite Brethren churches in Ontario was discussed. At this general meeting, scheduled for the first Sunday of 1932, the future framework for the operational interaction of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ontario among each other, was to be worked out. A question of fundamental importance was the choice between a loosely knit organization of churches, headed by an elected committee with congregational representation, or a pyramidal framework, with Kitchener remaining the parent institution and the various congregations affiliated appendages. The group at Hespeler decided to opt for the federal type framework, and within

this to declare itself an independent congregation. This was a red-letter day in its history. Thereupon Hespeler also decided to elect its own administrative officers. (11) This was another step toward the attainment of full congregational autonomy. On January 17, 1932, the Rev. Jacob P. Wiens was elected leader of the church, Heinrich Wiens was entrusted with the treasury, and Johann Schoenke became secretary. Also at that time a decision was made to elect the administrative board annually. (12)

January 1932 brought about a change in the leadership and administration of Ontario Mennonite Brethren Churches in toto. The Rev. Jacob P. Friesen, who had carefully piloted the the infant organization from its inception in 1925, laid down his office. He was succeeded by H. H. Janzen, who believed that the churches of Ontario were ready for corporate and co-operative action. To this end he proposed the formation of a conference of Mennonite Brethren churches. This proposal was adopted, and became a reality on July 8, 1932, when the conference came into being. (See page 29 of Chapter VI.) Among those making application for the granting of Letters Patent, was a Hespeler representative, H. H. Wiens. (13)

The year 1932 appears to have been a time period of numerous resignations and changes in administration. In May of that year, the Rev. Jacob P. Wiens, for some time leader and minister of the Hespeler congregation, also resigned his office. The post he had occupied as Hespeler's representative on the Committee of Ontario Mennonite Brethren Churches, was thereupon filled by H. H. Wiens. (14) Rev. Dietrich J. Klassen, a young minister recently arrived from Russia, was chosen by the Hespeler church to succeed J. P. Wiens as minister. Klassen was anxious to work in the Lord's vineyard. He had been ordained to the ministry in Kitchener on April 5, 1931, by the local minister J. P. Friesen, and Gerhard Reimer of Leamington. At the time Klassen assumed

the leadership of the Hespeler congregation, the membership of the Church Council there was brought to five, with the new minister acting as chairman, H. H. Wiens as treasurer, Johann Schoenke as secretary, and Abram Dueck and Johann Klassen as members at large. (15)

In spite of the incorporation of the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Churches on July 8, 1932, into a conference, membership of the individual congregation in this body was not automatic. Each church had to join on its own volition, whenever it made application for membership. Hespeler did not procrastinate in seeking membership. On August 12, 1932, the congregation decided to join the conference with all its baptized members, which number, at that time stood at 28. Thereafter the congregation was officially known as: Hespeler Mennonite Brethren Church. (16) This name was borne by the church until its liquidation and incorporation with the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church in 1953.

Although D. J. Klassen had been ordained to the ministry in April 1931, he had not yet obtained a license to perform marriages. In December of 1932, therefore, the Hespeler Church decided to file an application with the provincial government, requesting it to recognize Klassen's status as clergyman, and to grant him permission to officiate the marriage rite.

Of interest and value in the history of a church are its financial records. In this regard Hespeler is no exception. Financial statements mirror to some degree, not only the economic situation of the period, but also the degree of social concern and brotherly love the members display one for another. At the annual meeting of the Ontario Conference held on November 19, and 20, of 1932 in Kitchener, it was decided to levy a head tax of 25 cents per conference member for the defrayal of conference expenses. In view of the fact that Hespeler had those who were not able to pay this amount, the Hespeler Church decided to exempt such members, but at the same

time to raise the tax of the other members of its congregation to 29 cents in order to make up for the resultant loss in revenue.

Another somewhat critical ^{an} financial situation arising at that time, was a hospital bill of \$20.00, which the family in question was unable to pay. In view of the situation the church decided to step in and defray half of the amount by using funds from the Treasury of the Poor, while the remaining \$10.00 were to be raised by voluntary contributions. (17)

In January 1933 the annual financial statement from the previous year showed somewhat of an imbalance in the state of the treasury:

(a) Missions Treasury --	\$ 4.80
(b) Congregational " --	\$ 7.46
(c) Treasury for Poor --	\$58.84

Thereupon the following steps were taken to remedy the situation. Whereas the monthly levy of 15 cents for Home Missions was maintained, the monthly contribution for the poor was reduced from 25 to 10 cents per member.

Although the congregation decided to defray any travelling expenses incurred by Rev. D. J. Klassen in connection with church matters, the projected budget for 1933 does not designate any money to be used as remuneration for the minister's services to the church, except that Rev. and Mrs. Klassen were to be exempted from all financial obligations to the church. Such an act of exemption was to be considered as a recognition of his services in preaching the Word.

As the Great Depression of the 1930's deepened, many churches of necessity saw fit to trim their operational budgets. In this regard, the Hespeler M. B. Church was no exception. One step taken in reducing the budget was to cut the number of ministerial visits from twelve to eight annually. The practice of inviting ministers to preach in Hespeler's pulpit, was a custom started in the days when a few families met for worship at the Bartels' home in Beaverdale.

Although it was only a very small allowance such ministers received to cover their travelling expenses, a reduction in the number of such visits by one third would, nevertheless, constitute a small overall saving.

Finances, however, were not the only concern of the congregation at Hespeler. In projecting the churches programme into the future, its leaders were concerned about enlarging the spiritual vision of its members by means of arousing an interest in missions abroad. The church hoped to foster spiritual growth by means of programmes featuring missions at least four times a year. Offerings taken on such occasions were to be used in support of foreign mission projects. The church was also concerned about improving its Sunday School teaching, and agreed to provide more teaching aids for this branch of its ministry. (13)

Concerning Sunday School as carried on in Hespeler, Anna Wall recalls her impressions. She writes: "Sunday School was at our house, and I remember how much I enjoyed the lessons and the singing. One of our teachers was Mr. Abram Dyck. He also led the singing and had us sing in three-part harmony. It was beautiful, even if I say so myself. On Christmas-Eve we had a programme of plays, poems and songs. These programmes made a deep impression on me -- an impression I shall never forget." (14)

In her reflections Anna is able to throw light on another side of church life. She recalls evangelistic meetings with Rev. J. Penner of Port Rowan as guest speaker. One evening, in her own home, the minister confronted her with the question she dreaded to hear: "Have you let Jesus come into your heart?" Anna accepted Christ as her saviour that night. Some years later, under the ministry of Rev. Abram Huebert of Leamington, Anna re-dedicated her life to to the Lord. In the summer time Anna Wall, Elsie Wiens and Anna Bartels were baptized by Rev. H. H. Janzen. They became members of the Hespeler Church.

A question which caused concern and uncertainty for some time in the Hespeler Church, was the role of the deaconate in the life of a congregation. In order to receive clarity regarding the teaching of scripture about this phase of church-life, Rev. H. H. Janzen was invited to instruct the congregation on what the Bible says about this subject. Basing his messages on Acts 6:1-5 and on 1. Timothy 3:8-13, Janzen delineated the role of a deacon in the church, which he followed up by a description of the ideal deacon. As a result of Janzen's ministry Johann Schoenke and his wife became the first deacon couple of the Hespeler Church. (20.)

In July of 1934 Rev. D. J. Klassen and family left Hespeler to relocate in Beamsville, where a nucleus of Mennonite families from Russia were beginning to take up fruit farming. This move left the struggling Hespeler Church orphaned once more. The congregation was again faced with the question of providing sermons for the Sunday morning worship service. The best solution seemed to be to revert to the former custom of inviting ministers from other congregations on a visitation basis. In the event of being unable to obtain a speaker, one of the church members would be called upon to read a sermon by Spurgeon. Ministers from Kitchener were at that time reimbursed with \$1.50 for each visit, while those from New Hamburg received \$2.00. (21)

Throughout 1935 the question of obtaining speakers for Sunday morning remained a primary concern. At the business meeting on January 5, 1936, the following pattern emerged in an attempt to solve this problem: Because Mennonite Brethren and Kirchengemeinde worshipped together in Hespeler, it was decided to invite ministers from the Brethren on the first, third and fourth Sundays of each month; ministers from the Kirchengemeinde would be invited to preach every second Sunday and also if there happened to be a fifth Lord's Day. Furthermore the congregation agreed to arrange four ministers who served in Hespeler during the years from 1935-1945 were: Jacob Janzen and Bernhard Martens from the United Mennonite Church, and E.B. Esist, Abram Dick and H.H. Janzen from the Mennonite Brethren.

XVII-1/2 Anne Wiebe Mennonite Archives of Ontario "The Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario..."

evening services annually with a missions emphasis. Offerings taken in connection with such programmes were to support the work of Heinrich Bartsch in the Belgian Congo, Africa. (22)

In spite of the fact that the Hespeler congregation remained a small body numerically, it tried valiantly to keep abreast of the times in matters concerning the conference and in its relation to its sister churches. When H. H. Janzen was delegated to Reedley, California, on October 25, 1936, to seek membership in the Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America, Hespeler, along with the other M. B. churches of Ontario, stood behind him, and accepted membership in the larger American body. (23) In 1940 mention is first made of Bethesda, the home for the emotionally disturbed at Camden. Records make mention of gifts to be forwarded to Henry Wiebe, founder and director of the project. Also, the church decided to maintain a 30 cent monthly levy in support of Home Missions, and arrangements were made for Rev. Abram Huebert of Leamington to conduct an evangelization campaign in Hespeler, while H. H. Janzen was to preach on : Die Abschiedsreden Jesu. (24)

Thus Hespeler carried on courageously without a resident minister for ten years. However, fears about losing its identity could not be suppressed indefinitely. The church ~~made known~~ these doubts to the Board of Spiritual Concerns and expressed the hope that this body would assist Hespeler in its spiritual nurture. (25)

In response to Hespeler's call for spiritual assistance, three ministers were prepared to take up the challenge. By unanimous choice Rev. J. Sudermann accepted a call to Hespeler early in 1945. As a token of appreciation for his services, Sudermann was to receive \$100.00 per annum. This was not to be looked upon as remuneration. (26)

Here Anna Wall again comes to the rescue and embellishes somewhat that which is merely mentioned in the records. She says: "In 1945 Jacob Sudermann was

called to be our pastor. With two little girls the Sudermanns came and served our church for two years. Our pastor helped to set up a Vacation Bible School to be taught in Puslinch, and I was able to teach there. In the meantime I was also asked to teach older children in Sunday School. In fear and trembling I approached the task, but after much prayer and a great deal of preparation we were often blessed.

"Mrs. Sudermann organized a young girls' group which called itself the Sunbeams. Again I helped. Whenever we met we sang, read God's Word, told stories or listened to someone who had prepared an object lesson. We enjoyed doing crafts, and practised singing. For several years this girls group was our church choir. George Wiens faithfully accompanied us on the piano. Those days will remain unforgettable." (27)

With the coming of a pastor, it appears that, for a short period at least, new hope and fresh enthusiasm were injected into the life-blood of the congregation. Early in 1946 the church asked Abram Wall Jr., Gerhard Martens and Gerhard Tjart, to look for a suitable place to build a church. (28)

Although such a lot was found, and contributions from individuals and churches flowed into a building fund, the project never came to fruition, and the gifts were returned to their donors. For this there were several reasons. Being at the end of World War II, building materials were very difficult to obtain. The membership of the Hespeler Church was experiencing a steady decline, for places as Vineland, Virgil, Leamington and Port Rowan seemed to offer better possibilities of livelihood. On September 28, 1946, therefore, it was decided to abandon the building project, prompted by a realistic assessment of the potential for future church-growth in Hespeler. In a sense this was, no doubt, the beginning of the end, although the final dissolution of the church did not take place for another seven years. (29) Rev. Sudermann left shortly thereafter for Winnipeg.

The departure of Sudermann, last resident pastor, was perhaps the death knell for the struggling Hespeler Church. Once again the congregation had to look elsewhere for a spiritual diet. By 1952 the inevitable question: "Does the church wish to continue to function as an independent organism, or does it wish to dissolve itself and amalgamate with Kitchener," had to be asked. Once more the decision to remain intact, stood, but a year later on September 19, 1953, the Hespeler Mennonite Brethren Church decided to dissolve itself, and to amalgamate with Kitchener. Of the 14 members present at the meeting, eleven favoured joining Kitchener, three abstained, and none opposed the move. (31) Johann Schoenke and Edward Wiens were delegated to negotiate the terms of union with F. C. Peters, Pastor of the Kitchener M. B. Church, while Gerhard Tjart and Eric Dick were elected to manage financial arrangements, such as the disposal of assets.

On October 1, 1953, the Hespeler Mennonite Brethren Church formally ceased to exist.

Notes and BibliographyChapter VII

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- (10) Congregational Minutes, Hespeler Mennonite Brthren Church, December 20, 1930, p. 1.
- (11) Ibid., December 26, 1931, pp. 7-8.
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- (13) Ibid., May 13, 1932, p. 11.
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- (18) Ibid., January 15, 1933.
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- (21) Ibid., August 12, 1934.
- (22) Ibid., January 5, 1936.
- (23) Ibid., December 16, 1936.
- (24) Ibid., January 27, 1940.
- (25) Ibid., November 19, 1944.

- (26) Ibid., January 7, 1945.
- (27) Anna Wall, op. cit., written, unpublished recollections of her life.
- (28) Minutes, op. cit., January 6, 1946.
- (29) Ibid., April 13, and September 28, 1946.
- (30) Ibid., September 19, 1953.



Detainees in Southampton, Atlantic Park, United Kingdom, 1926.
l-r. Maria Sawatzky, Tina Wall, Abram Wall, Franz Dahl, Lena Dahl,
Lena Wall.

front - Anna Wall and Frieda Peters.

Immigrants lived in large halls, barracks style. At night quarters were
closed off with blankets for reasons of privacy.



Immigrants in Atlantic Park, Photo taken immediately after application of medication in the treatment of trachoma. L-R. Tina Wall, Lena Wall, Lena Schultz (Mrs. J. J. Toews, Pastor of Kitchener M B Church for some years), Lena Dahl, and Neta Giesbrecht.



Immigrant detainees in Atlantic Park, Southampton, ca. 1927, formed a choir after many of their kin had departed for Canada. Back row, extreme right is choir director, J. B. Toews, now MB Seminary, Fresno, California. His sister, Lydia Toews (Mrs. Peter Dick, St. Catharines), back row, #4 from left. Lenchen Toews (Mrs. David Pauls), front row, extreme left.

Chapter VIII

Settling in NEW HAMBURG

The New Hamburg Mennonite Brethren Church was organized on March 27, 1927. It was the second M. B. congregation in Ontario. Its inception took place at a business meeting chaired by the Rev. Jacob. P. Friesen of Kitchener, after the Sunday morning worship service in New Hamburg. (1) Even prior to its incorporation, the members of the new church, recent immigrants from Russia, had met together for worship, and had considered themselves a branch of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Kitchener. ^{latter body} This Δ by virtue of its capable leaders, priority of organization, and its favourable location, was destined to play an influential and leading role in the growth and development of M. B. churches in Ontario.

The members of the ^{Hamburg} New Church were largely newcomers from Russia, who had arrived in Waterloo since 1924. Although the immigrants were at first hosted by Swiss Mennonites of the area, they began with the passage of time, to drift toward urban centres, where employment opportunities offered greater monetary rewards, and where the possibilities of meeting with former countrymen were more favourable than in the rural districts. Formal organization into a corporate body launched the New Hamburg church upon its course -- a life-span of 25 years -- a life-span that was destined to merge with its sister-church in Kitchener in 1952.

As in other places where immigrants met to worship during the decade of the twenties, so in New Hamburg also, Mennonite Brethren worshipped together with their counterparts of the General Conference. Concerning those early days of the church's history, John Mathies reminisced in 1979: "The hall we rented as a meeting-place was really very attractive. At the beginning, however, there were no proper seating facilities. Everyone sat on wooden planks that were propped up by contraptions resembling some sort of drawers".

In his capacity as trustee,^{Mathies} solicited the membership to provide a sufficient number of wooden kitchen chairs at fifty cents each, to accommodate the members of one's family. This suggestion was complied with by all who worshipped in New Hamburg.

Nicholas and Gertrude Enns joined John Mathies during the interview in 1979 in recalling various incidents about the church's early history. Although the group was a small body initially, they said, it did for some years continue to increase numerically, as members tended to attract and entice relatives and friends from other places to come and join them in New Hamburg. In composition the church was a conglomerate of people, composed of immigrants whose background was rooted in various regions, and in different colonies of Russia. It stands to reason, therefore, that viewpoints and convictions held by such a wide spectrum of the Mennonite family, mirrored and reflected customs, traditions and beliefs not always compatible, nor harmonious in ^{their} its overtones. Mrs. Anna Mathies, another pioneer of those days, recalls that discussions at early business meetings were sometimes lively and argumentative, but these, she claims, served as does the lapidary's tumbling process, to smooth away edges in the production of polished and shiny pebbles. With the passage of time, the members of the church in New Hamburg were knit into a corporate and unified body, of which John Mathies said: "Wir hatten uns lieb". (We loved one another.) Years later, when talking about her childhood in New Hamburg, Gertrude (Enns) Wiens of Leamington stated: "I did not realize at the time, that two churches were involved within one framework". Thus Mennonite Brethren and Kirchliche worshipped together and co-operated with each other. All services, with the exception of communion, were communally attended, and although the Lord's table was not mutually exclusive, each group seems to have shown a distinct preference for its own practice of observing the eucharist.

During the course of the organizational meeting on March 27, 1927, at which the group in New Hamburg was formally affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren Church of Kitchener, the question of the deaconate also came up for discussion. Although this matter had previously been considered, no consensus ^{then} was arrived at. On this occasion, however, the roster of executive officers chosen for the new church, included David Goerzen as candidate for the deaconate. The ~~balance of~~ slate included two preaching brethren, the Rev. Peter Goerzen and Rev. Dietrich Derksen. J. B. Janz was elected secretary, while Abram Teichroeb and John Mathies, both former teachers, were designated as trustees. One of the latter two would be required to handle the finances of the church in addition to other custodial duties. (2)

This meeting also agreed to continue the monthly levy of a ~~monthly levy~~ a 25 cent head-tax per baptized member. Such funds were to be used for the defrayal of domestic expenses. Offerings taken on communion Sundays, the second Sunday of every other month, were to be set aside for the support of foreign missions. It appears that the young church, from its earliest beginnings, was financially viable.

After attaining congregational status, and having been formally affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren Church of Kitchener, New Hamburg turned its thoughts to such matters as Sunday School for members' children. This question had also been raised previously, but had remained unresolved for practical reasons. The majority of people with families were still living in rural areas, and found it circumstantially impossible to appear on time for Sunday School. At this point, however, it was thought that the moment had arrived for such instruction to begin, and Abram Teichroeb was asked to take charge. Besides organizing a Sunday School, Teichroeb, who had been a practicing teacher in Russia, was asked to organize a German Language School as well.

because the German language was then used exclusively in all religious services and spoken in most of the homes. Thereafter many a Mennonite child in New Hamburg had to sacrifice its freedom on Saturday mornings and trudge -- sometimes unwillingly -- to German School. (3)

As in other matters, so close co-operation between GCs and MBs in the operation of the Sunday School was clearly evident. Preferred teaching materials were the Bible Stories as prepared by Elder Jacob H. Janzen of the United Mennonite Church of Waterloo. Illustrative materials were purchased from money raised at celebrations such as Kinderfeste, which were held at various times. Sometimes a family talent night, where all families were encouraged to participate, was organized. Proceeds from such events helped to fund special projects during a time that was, economically speaking, lean and meagre. Many a family provider at the time was happy to have a job that paid him 25 cents an hour. Levies upon the church membership, as high as 50 cents per member, were used to cover expenses incurred in connection with Christmas programmes and picnics, when prizes and sweets were distributed.

But children were also encouraged to participate in offerings for missions. Monies so collected were used to support missionary efforts on various foreign fields. Monies raised at various social functions were often used for home missions, such as outfitting the Sunday School. Visual aids in teaching, such as maps, pictures of Bible stories, wall dividers to separate classes from each other, programme materials, classroom registers, a suit for Santa Claus and transportation expenses for Sunday School teachers to enable them to make the odd trip to Waterloo, all these and more were included in the budget of the Sunday School. Generally speaking, teachers were thoroughly dedicated in their service to God and man, and the church recognized their efforts with gratitude.

With the progression of time innovations were introduced into the programme

of religious training by the churches of Ontario. One new project was the introduction of a two-week Summer Bible School for the children of the congregation. In order to be able to offer courses of outstanding quality and value, it was decided to recruit teaching aid from beyond the ranks of the local congregation. In order to support such a venture financially, voluntary donations were solicited from the membership. Evaluations of the project, after its completion were very positive, and New Hamburg not only repeated the experiment, but recommended it to other churches as well.

Another inovative programme was a short-term Bible School for young people from the ages 14-20, and over if interested. The adoption of this programme, was actually the implementation of a recommendation made by the Ontario Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. B. B. Boldt of Kitchener, a minister and teacher, was the initial instructor of the course. The remuneration paid for his services, \$7.50 which included transportation, is again an accurate reflection on the poverty of the immigrant constituency and the dearth of the Canadian economy.

The church was mindful, however, not only of its youth and children, but also of those who gave of their time and energy to teach those children -- the Sunday School teachers. In order to enable them to have fellowship with teachers of other congregations, to help them improve their methods of teaching by observing the performance of their colleagues plying the same trade, Sunday School conventions became an annual affair. By 1941 the appearance of a curriculum for Mennonite Brethren Sunday Schools was being prepared by a committee of M.B. teachers; its publication was eagerly anticipated. (4)

In view of the fact that MBs and BCs worshipped together in New Hamburg, it was logical for them to come to terms concerning such matters as preaching responsibility of the groups, as well as performance of custodial duties

in maintaining the rented locale used as meeting place. Numerically the MBs comprised ca. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total membership. An agreement was reached, therefore, that on the first and third Sundays of every month the pulpit be occupied by Mennonite Brethren, whereas the second and fourth Sundays be reserved for General Conference ministers. Any fifth Sunday of a month would belong to the Brethren. Regarding the equal distribution of expenses incurred by the use of the rented quarters, it was decided that heat, rent, and light costs be allocated according to membership. The floor of the locale was to be washed twice annually by Brethren and once a year by General Conference members.

From its early beginnings the church in New Hamburg had an open mind for social concerns. In order to carry on a missions programme at home and abroad, a missions treasury was created apart from a general treasury for domestic funds. The special levies imposed on the membership initially to gather funds for missions, eventually gave way to regular Sunday offerings. People and charitable organizations that received support in the course of years, ~~were~~ private individuals "of the household of faith", ^{and} Mennonite refugees, known as the Moscow group, people who fled the Russian terror in 1929. To some 5000 of these ^{refugees} Germany opened its borders in order to funnel them on to other states, mostly to South America; a few made it to Canada, but Canada's restrictions on immigration were very rigid at the time. ^{Furthermore,} ~~ed~~ educational institutions were on the list of recipients, such as Winkler Bible School in Manitoba, Eden Bible School in Virgil, Ontario, Tabor College in Hilsboro, Kansas, and later Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Missions abroad also were not forgotten. The original mission field which the MBs had pioneered in India, was contacted through Missionary Cornelius Unruh; Henry Bartsch and his work in the Belgian Congo of Africa became ~~me~~ places of special concern, as were the Rosenbergs, Jewish missionaries to their own people

in Poland.

Commensurate with the general upswing of the economic tide during the forties, the missions treasury of New Hamburg swelled as well. Records show that on August 20, 1945, \$90.00 from the Missions Treasury were disbursed in the following manner:

- a) \$20.00 to Mennonite Brethren Bible College, Winnipeg
- b) \$20.00 to Eden Bible School, Virgil
- c) \$10.00 to Niagara Christian College, Fort Erie
- d) \$10.00 to mission for Jews in Toronto

The remaining funds, plus the anticipated offering on Thanksgiving Sunday, were designated for the Missions Treasury of the General Conference of North America (Bundeskonferenz). (5)

At a church business meeting held on November 7, 1932, the New Hamburg congregation made an important and far-reaching decision when it, with other MB stations, agreed to become members of the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario.

About this time the doctrinal stand of Mennonite Brethren churches of Ontario on the eucharist was defined. Also, a stand was taken concerning eligibility for church membership. Regarding the eucharist the position of the church was, that it celebrates communion with all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have experienced spiritual regeneration, and have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour. The form of baptism received by the communicant is not considered in this matter. All non-members desiring to take communion, however, should notify church council of such intention. Strangers will be asked to testify publicly to the church concerning their personal relationship to God, before the communion service.

Regarding church membership, the New Hamburg congregation accepts the conference position agreed upon May 15, 1932, namely: that the church accepts such persons into membership as have been baptized upon a personal

faith in Jesus Christ, regardless of whether the mode of baptism was by immersion or by sprinkling.

On matters of matrimony between believers and non-believers, the church takes a negative view on the basis of such scriptures as Ephesians 5:10-17, 2. Corinthians 6:11-18 and 1. Corinthians 3:16-17. (6)

Another question, semi-doctrinal in nature, was raised some years later, namely, wheter such as have never affiliated with a church may be called upon to assume a position of leadership in the Mennonite Brethren Church. Basing delineations on directions given by Paul in Acts 6:2-3, the church established the principle that such as have not joined a church are not eligible for the following church offices:

- a) - minister
 - b) - Sunday School teacher
 - c) - leader of Christian Endeavour (Jugendverein)
 - d) - choir work
- (7)

At the meeting on March 27, 1927, at which time the New Hamburg church was organized, David Goerzen became candidate for the deaconate of the local congregation. From church records it could perhaps be construed, that the thinking of the church on the nature of the deaconate, and on the necessity of having deacons in the church, was perhaps somewhat nebulous and required clarification, for Goerzen was never invested in his office. Technically, therefore, New Hamburg had no official deacon. To assist the church in coming to grips with the matter, Rev. H. H. Janzen of Kitchener delivered an address on the subject on January 21, 1934. In his delineations he stressed the meaning and importance of a deacon's office. Basing his exposition on Acts 6:1-7 and on 1. Timothy 3:8-13, he pointed out

- a) the reasons why a church should have deacons
- b) personal qualifications required of deacons
- c) responsibility of a deacon (as deacon)

Following the address, Bro. Janzen admonished the congregation to give serious

and prayerful consideration to the candidature of Bro. Goerzen. The result of a vote, taken by secret ballot, revealed that the candidate did not have the confidence of the majority of church members. Thereupon the candidature for the deaconate was declared vacant. The church agreed to let the matter rest until such time, as the Lord would lead the way. (8)

It was during the second half of the same year, 1934, that the church at New Hamburg experienced an all-time spiritual low. Matters came to a head at the annual Provincial Conference of M. B. Churches, held on November 3rd and 4th at Port Rowan. Here it became evident, that a rift had occurred in the ranks of the membership, and this not on conference lines, but among the Brethren. Unable to handle its own controversy, the M. B. membership brought its case to the conference, and assistance in solving its problems was requested. Thereupon a commission, consisting of five brethren, was appointed. H. H. Janzen and B. B. Boldt of Kitchener, A. A. Huebert of Leamington, D. J. Klassen and H. D. Janzen of Beamsville were given the charge to investigate the situation, and to try to remedy existing problems.

On November 17 and 18, 1934, the commission met with the congregation in New Hamburg. Its task was three-fold:

- a) - to determine the cause of the rift in the church
- b) - to clear up the causes of the rift
- c) - to regulate the executive of the church

After listening to all grievances it was evident, that the cause of the schism lay in the leadership as well as among church members. Following the airing of complaints, as well as a giving and taking of admonitions, a reconciliation of the factions was achieved. The Holy Spirit was moving in the hearts and minds of God's people. As a result praise and thanksgiving followed. Thereupon the commission withdrew in order to choose a new executive for the church. After earnest prayer and soul-searching, the following

brethren were selected:

- a) Peter Friesen -- leader of church
- b) Gerhard Wiebe -- deacon
- c) Kornelius Dick -- treasurer and congregational representative
- d) Abram Teichroeb -- secretary of church

Upon being approached by the commission concerning their personal attitude toward the prospective positions to be entrusted to them, the four brethren replied, that they were willing to accept them. They stated that they were ready to serve the church as unto the Lord.

The commission then appeared once more before the church and declared, that the two factions were no longer in existence. Following this move, the new executive was presented to the congregation. The four brethren chosen to serve the church, requested of the members intercessory prayer, to enable them to serve the church faithfully. (9)

A happy sequel, to this rather sad account, came about a year later. At a business meeting at which Rev. H. H. Janzen of Kitchener was present, Gerhard Wiebe, the chairman, declared that the hour had finally arrived, when the church in New Hamburg was able, once again, to choose its own executive. The new slate of officers elected by the congregation were:

- a) G. Wiebe -- church leader
 - b) G. Wiebe -- deacon
 - c) A. Teichroeb -- secretary
 - d) N. Enns -- treasurer
- (10)

On May 17, 1924, the New Hamburg Church decided to ordain G. Wiebe as deacon. The installation was to take place in August, with Rev. H. H. Janzen officiating.

An important issue that faced not only New Hamburg, but all M.B. churches in the fall of 1923, was the question of membership in the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America. The implications resulting from joining this conference were fundamental and far-reaching. For that reason they were first considered at a meeting of ministers and deacons, then

passed on for further consultation to the Board of Spiritual Concerns, and finally relayed to the individual churches for ratification or rejection. Because clarification of important issues was of the utmost importance, the Board of Spiritual Concerns commissioned H. H. Janzen to explain and clarify to the membership at large the issues involved. In New Hamburg this happened at a meeting on September 10, 1929. From a total membership^{of 40} in the local church at the time, 33 attended the meeting. Following a thorough discussion, a tally of votes showed 31 in favour of joining the North American body; *there were* two abstentions. Armed with the results of the vote, as well as with an application for full membership in the General Conference, those delegated to the conference, headed to Corn, Oklahoma later in the season. (11)

During the course of a business meeting on December 3, 1929, the church discussed the desirability of purchasing a piano. For lack of agreement, the idea was shelved temporarily. Thereupon John Mathies asked permission of the church to supply a piano, at his own expense, for the night of the Christmas programme only. Having received the church's consent, Mathies supplied a piano. Although the church offered to reimburse the donor for expenses involved in transporting the instrument, the offer was declined. That Mathies had scored a victory, however, can hardly be disputed, for in July of 1941, ca. a year and a half later, the church declared its intent to purchase a piano. John Mathies and Nicholai Enns were entrusted with the deal. Although no price is recorded in the church's records, mention is made of its eventual debt retirement in March 1944.

Toward the end of 1945 an ugly spectre, the Reiseschuld (transportation debt of the 1920's) raised its head once more. Although most Mennonites had paid their dues to the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization in the intervening years, some of the accounts outstanding were left unpaid because

those responsible could no longer be contacted for various reasons -- such as death, or moving to another locality without leaving a forwarding address. Some were unable to pay for reasons of sickness, and in some extreme cases it was sheer irresponsibility. In view of the fact that the transportation debt was regarded as a "debt of honour" (Ehrenschild), a concerted effort was made in December 1945 to eradicate the existing liability, and so preserve the good reputation enjoyed by the Mennonites of Canada. Toward realizing this goal Mennonite Brethren were asked to contribute \$9.50 for members and their children. (12) However, the final liquidation was not accomplished until 1947. On January 12, 1947 Jacob Bergen announce in Kitchener that the debt had finally been paid. Clearing this debt was in a sense symbolic, for it vindicated the trust and confidence in the Mennonite brotherhood, which Elder Toews exercised when he signed, singlehanded, that ominous document with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company which enabled some 20,000 of his people to make Canada their home. In commemoration of this very significant event, a service of thanksgiving was observed in Vineland on February 22 and 23, 1947. The delegate representing New Hamburg on the occasion was Rev. Isaac T. Ewert. (13)

In the life of the New Hamburg church ^{during the forties} the introduction of the Evangeliumslieder alongside the Dreiband, the hymnal then in use, was somewhat of an innovation. The reception the Gospel Songs received, was less than cool at the beginning. New Hamburg decided to try the Evangeliumslieder on Sunday evenings on a temporary basis only. The records of that time specify, that should anyone request a hymn to be sung from this book, a hymn that was not known to the congregation, the person making the request would be held responsible to lead the singing. When \$4.50 remained after paying for the recently acquired piano, the money was used to buy some copies of the new hymnal, although the books were without music.

The outbreak of World War II opened up a new avenue for charitable relief

during the first period of the forties. Donations of clothes and money were collected repeatedly to help those, especially children, stricken by the horrors of war.

Among other questions that New Hamburg had to contend with in the decade of the forties, was its apparent inability to observe the Lord's Supper regularly. In order to solve this problem it was suggested, that a minister from Kitchener be invited for the first Sunday of every month, with the understanding that he would serve at the Lord's Table. Whether or not the suggested solution was ever implemented, cannot be determined on the basis of church records, but visiting ministers were by no means novel in New Hamburg. Although the church had had a few ministering brethren among its members, it had, throughout its history, relied to a large degree on Kitchener to supply it with speakers. In his years of "apprenticeship in preaching" in the late 20's and early 30's, H. H. Janzen practised his oratorical skills from the pulpits of New Hamburg and Hespeler. Other future stalwarts of the M. B. Conference of Ontario like I. T. Ewert, D. J. Klassen, B. B. Boldt and many others served the church of New Hamburg on countless occasions.

The greatest concern for the church during the forties, however, was the steady decline of its membership. At a business meeting in December 1943, this topic was mentioned for the first time officially. By 1947 the church was much concerned about the future of its youth which was being siphoned off to Kitchener and larger centres. It appears as if a more concerted effort was put forth at this time to offer the young people meaningful and interesting diversions by means of such organizations as Christian Endeavour. Jake Klassen, choir director for some years, John Mathies and D. Dueck were out in charge of youth activities. Years later Mathies recalled those days nostalgically: "Wir hatten eine gute Jugend,"^{he said,} "^(We had a fine group of young people.) The latter engaged in such activities as music.—

vocal and instrumental, recitation of poetry, and drama -- often written by one of their number. The congregation also decided to teach catechism to the young folk on two Sunday evenings per month. Following these instruction periods there remained some free time, which was then utilized as a type of talent night. (14)

Thus the struggle for survival continued for some years. On September 28, 1951, however, the inevitable moment had arrived when the question was formulated: "Can New Hamburg continue to function as an independent congregation, or shall it amalgamate with Kitchener?" It was a question that required time for thought and reflection, but on September 17, 1952, everyone agreed that a merger was inevitable, that New Hamburg would continue to meet independently, however, until the new premises being constructed at 53 Ottawa St. North, in Kitchener, were ready for occupancy. Terms of union, according to which the amalgamation was to be carried out, were drawn up and signed by the contracting parties. It was further decided that the M. B. Church of New Hamburg was to be completely liquidated and amalgamation with Kitchener was to be completed by October 1, 1952. (15)

With the merging of the two congregations sixteen names were added to the membership list of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Kitchener. They were:

David and Agatha Dick
 David and Anna Mathies and son Helmut Mathies
 Margareta Mathies, (mother of David and John Mathies)
 John and Sara Mathies and daughters
 Helen and Margaret Mathies
 Jake and Tina Klassen
 Neil and Ella Isaac
 Peter and Elfrieda Petker

*Officers of the
 church:*

David Dick, leader of the church
 David Mathies, secretary and deacon
 Jake Klassen, treasurer and trustee
 Anna Mathies, Sunday School teacher
 Corny Isaac, Sunday School teacher
 Helen Mathies, Sunday School teacher (16)

Terms of Union between the New Hamburg and the Kitchener
Mennonite Brethren Churches (in translation from the German)

1. The Mennonite Brethren Church of New Hamburg relinquishes its rights as an independent congregation.
2. Members of the New Hamburg M. B. Church shall be regarded officially as members of the Kitchener M. B. Church, and shall be registered in the record books of the said church.
3. The members of the New Hamburg M. B. Church will continue to congregate as a group in New Hamburg, but will be considered as affiliated with the Kitchener M. B. Church. The New Hamburg members are requested to assemble four times annually with the Kitchener church to celebrate the Lord's Supper.
4. The leading minister of the Kitchener M. B. Church, together with the leader of the New Hamburg group, shall be jointly responsible for the well-being of the affiliate. The leading minister shall be responsible for spiritual nurture.
5. The leading minister of the congregation is to be present at the chief business meetings of the affiliated group.
6. All important projects are to be initiated by the church, and performed under its direction, with active participation by the affiliated group.
7. The slate of officers, which the affiliate members will elect independently for their group, are a leader of the group, secretary, treasurer, choir director, youth leader, Sunday School superintendent and teachers. A minister and deacons shall be elected by the church, rather than by members of the affiliate only.
8. The affiliated group in new Hamburg is autonomous in local financial matters, and for this purpose has its own treasury, which shall pay

all local expenses. The group has no financial obligations toward the congregation in Kitchener, except on its own volition. A similar arrangement applies vice-versa.

9. The church would like the affiliate in New Hamburg to retain its conference rights, e. g., that ministers delegated by the conference to visit the various congregations, should also preach in New Hamburg, providing that the size of the group warrants such a visit. Similarly, the group will carry out its obligations toward the conference, such as the implementation of conference decisions and the collection of levies or special offerings.
10. At conferences the affiliate shall always be represented by its own delegates, who will act as its representatives.
11. Regarding spiritual nurture
 - a) The affiliated group will plan its worship-services in such a way that the leading minister, or his representative, can officiate at such functions.
 - b) Regarding reimbursement for preaching services rendered, and for transportation costs to and from New Hamburg: The people of New Hamburg shall contribute to the treasury at Kitchener an amount (in proportion to their numbers) equivalent to that paid by the Kitchener members for the upkeep of their minister.
 - c) The amount of remuneration for preaching in New Hamburg, and the transportation charges involved will be determined, and paid for by the church in Kitchener.
12. In case of the dissolution of the New Hamburg affiliate, the arrangements for such an eventuality will be made by the congregation.

signed: F. C. Peters
D. Dick

Footnotes

- (1) Minutes, New Hamburg Church records, March 27, 1927.
- (2) " " " " " , March 27, 1927.
- (3) Church records, December 15, 1929.
- (4) " " , March 31, 1935, April 27, 1935, and December 14, 1941.
- (5) " " , August 20, 1945.
- (6) " " , May 1933, - no day given.
- (7) " " , January 12, 1939.
- (8) " " , January 21, 1934.
- (9) (From a special report prepared by H. H. Janzen on the work of the commission for the New Hamburg Church, attached to its records of the day.)
- (10) Church records, December 1, 1935.
- (11) " " , September 10, 1939.
- (12) " " , December 13, 1945.
- (13) " " , February 2, 1947.
- (14) " " , January 28, 1945.
- (15) " " , September 17, 1952.
- (16) " " , September 17, 1952.

Chapter LX

Growth and Expansion of Kitchener Church - 1935-1953

The acquisition of a house of worship was reason indeed for great rejoicing among Mennonite Brethren in Kitchener. Some of the prevailing fervour engendered at the time was caught by H. H. Janzen and portrayed in an article which he published on December 11, 1935 in the Mennonitische Rundschau*. In addition to his host of pastoral duties as leading minister of the local church, Janzen was also its chief correspondent, a responsibility long since delegated to someone from membership ranks. Concerning the transpiration of recent events, Janzen reports:

"In the past our congregation has had much reason for gratitude. Almost ten years have passed since the inception of the church. The Lord has been faithful at all times, through joyous as well as stormy days. We confess that our gratitude has frequently been insufficient.

"On November 10, 1935 we gathered for a special service of Thanksgiving. Our purpose was to give thanks unto God for the church He enabled us to purchase recently. Gratitude filled every heart. Guests arrived from distant places to worship with us. For this festival of praise and dedication the sanctuary^{was} fittingly decorated. By 10:30 the church was filled to capacity. Fortunately a loud-speaking system had been installed. This enabled the overflow-crowd in the basement to follow the proceedings.

"An introductory prayer session was led by Rev. Bernhard B. Boldt, who based his remarks on the peculiar importance ascribed to the corner-stone of a building. The cornerstone, he emphasized, would have to be the foundation of the newly acquired house of God, if the blessing of the Almighty were to continue to rest upon the congregation. The prayers following this introduction were expressions of thanksgiving, as well as sincere petitions for the continuation of God's favour.

"The second speaker, the Rev. Abram Huebert of Leamington, chose a text from 2. Samuel 5. He emphasized verses 23 and 24, which underscore the importance of the voice of the Lord being heard in this house. In order to hear the voice of the Lord, the church must prostrate itself in God's holy presence, and in silence wait upon him for a message.

"Bro. Dietrich Klassen of Beamsville read 1. Chronicles 29:1b, 9-20, and a few other scriptures. In all sincerity he stressed the importance of the house of God as a place of worship, as a place where the individual must humble himself before God, and offer God his thanksgiving.

"Bro. Jacob Wiens of the United Mennonite Church of Waterloo read John 4:23-24. Worshipping the Lord, he stressed, does not depend on time nor place. Neither does it depend on denominational affiliation, but those who come to God must worship him in spirit and in truth. All believers, in all churches, are encouraged to join in

such worship. That such worship be practiced in the bond of unity, was the sincere desire expressed by this dear brother. "At the conclusion of the service the undersigned (H. H. Janzen) based a few remarks on Matthew 17:1-9. The sanctuary of this church is to be a Tabor, he declared; a Tabor where the glory of the Lord reveals itself, where spiritual eyes are opened, heavenly voices heard and great joy fills the hearts of those present.

"Suitable choir anthems added variety to a beautiful service. The blessing of the Lord rested upon the congregation." (1)

Dedicatory services being completed, the mundane routine of managing the new church claimed the attention of the congregation. From the start it was deemed necessary to make some changes and innovations in the order of service. The prayer meeting preceding the Sunday morning worship service, for instance, was transferred to, and combined with the weekly Bible study on Friday nights. Sunday-evening services were to be used for evangelistic purposes. To enable the Sunday School to "enlarge its tents", two resident ministers, B. B. Boldt and I. T. Ewert were elected to assume joint supervisory positions. John Dick and Peter J. Isaak were ordained to the deaconate in March 1936.

Financially the congregation was still struggling to meet budget requirements. Wages in the "dirty thirties" were low, and unemployment, especially among men, was common. When confronted with the question of discharging its custodial obligations, there seemed to be two routes for the church to follow. The simpler method would have been to engage a custodian to perform the necessary tasks. However, such a solution would have required the imposition of a levy on the membership in order to meet the expenses so incurred. The only apparent alternative route was to have the membership perform the janitorial work by turns. Realistically the church accepted the inevitable. The existing monthly levy of 25 cents per member was considered to be sufficiently onerous for many. Furthermore, from this financial source, combined with voluntary offerings, the church struggled to maintain and supply the following treasuries:

1. Household (domestic) Treasury
2. Treasury for the Support of the Poor
3. " for Missions in Africa
4. " for Missions in India
5. " for Itinerant Ministers
6. " for the Support of the Leading Minister of the Congregation
7. " for Christian Endeavor (Jugendverein), the youth programme of the church
8. Sunday School Treasury
9. Choir Treasury (2)

To assist in the smooth operation of the church, the following slate of officers was elected on January 19, 1936:

1. Secretary - Henry Penner
2. Trustees - Henry Penner, Henry (Heinz) Reimer, H. Dick
3. Auditors - Gerhard Enns, Jacob Bergen
4. Treasurers - Kornelius G. Rempel, Henry Reimer
5. Leader of Christian Endeavour - Rev. B. B. Boldt assisted by Abram J. Dick

The musical instrument used to accompany congregational singing was an old piano, constantly out of tune. At a congregational business meeting John G. Rempel offered to to repeat his previous attempts at restoring the instrument. Thereupon the congregation decided that, failing these final efforts, the piano was to be raffled off among the church members. Proceeds from the sale of tickets would flow into a fund used toward the purchase of a new instrument. (3)

At this point in their historical development, Mennonite Brethren churches in Ontario had not yet adopted the pastoral system, whereby each congregation engages a full-time salaried minister. In the past Mennonites had always subscribed to the idea of a lay ministry, rather than to professionally trained theologians. In Russia lay ministers had been men, often elementary or secondary school teachers, who were elected by the congregation to preach—providing they felt called of the Lord. If, after a probationary preaching period, both sides agreed on the suitability of the candidate for the ministry, the congregation would then proceed with ordination. A similar manner of obtaining ministers was used in Ontario M. B. circles. By obtaining preachers, as they were called, in this manner, most congregations had two or three resident ministers

who would share the pulpit of the church. As in Russia, so in the early years of Ontario, the preachers were not salaried. They were dependent for their support upon the factory,^{if} in the city, or on the farm in case of rural churches. A brief quotation from the Zionsbote of May 6, 1925 referring to the organization of the M. B. church in Ontario, may perhaps illustrate the foregoing. It says:

"The leadership of the church has been entrusted to preacher Jacob P. Friesen, Kitchener. The preachers Jacob Wiens, St. Jacobs, Jacob W. Reimer, Baden, and Peter Goertzen, Vineland, are his loyal assistants." (Signed: Jacob P. Friesen, preacher. (4)

In view of the fact that Jacob P. Friesen was entrusted with the leadership of the church, it follows that he should be designated as Leitender, or leading minister.

When deteriorating health caused Friesen to lay down the leadership in 1932, H. H. Janzen was elected his successor. This mandate was renewed on an annual basis. In his ministry in Kitchener Janzen was assisted by other ordained men such as Dietrich Klassen, Isaac T. Ewert and Bernhard B. Boldt. These men were frequently referred to as teaching brethren.

The service rendered by these men to the congregation was at first done gratis, for the ministry was not a profession. Therefore, to hold body and soul together, these preachers were initially all employed in local industries, or on farms in the vicinity. As leader of the congregation, however, as well as leader of the Ontario Conference, Janzen was confronted with an ever-increasing duty load. Recognizing the imperative of laying down his factory job at Fishman's Spring in the interests of building the Lord's kingdom, he did so in 1934, and thereafter devoted his entire time to church related activities. In response to this move the church reciprocated by coming to his assistance with a small monthly stipend, which, however, was only partially sufficient to support his young family. He was

obliged, therefore, to take on all manner of additional work, such as itinerant preaching and teaching, eventually in three languages, English, German and Russian. These assignments took H. H. Janzen across the continent to distant places in Canada as well as the U. S. A. He thus became a familiar figure and a greatly desired speaker in M. B. circles, as well as in Russian Baptist congregations of North America.

At a congregational business meeting conducted in the summer of 1936 during one of Janzen's travels, the Kitchener church decided to raise his monthly stipend from \$20.00 to \$35.00. Not that Janzen had requested the increase; it was rather to be regarded as an expression of gratitude and appreciation for his service. In order to demonstrate its appreciation to the other ministers as well, the church decided to buy a second-hand sewing machine, valued at \$10.00, for Rev. Isaac T. Ewert, and to present a gift of \$10.00 in cash to Rev. Bernhard B. Boldt. At the same time the church expressed the hope that H. H. Janzen, as leading minister, might be in closer contact with the church membership by means of a more active visitation programme. The brethren Ewert and Boldt were charged with relaying these requests to Janzen upon his return.

Having decided to increase the financial support for the church leader, the method of raising additional funds to carry out such a programme, became the next topic of discussion. It appears that Janzen's stipend thus far had been taken partially from the General Household Treasury, and in part it was comprised of voluntary contributions given for this purpose by certain church members. This method was henceforth to be discontinued. Instead, the former monthly levy of 25 cents per member was to be increased to 60 cents, and the money thus raised, as formerly was to flow into the General Household Treasury. Having thus increased its resources, the church agreed to use this

source to cover additional expenses.

At the same time the church also agreed to to pay henceforth for any and all teaching aids required by the Sunday School from the same treasury. Thus far the Sunday School had been left to look to its own resources in taking care of its various needs. It had to this point supported itself by staging special programmes, by means of which it financed its own ~~a~~ *needs*. This was also to be changed in the future. Monies raised from special programmes were ~~henceforth~~ to be used for mission projects or other charities, while the Household Treasury paid for needed equipment. (5)

Having completed his assignment in due time, H. H. Janzen returned to Kitchener. Calmly and graciously, as was his custom, he thanked the church for the additional support promised to him. He assured the membership of his willingness to attempt a curtailment of his activities ~~outside~~ the pale of the conference, as much as possible, but at the same time he drew their attention to the fact, that there existed certain responsibilities to "those without". He also explained, that if any slack on his part had occurred in regard to the visitation programme, it must be ascribed to an over-extended work-load. He declared his intent to serve the church to the best of his ability until such time, as the Lord would see fit to lead him into other avenues of service. (6)

The extensive speaking engagements of H. H. Janzen led him into various contacts with MB churches and their leaders throughout North America. His acquaintance with leaders of these churches and with their umbrella organization, the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America, its foreign missions programme overseas and other projects at home, enabled him to envision the latent potential inherent in united action. The increased scope of his vision, in turn, gave rise to a dream for the brotherhood, a dream for a broader union of conferences, a union transcending political

boundaries, perhaps even points of doctrine. But not only was the scope of Janzen's personal vision enlarged. Following his contacts abroad, Janzen's reports to the local MB churches also increased their awareness of the possibility of an enlarged sphere of action in building the church of Jesus Christ.

Deputational visits of missionaries on furlough from the foreign field, contributed as well in arousing an interest in carrying out possible joint projects. In this regard the story of the sensational escape of the Jacob Dick family from Soviet Russia to India, where they became missionaries under the auspices of the General MB Conference of North America, was sufficiently dramatic to kindle the most sluggish imagination.

The groundwork for extended co-operative action of Mennonite Brethren churches having been laid, H. H. Janzen was delegated in the fall of 1936 to Reedley, California, where the General Conference was to convene. He was equipped with an application form from the MB Conference of Ontario for admission to its American counterpart. The Ontario position, as spelled out in its application, was not entirely unconditional. An excerpt from this document reads:

"...we feel that the tenor of our time demands that all believers of the world unite, so that together they may fight the battle of faith, in order to be victorious at the appearing of our Lord. This is the desire of our Lord Jesus according to John 17:21 and 11:51,52.

"If the General Conference, an organization we greatly esteem, should feel inclined to work together with our conference, we would be willing to join the union of MB churches as an independent body. We shall be happy to participate with you, dear brethren, according to our ability, in all your mutual conference undertakings.

"One stipulation in regard to our application for membership we must make, however, that you, dear brethren, refrain from subjecting us to any burdens, but instead would grant us the liberty to maintain our..... stand according to acts 15, especially verse 28." (7)* see p. 8.

Ontario's hopes for understanding its Alliance position, and of its recognition as an independent body within the greater brotherhood, found only partial recognition. The response to the application for membership was not exactly what the brethren had hoped for. The strictly conditional reply stated:

"The General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America values the fact that the Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ontario feel drawn to their brethren of the faith in North America, and is ready to clasp the proffered hand of brotherhood for the purpose of mutually co-operative action. However, because of divergent convictions in certain constitutional matters, as well as in some matters regarding local church practices, the General Conference finds it necessary to limit this co-operative action as follows: The delegates from Ontario will refrain from participating in discussions relating to constitutional matters, as well as from matters pertaining to internal church practices. They will also abstain from voting on such things. Should there be candidates for the mission-field in their midst, the General Conference would not like to accept them, unless such candidates have been ~~re-baptized~~ baptized by immersion. But in all matters pertaining to missions and cultural programmes, the delegates from Ontario MB churches shall be welcome to take part with full voting privileges. Notwithstanding this limited participation, it is expected of the Ontario churches that they support all projects of the General Conference with prayer and finances. Likewise it is expected, that any mission programmes already in existence in Ontario, will not diminish the zeal nor the enthusiasm in the support of mutual undertakings." (8)

At a congregational business meeting held on December 13, 1936, H. H. Janzen presented to the church in Kitchener the reply of the General Conference to its application for membership, as had been presented to him in Reedley earlier that fall. Janzen and his congregation doubtlessly prized membership in the larger brotherhood very highly, for the agreement, as formulated by the conference at Reedley, inspite of the conditions stip-

* A reference to the Alliance stand stemming from the Molotschna in Russia, during the early 20th century. Although the mode of baptism practiced by the Alliance was immersion only, believers who had received other forms of baptism, such as sprinkling, were also accepted into membership without re-baptism.

ulated, was accepted without a dissenting vote. Consequently, further steps were then taken to acquaint the other congregations of the Ontario Conference, with similar results. (9)

In the ensuing years, membership in the General Conference proved to be productive. Ontario MB churches profited spiritually by the numerous visits from missionaries and other speakers, as well as by reports about various conference projects. By these means the desire for complete and full amalgamation with the conference and the resulting total participation in the activities of the North American organization, were strengthened. Such a decision would, however, require an abandonment of the independent Alliance position which the Ontario Conference had cherished since its inception.

The determining impetus in leading the Ontario churches to sacrifice their Alliance stand, was a rift which occurred in the Leamington MB Church in 1938. The split in the Leamington church came as a result of a considerable influx of MB's from Western Canada. These people were not familiar with the liberal stand of the Alliance position. To them the practices as accepted by the churches of Ontario were strange and unacceptable, and for that reason a number withdrew from the Leamington congregation and formed their own church. In order to prevent the rift from enlarging, and to expedite the healing of the schism already in existence, the Ontario Conference decided to surrender its Alliance position. Being of the opinion that its stand on baptism was the only hindrance that had prevented it from receiving unequivocal membership in the General Conference, it decided once more to make application for admission to this body. Reference re joining the General Conference was made at a church business meeting on October 19, 1939. It says:

"The minister, H. Janzen, explains in detail what is involved in this step, and recommends a complete amalgamation of our

conference with the General Conference. Since the difference between the two conferences is minimal, only a minor sacrifice is required on our part. However, should we be required to exclude from our membership those of our number who have not been baptized by immersion, we would rather desist from accepting such membership. The motion is carried with 48 votes in favour, none against and 17 abstentions." (10)

An excerpt from the document of application presented to the General Conference at Corn, Oklahoma, on October 25, 1939, follows in translation:

"To the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America: Dear Brethren, With special thanksgiving we recall the love you bestowed on us in 1936, in Reedley, when you extended to us your hand for common action. We appreciate that step fully, and are grateful to the Lord for all the blessings which, as a result, have been poured upon our churches.

"In as far as it is impossible for the individual believer to arrive at the full stature of his Christian calling, unless he identifies with a group of believers for the purpose of fellowship, spiritual nourishment and communal work, no more can a congregation exist in isolation, nor can a small conference like ours. For that reason, dear brethren, we feel drawn toward you, in order to work with you in more intimate fellowship.....

"For that purpose we approach the conference with the following petition, which we would like to preface with an explanation: After duly considering this important question, we have decided to refrain in future from accepting into our membership ranks, such as have not been immersed in baptism. We hope, that as a result of such a ruling, our conference might find unequivocal acceptance among your union of churches, for we feel that our modus of accepting some members without being immersed in baptism, is probably the only hindrance that prevents us from obtaining full membership in the General Conference. Therefore we ask the said Conference, to accept us as a District Conference of your union, and as a duly qualified working partner. Regarding those members in our midst who have not yet received baptism by immersion, whose numbers, however are small, we ask you not to turn them down.

"We are mindful that the plea of the Lord Jesus for the unity of all believers in John 17 is a command for the present, especially as the day approaches as expressed in Hebrews 10:25. For that reason we would like to do our share to realize this unity in word as well as in practice..... The Ontario Conference of MB Churches."

In reply to the application of the Ontario MB Churches for full mem-

bership, the Committee of Spiritual and Social Concerns prepared the following statement:

"Since the General Conference, according to its constitution, grants membership to all churches that share its faith, accept its decisions, and work with it co-operatively in its various undertakings, it is willing to grant to the churches of Ontario, with those of its members which have been baptized by immersion, full membership, providing they promise to observe the conditions as outlined. In view of the fact that the Ontario Conference has already been registered with the Government of Ontario, and in view of the great geographical distance between it and other MB churches in the United States and Canada, we shall deem it appropriate to designate said conference as the Ontario District Conference..... This decision of the General Conference is not to become legally binding until such time as the Ontario Conference has ratified it at its local convention, and has published its intention to this effect in the Zionsbote." (11)

At the next annual session of the Ontario MB Conference, which convened on November 5, 1939, it was agreed, though apparently with considerable regret by some, to accept membership in the North American brotherhood as offered. The sincere desire for fellowship with other brethren of the faith, obviously outweighed the limitations imposed. Ontario was willing to abide by the rules of the constitution of the General Conference, but at the same time it clarified its loyalty to those of its members who had not been immersed in baptism. It did so by going on record with the following pronouncement:

"The Ontario Conference accepts these brethren as fully qualified members of the local MB churches and of the Ontario District Conference. It grants them full membership privileges to take part in all discussions, and also the right to vote in all matters pertaining to the Ontario Conference. We are happy to accept their service in preaching the Word, in the diaconate, in Sunday School, as well as in serving as delegates to the annual Ontario District Conference. In all matters directly concerning the General Conference, they will have to abstain from taking part in discussions..... We will have to refrain from making them leaders of churches, chairmen of congregational business meetings, and leaders of the District

Conference, as well as from designating them to act as delegates to the General Conference, or in recommending them to that conference as delegates for the foreign mission field." (12)

As a result of full membership in the General Conference, Ontario was brought into more intimate contact with the Northern District Conference of Canada also. (Western Canadian Provinces) Their previous mutual support of several Canadian projects, such as Bethesda, the home for the emotionally disturbed at Camden, Ontario, and the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, had considerably increased their contacts with each other over the years. It is not surprising, therefore, that Ontario aspired toward yet another amalgamation. On November 3, 1945, the Ontario Conference decided to approach its sister conference in the Canadian West with a proposition. The suggestion to unite was accepted and brought into being a year later at the convention of the Northern District Conference in Winkler, Manitoba, on June 29, 1946. The two conferences combined to form the Canadian District Conference. By virtue of this amalgamation Ontario surrendered its status as an independent district conference, and became a provincial conference of the Canadian Conference with the same rights, privileges and obligations as the other provincial provinces of Canada. In this arrangement the same stipulations applied to local conditions regarding members that had not received baptism by immersion, as existed in their relationship to the General Conference. (13)

Thus, following its integration into the main stream of the North American mosaic, the Ontario Conference had by 1946, come of age. In spite of its youth (barely fourteen years old, 1932-1946), it had gained recognition as one among equals. Although young, it had demonstrated that it was capable of making value-judgments when confronted with serious choices and

issues. The Alliance principles it so highly regarded, were sacrificed only to the higher ideal of unity and fellowship among the greater brotherhood, albeit not without pangs of regret. But advantages were not lacking as a result of the newly gained status. Co-operative efforts in the fields of Sunday School instruction, as well as that of higher education, choral music, mutual participation in home missions projects, and the opportunity for broadening mental and spiritual horizons through the exchange of those delegated to the annual conference sessions, were but a few of the benefits accruing to the churches attempting to build the Kingdom of God on earth. In its short history, the Kitchener MB Church, heir of a dual spiritual heritage, has had to carve for itself an independent route that was peculiarly and uniquely its own. Referring to its "fathers of the faith" as groping their way to find a common course acceptable to both convictions, Jacob A. Kutz, one of the pioneers, said in an address delivered on July 16, 1950:

"They did not dwell on minor differences. Little things tend to be divisive. Solomon speaks in his Songs 2:15 about the little foxes that tend to spoil the vines." (14)

In this instance the foxes were prevented from being destructive.

Notwithstanding matters of church polity, the unfolding of congregational life in Kitchener continued unobtrusively with the passage of time. Katharina Janzen, wife of H. H. Janzen, sheds light on the vital role her husband played in interlocking the warp of pastoral activities with the woof of everyday events in the life of the congregation. She says:

"My husband travelled much; he took part in theological discussions in the churches of Ontario and with the Russians (Baptists). There was much work to be done in the congregation, visitations, various committee meetings, the pulpit messages on Sundays, and his additional duties among the Russians in Toronto, Alberta, and in Dearborn, Michigan. His work also took him to Winnipeg, Manitoba." (15)

Reports written by H. H. Janzen himself speak of everyday life in his church.

"On Sunday, August 21, 1938," he says, "our congregation celebrated at a beautiful baptismal service. Kitchener's twin city, Waterloo, has a lovely lake in its park. On the shores of this pool we gathered early in the morning. At eight o'clock we had already congregated. It was a beautiful morning. The sun greeted us in a warm embrace. Unruffled, and peacefully calm, the small body of water lay at our feet. To begin with, we considered the meaning of Christian baptism according to the specifications as laid down in God's Word. The Lord added his blessing to our meditation. Following this, the baptismal candidates, three young women and the officiating minister, stepped into the water. Upon the question: 'Do you believe with all your heart....', the candidates replied positively with joyous conviction: 'Yes, I do believe.' By their testimony the candidates witnessed to something they had experienced. By participating in this act, they made a public declaration of their commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. Later on we re-gathered in our church for the morning worship service. To begin with, those newly baptized were received into church membership. This act was performed by our dear Brother, Rev. Hermann Konrad, whose granddaughter was one of the candidates.

"Next Sunday, the Lord willing, we intend to continue with the baptismal service, for another sister has asked that this rite be performed on her." (16)

To find a suitable place for performing the baptismal rite, remained a perpetual problem. Suitable places were sometimes located in outlying areas, in which case they proved inaccessible to those who lacked means of transportation. Over the years baptismal locations were used near New Dundee, in Bridgeport, in Hespeler on the farm rented by Jacob Bartels; Waterloo Park was a favourite spot, and on occasion the Kogler swimming pool was used, as was the pond beyond the Dick farm near Waterloo. Sometimes baptisms were performed in the Nith River at New Hamburg, and now and then the facilities at Benton Street Baptist Church were used. Eventually in 1943, the membership was convinced of the need for constructing

a baptismal basin. In view of the fact that this additional expense had not been included in the annual budget, the cost of \$175.00 was to be covered by a special collection held for this purpose on Good Friday of that year. (17) To ensure baptismal candidates of proper attire for the occasion, gowns for this purpose were purchased by the church in 1941. In that same year also, the congregation decided to introduce individual communion cups to be used instead of the common chalice, as had been customary. (18)

As moderator of the Ontario Conference, Janzen made every effort to be in touch with all phases of spiritual life in the churches of Ontario. Of great concern to all congregational leaders was youth work. Church records reveal repeatedly the difficulty encountered by those responsible for this branch of the church programme. It was difficult to engage the young folk in meaningful activities. An organization that was universally favoured in the 30's and 40's by Mennonite churches, was Christian Endeavour. This institution proved to be a medium by which the youth of the church could be encouraged and challenged to accept and practice Christian ideals of conduct and service. At a Youth Conference which convened in Kitchener on August 22 and 23, 1936, Janzen delivered an address entitled: "The Purpose of Christian Endeavour in the Church." In this lecture he outlined the objectives of Christian Endeavour thus:

- a) To bring youth closer to Christ --
- b) To strengthen and support youth in its struggle with sin --
- c) To help young people in learning to love the Word of God and to help them to understand it better --
- d) To train youth for service in the Lord's work --
- e) To foster in youth an understanding of the value of belonging to a community: (Gemeinschaftssinn)

The speaker pointed out that Christian Endeavour provided a suitable arena for youthful church members to exercise their particular gifts. This arena, he pointed out, offered an excellent opportunity to encourage the young to

perfect their God-given talents, and could thereby supply the churches with leaders, teachers, and useful members. Together with the Sunday School, Christian Endeavour was considered to be a useful instrument, able to perform an important mission in the life of a congregation. (19)

The usual way for members of Christian Endeavour to participate in congregational life was by staging programmes in church on Sunday nights. Such a programme was woven around a specific theme, which was then embellished by suitable recitations of poetry, vocal and instrumental music, and usually an address or sermonette. The following copy of such a programme might serve as a sample to illustrate the topic in question. The theme in consideration, Missions, was of keen interest to the Kitchener congregation. (20)

Sample
Programme

Programm
für den Missionsabend am 17 Okt. 1934.

- I. Allg. Gesang: „Glbst. 530. Schriften: Matth. 9³⁵⁻³⁸
- II. Deklamatorium: „Der 23 Psalm“ ^{S. 95} [3 Gebet], aufgeführt von 8 Mädchen, dazu Gesangeinlagen:
 - 1.) Allg. Ges.: „Jesu geh voran...“ Glbst. 703.
 - 2.) " " „Gott mit mir...“ Glbst. 10.
 - 3.) " " „O Liebe wie groß“ Glbst. 43c. Str. 1.
- III. Gedicht: Missionshoffnung. ^{S. 76} vorg. v. Erika Neufeld
- IV. " " : Missionsregen. vorg. v. V. Pinner
- V. Allg. Ges.: „Jesus nimmt d. Sünder an.“ Glbst. 159. St. 1.
- VI. Gedicht: Arbeit für den Herrn, ^{S. 79} vorg. v. Al. Bergen
- VII. " " : Die Not der Heiden, " „Lena Wiebe
- VIII. Lied: „Ueber dem blauen Meer“, von 1 Gruppe M.
- IX. Gedicht: Die selige Schar. vorg. v. Schm. M. Wiebe
- X. Allg. Ges.: „Welche Scharen!“ Erbauung-Sänger 150
- XI. Gedicht: Das Wort von d. Versöhnung. T. Pempel
- XII. Quartett: „Die offene Bibel“
- XIII. Ansprache:

Key or Dictionary - Programme for Missions night.

- I. = congregational singing - Glbst. = Glaubensstimme, The name of a hymnal used: The Voice of Faith
= Schriften; abbreviation for: scripture passage; Gebet-pray
- II. = a longer poem, or a number of poems clustered around one theme. — aufgeführt: performed by 8 girls, with interspersions of songs.
- III = Poem: the Hope of Missions
- IV = — : Mission Blessings
- VIII = Song: — by a group of men
- XII = Quartett; the Open Bible
- XIII = Address (speaker)

In Kitchener interest in missions was fanned by ^{visitors} missionaries either going ^{to} or returning ^{from} the field, for it was at such times that they generally reported to the churches. In the 1930's it was the Heinrich Bartsch family that succeeded in broadening the congregation's vision for missions. On their way to the Belgian Congo in 1931, Henry and Anna Bartsch had been advised by friends in Winnipeg to make a stop-over in Kitchener while en route. H. H. Janzen seized the opportunity thus thrust upon him, to acquaint his congregation with these candidates for the mission field, and turned the Sunday evening service over to them. The Bartsches gratefully used the time at their disposal to familiarize the church in Kitchener with their situation, for although they were sure of the Master's call, yet the Mission Board had been slow and reluctant to respond. It was in faith, therefore, that they were now venturing forth alone, supported only by private initiative. Referring to her husband's report that night, Anna Bartsch - many years later - makes the following remarks:

"It was well received, and later on that evening a considerable number joined us at the Janzen home for tea and the opportunity of a closer acquaintance."

She then continues:

"Another blessing resulting from this stop-over was the organization of a women's Africa mission circle. This was an association of employed women who were able to support us with prayer and finances. We took leave with their blessings. In that short span of time an intimate bond of understanding was established. We felt the unity of the spirit. It was good to know that we were still on the right track, and to experience what the Lord says to Isaiah: 'And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.' (Is. 30:21) (21)

The Kitchener ^{church} was moved with sympathy and compassion by the report of the Bartsches; sympathy for the missionary family who stood alone without financial backing, compassion for the Congolese held captive by the forces of darkness. As result of the interest aroused, Kitchener began to support

the work in the Congo among other mission projects on its agenda.

The Africa Mission Circle to which Anna Bartsch refers in her memoirs, was formed in the Kitchener MB Church by a group of eight women. These women, according to records preserved in the Kitchener archives are: Miss Käthe Thielmann, Mrs. Helen (David) Quapp, Mrs. Nesa (Peter) Loewen, Miss Agatha Giesbrecht, Miss Mariechen Braun, Miss Helen Dyck, Miss Manya Fehderau and Miss Anna Teichroeb. Shortly thereafter this number was raised to ten by the addition of Mrs. Anna (Abram) Dick and Mrs. Marie (Jacob) Dick. These women banded themselves together to work in support of missions. To denote their keen interest in Africa, they called the new organization Africa Mission Circle. The motto chosen for the club was: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." John 9:4.

The modus operandi decided upon by the AMC (Africa Mission Circle), was to meet twice monthly in the homes of its members. In view of the fact that these were all employed in industry, where overtime often required them to spend additional hours at work, stamina and determination was demanded of the women in order to maintain the enthusiasm and the love for the cause of missions, which had prompted the formation of the club. At the meetings hand-crafted articles were prepared to be sold eventually. The proceeds from such sales were destined for the mission field.

The first sale of hand-crafted articles was scheduled for October 22, 1936. Excitement ran high, for the profit would represent the first fruits of their labours, and would to some extent corroborate or contradict the validity of the method chosen to bring in the funds. The method of raising money for missions by auction was strange for many members of the Kitchener church. The attitude of such people toward the anticipated sale was largely

negative, and discouraging for the club members. Nevertheless, inspite of obstacles the women remained undaunted in their determination to carry out their plans. The scheduled sale had been ^{arranged so as} to coincide with the deputational visit of Margaret Siemens, a nurses' aid, on her way to Africa, where she was to work at the Bartsch mission in the Congo. The timing was perfect.

The night of the sale arrived. After making preliminary remarks, Pastor H. H. Janzen called upon Nurse Siemens to tell her story. To a crowded church she spoke of her call to the mission field. She told the church how God had prepared her for service in a foreign land. The interest was keen, the moving of the Spirit obvious. Greatly encouraged by what she experienced that evening, Margaret Siemens was able to proceed on her way to the Congo. She did not go empty-handed.

Following the devotional part of the programme, Jacob Bergen, the auctioneer, performed superbly. The sale netted \$160.00 and the offering brought in \$20.00. At a time when jobs were scarce, unemployment high, and prices and wages low, these figures were beyond expectation. The members of the AMC were grateful for the success experienced. They were happy to present a purse of money to Margaret Siemens, and in addition she was asked to convey a bundle of infant clothing to the Bartsch family, where a new arrival was expected shortly.

In reply to that package a letter arrived for AMC on May 3, 1937. It was addressed to all the members of the organization. Anna Bartsch spoke about the birth of their son Karl on January 28th, and expressed her thanks for the layette sent via Nurse Siemens. She closed with the following words:

"To you all our sincere thanks for your intercession on our behalf to the Heavenly Father, also for the material aid.

Please continue to remember us before the Throne of Grace for safe-keeping, and for wisdom in the training of our children."

Sincere greetings from
H. and A. Bartsch

Such letters were indeed a reward and an encouragement to the women who had ventured out in faith, in their efforts to serve the Lord by supporting some who were labouring on foreign fields. On November 28, 1937, another letter, also acknowledging a gift of money for the Bartsch family, arrived from F. C. Thiessen, Secretary of the Africa Mission Society. The letter read:

Dear Sisters in the Lord:

With gratitude I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your donation of \$122.45, a sum forwarded to me by Bro. H. H. Janzen of Kitchener, Ontario, Chairman of the African Mission Society. We praise the Lord who made you willing, not only to pray for the work of our Lord in Africa, but also to contribute financially with liberality. When looking at your generous gift we say: 'This is the Lord's doing; to him be the glory.' We pray that our faithful Heavenly Father 'which seeth in secret', may richly bless and reward you all openly. We have that promise. May the Lord also bless your donation to that end, so that the unadulterated gospel may yet enlighten many a soul. Please accept our sincere thanks and warmest greetings. Col. 3:24.

With brotherly greetings,
Frank C. Thiessen, Winnipeg. (22)

In order to keep the churches of North America informed about the state of affairs in Africa, a small pamphlet, Der Afrika-Bote (The Africa Messenger), was being published by a group of interested men, among whom were H. H. Janzen and F. C. Thiessen. In October of 1937 the Afrika-Bote reported the safe arrival in the Congo of an additional missionary couple, the Hermann Lenzmanns, who were to assist the Bartsches in their work..At the same time, however, it also intimated that the state of Mrs. Bartsch's health left much to be desired. The tropical climate was taking its toll,

and although the Bartsches wanted very much to remain until the arrival of a third missionay pair, the Karl Kramers from Germany, they were unable, for reasons of health, (to do so). On January 1, 1938, they left the Congo to return to Canada on an extended leave; the Kramers arrived to take their place on March 18.

Although the Bartsch family was headed in direction Canada, the destination of the ship they boarded was Hamburg, Germany. Obviously this was going to be a long circuitous route. The sea voyage was smooth and uneventful -- 30 days at sea. Then ^{as} the German coast ^{was} heaving into view ^{and} the estuary of the Elbe clearly visible, ^{was announced} a severe storm warning ^{at} noon. Black clouds, harbingers of danger ahead, loom ominously in the heavens, and soon the treacherous North Sea is being whipped up into a frothing cauldron by a fierce gale. The ship sustains damage by the pounding waves, and lists at 40 degrees. Should the coal in the ship's belly slide in the direction of the list, the captain fears she may never be able to right herself. Two ~~portholes~~ are smashed, the crackling of the ships hull spells doom and gloom. Four other vessels in the vicinity find watery graves, one with a complete loss of life. The Bartsch family as a unit remains in its cabin and commits itself to the keeping of the Almighty. 24 hours later -- the gale subsides, and with its ebb, the flow of life returns. Slowly the battered cruise-ship is piloted into port.

In Hamburg the Bartsches head for the Institute for Tropical Diseases, where they hope for restitution of Sr. Bartsch's ~~poor~~ health. However, this was no simple matter. For weeks she had to give up her children to the care of others, as she submitted to a period of complete rest and special diet. But finally the journey to Canada lay ahead, where the first stop was to be Kitchener, ~~where~~ They arrived on May 30. Kitchener had been

1936

their last port of call before leaving for Africa in 1931.

At the home of H. H. Janzen a warm reception awaited them. In view of the intervening years between 1931 and 1938, there was much to talk about. Recalling the moments spent in the Janzen home, Sr. Bartsch makes note of the following:

"Thereupon Br. Janzen took me to a store and asked the clerk to supply me with a coat, dress and hat. My clothes from years back were, without doubt, badly out of style, but 'clothes make the man' (Kleider machen Leute, according to a German idiom), and I felt reassured of now being able to appear in public without drawing undue attention to myself. And how I relished the fellowship at the Sunday worship service! How wonderful those old hymns were! My emotions got the better of me, and tears flowed freely. This feeling of home and belonging I had missed so long." (23)

In all its classical simplicity, what a beautiful testimonial to the gracious hospitality of an erstwhile shepherd of the flock in Kitchener: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matth. 25:40)

After a week in Kitchener, the Bartsches continued to Winnipeg, where they took up temporary residence. It was from here that they carried on future deputational work.

For the Africa Mission Circle in Kitchener, the following year, 1939, brought about a change of name. 1939 was the year in which the MB Conference became a full fledged member of the General Conference of MB Churches of North America. After this event became a reality, the members of the Africa Mission Circle were hoping that the Bartsch mission in the Congo would henceforth get full conference backing. This would then enable the AMC to support other missions as well, although Africa was to remain close to its heart. To reflect the change of emphasis in missionary support, the word Africa was deleted from the name of the organization, and henceforth,

until its dissolution in 1943, it was known simply as Mission Circle (Missionsverein). (24)

Just two years after the Africa Mission Circle came into being, another group of Kitchener women decided to join ranks in order to work collectively for the Lord. On October 23, 1938, this group organized and elected Helen Ewert president, a position she held for four years. The new organization chose for its motto Hebrews 13:16, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Although the motto clearly spelled out the reason for the existence of the new association, it was not an easy task to find a suitable appellation, one that would at the same time describe the nature and the purpose of the club. After much soul searching the name Gabenverein, or (Mission Gift Circle) was chosen.

According to its statement of purpose, the members of Gabenverein intended to perform deeds of charity, and thereby communicate the love of God to others. At its first meeting a method had to be devised, as to how these charitable acts were to be performed, as well as where, and what the acts were to consist of. In view of the fact that money was scarce and wages low during the prevailing depression, it was decided that contributions were to be made largely in the form of canned foods, which when collected would be brought to widows, to unemployed or otherwise needy families of the congregation. The donations were to be brought to the semi-monthly meetings at the homes of the members.

Although the chief purpose of the club was to carry out in a practical way Christ's teaching of neighbourly love and concern, there were other reasons for its existence as well. The members desired also to grow spiritually through prayer and by the study of God's Word. Part of each meeting was, therefore, to be of a devotional nature, a practice which became

firmly entrenched in the pattern according to which Gabenverein's programmes have been styled through the years. The final purpose that Gabenverein considered as justification for its existence was social, the aim to enjoy friendship and fellowship with other Christians. Throughout the years of its history, those responsible for preparing the agenda for the meetings of Gabenverein, have never lost sight of these goals.

Following the first four years of operation, Gabenverein experienced a change of leadership. This event was considered by some to be perhaps an appropriate time for a change of name as well. At that crucial juncture in its history, however, there arrived from Henry J. Penner, a highly regarded leading church member, a letter, asking the women not to carry out their intention of name-change. He considered the name Gabenverein altogether suitable and fitting for this particular organization, and for that reason he begged the members not to change it. In deference to the trustworthy judgment and the wisdom of a spiritually minded "church father", Penner's appeal was heeded. The name remained unchanged at the time. Years later, however, when the church adopted the English language as its official form of communication, Women's Missionary Service became the club's formal appellation. (25)

Not only has Women's Missionary Service upheld the dictum, "It is more blessed to give than to receive", but during the years of its existence it has, in addition to giving, provided a variety of services, such as staging an occasional programme for the edification of the church, visiting the sick and shut-ins, writing letters to church members who are serving as missionaries on foreign fields, serving refreshments at funeral receptions or at dinners for other social functions. At Christmas time the practice of remembering the elderly of the church with fruit and flowers

or some small gift, has brought cheer to many on the periphery of life. The ever widening scope of its service can best be appreciated by examining briefly the steadily increasing financial resources which are being put at the disposal of Women's Missionary Service by its own members.

Offerings received by Women's Missionary Service between 1938-1963 are recorded thus:

1938-42 --	\$. 244.09
1942-48 --	1,245.24
1949-53 --	3,049.15
1954-58 --	4,233.82
1959-63 --	5,150.26

In keeping with its original purpose and in proportion to the swelling of its coffers, WMS has ever been, and continues to be, searching for new and extended avenues of service.

For several reasons the year 1953 was a milestone in the history of WMS. First and foremost it marked the fifteenth anniversary of the club, an event which was commemorated by a celebration. Furthermore, because the membership ranks had swelled to 50, it was decided to move the meetings from the private homes to the precincts of the church. Meetings were now held on a monthly basis, but the general format continued to be patterned according to the established form, emphasizing spiritual, material and social aspects. As a result of the influx of a wave of immigrants in the aftermath of World War II, the Kitchener MB Church, as well as WMS, were blessed with a rapidly increasing membership. When the latter's numbers had reached an unwieldy 70, it was decided to divide ranks and form a new club, which chose to be called Christian Women's Fellowship. The two clubs continue to flourish side by side.

In 1963 when Women's Missionary Service celebrated its "Silver" anniversary, it extended invitations not only to all former members, many of whom

are scattered across Canada and the United States, but to its sister clubs as well, the older Tabevereine (1930), and to its younger sibling, the Christian Women's Fellowship. Following the 25th birthday celebrations, WMS turned to the future to face the tasks that lay ahead.

Following is a list of women who served the club as chief executive officers during the first quarter century of its operation:

Helen Ewert.....1938-42
 Katie Fast.....1942-46
 Sara Isaak.....1946-47
 Lydia Dick.....1947-53
 Sara Isaak.....1953-56
 Anne Thiessen.....1956-59
 Olga Enns.....1959-63
 Lydia Dick.....1963..... (26)

For the Ontario MB Conference 1939 was an eventful year. Not only did the Conference align its allegiance with the General Conference of MB Churches of North America, but 1939 was the year that ushered in that devastating holocaust, World War II. News of its outbreak descended like a pall upon Ontario churches, whose members had but escaped from the horrors and destruction that had rocked the world a mere quarter of a century earlier. At the outset the war did not affect the MB churches of Ontario directly, but their foreign mission projects were involved. Just before the outbreak of hostilities, a missionary couple from India, Cornelius H. Unruh, succeeded in reaching North America, where they planned to retire in Kitchener. A letter written to the Unruhs by H. H. Janzen reflects somewhat the degree of ^{apprehension} ~~of~~ prevalent generally due to the impending crisis. Janzen addressed the letter to New York, where the Unruhs were expected to arrive. An excerpt follows:

....."I do not know, whether under the present uncertain conditions, you will arrive in New York, but although I am

early, I shall write at this time so my letter will await you upon your arrival.....

We feel constrained to tell you again, that you shall be most welcome in our midst, and that we are so much looking forward to seeing you again. Should you actually arrive in Kitchener toward the end of September, we shall be able to see each other before I leave for the United States, where I shall be speaking for a week in October, and following that I shall be attending two conferences. (One was the General Conference at Corn, Oklahoma, which the Ontario MB Conference joined at that time)

May God protect you and bring you safely to the destination of your journey. We are praying for you. United in the bonds of Christian love, Yours in the Lord,
H. H. and K. Janzen (27)

As planned, the Unruhs took up residence in Kitchener, at 19 Margaret Ave. Thereupon the Conference Committee of the MB Conference of Ontario greeted them with the following message:

....."We thank God for the work and the service you have been able to perform in the Lord's vineyard in India. May God continue to bless, even now in retrospect, your labours to the poorest of the poor in that land.

"The Conference is happy that the Lord has seen fit for you to retire in Ontario, and we hope that He will bestow on us also, many a blessing by means of you. In sincere brotherly love the Conference would therefore like to welcome you into our midst. We know that we stand united in spirit, and we hope with all our hearts that you will be happy among us. We wish to convey to you Psalm 90:1,2 as a special word of greeting.

The Conference Committee, for the Ontario Conference of MB Churches." (28)

The Unruhs responded positively to the expectations and wishes expressed by those who welcomed them. In Kitchener they found a familiar milieu, a milieu of kindred souls with whom they were able to identify. Nor were the hopes and expectations of the churches unjustified. Kitchener was especially fortunate, because the Unruhs were living in their midst, and so the church was enriched by their ministerial contributions.

In one particular instance Bro. Unruh agreed to conduct, during the winter months of 1941, evangelistic services, from which great spiritual blessings accrued to the church. During the course of that week, by preaching the

Word, Unruh demonstrated anew, the power of the Gospel in its appeal to old and young alike. Deeply moved by his messages, a church member recorded her impressions thus:

"Today I must jot down something about the evangelistic meetings Missionary Unruh conducted in our church recently. Once again we experienced the power of prayer in bringing sinners to repentance, and my faith was strengthened as never before."

For a week the veteran missionary expounded a Biblical text every night. He chose as his first topic Judges 16:20, 'And Samson knew not that the Lord had departed from him.' The latent message of this passage, he pointed out, is a warning not to disobey the Lord, lest the Holy Spirit withdraw himself from the believer, as he did from Samson.

Throughout the week the messages were potent and powerful, ever dealing with various problems and conditions of life, yet never losing sight of the individual before him, be he man, woman or child. The claims of Christ were presented in simple, unadulterated fashion. The path to the Mercy Seat was spelled out in no uncertain terms. The clarion call to follow the Lord was compelling and unmistakable. Many of those who listened responded positively, including a considerable number of young people and children.

Some months after conducting the evangelistic campaign, Cornelius Unruh was called to his eternal reward. A stroke ended his life. "For all of us it was like a bad dream," remarked a member of the Kitchener church. (29)

For H. H. Janzen Unruh's death was a great personal loss. In a letter to F. C. Thiessen, Winnipeg, he says:

"Our dear brother C. H. Unruh 'went home' on December 9, and on December 11 we laid him to rest from the Baptist Church at King and Water Sts. A great void has been created by his death, not only in the life of the Unruh family, but in my own life as well. I feel lonely since his departure. He was a man with a warm, a magnanimous heart, and a good head. He understood me so completely. It is the Lord." (30)

While H. H. Janzen penned those words, the world was already engulfed in the throes of World War II. In anticipation of this catastrophe the Mennonite community in Canada had, between the years 1939-43, made certain communal preparations, under the auspices of the Mennonite Central Committee, to deal with matters such as relief and non-resistance. Mindful of their historic peace position, they formed three agencies to assist Mennonites in dealing with the issues of peace and war.

- a) In Western Canada the Military Problems Committee of Mennonite Churches, known as Western Services Committee, was formed.
- b) In Manitoba the Committee of Bishops, known as Alttestenkomitee, was created.
- c) In Ontario a Military Problems Committee was organized for the Non-Resistant Relief constituency (Amish, Brethren in Christ and Mennonites), as well as the Conference of Historic Peace Churches, which included Quakers and Rusländer. (31)

For people like the Mennonite Brethren of Ontario, who had but recently settled in Canada, it was of great value to be included under the umbrella of the Historic Peace Churches. Swiss Mennonites and Brethren in Christ, who were responsible for this organization, had during their lengthy sojourn in Ontario, gained not only the respect of their fellow-Canadians, but also the confidence of the authorities. Their loyalty to king and country was an established fact. The Non-Resistant Relief Organization, formed by them in 1917 during World War I, was created to express their appreciation to the Canadian Government "for exemption from military service, and as their positive expression of citizenship duties and Christian discipleship." (32)

A major question facing Mennonites during the war was the draft, or alternative service. Mennonite theology has, from its inception, interpreted Holy Writ, particularly the teachings of Jesus, to teach non-resistance to evil, the sanctity of human life -- which is not to be destroyed by man, and the avoidance of the swearing of oaths. War in particular brings these

tenets of the faith into sharp focus, and throughout their history Mennonites have been called upon repeatedly to re-define their position. Except for Manitoba, where drafted men had to face a judge to justify their objection to combat service, a situation which on numerous occasions led to imprisonment, Mennonite men were able to obtain conscientious objector status (CO), by filling out a printed statement obtained from the local church leader.

Having been granted CO status, the men were assigned to some alternative form of service. In the early stages of the war there was no choice in the assignment made. In Ontario this could mean working on a farm, in a factory, or perhaps road construction from a camp at Chalk River. When in due course this camp was liquidated, the men from Chalk River were re-assigned to forestry labour in British Columbia. Remuneration for all COs was a mere pittance. The allowance for men in the forestry service was 50 cents per day. In addition to this they were expected to provide their own clothing and to pay their transportation to and from the camps. What amounted to a mere existence allowance made life for married men with families especially difficult. On 50 cents per day, the boys from Ontario were hardly able to pay their train-fare home when the annual 2-week leave approached. F. C. Peters is of the opinion that the churches at home failed their boys in the camps by not giving them sufficient encouragement with more financial support. (33)

To a query as to what sort of preparation Mennonite Brethren youth had received to ground their faith in the doctrine of non-resistance, Peters' reply was a terse: "zero." He claimed, that he himself had never heard a sermon on non-resistance until he served in a forestry camp. Taking this to be the general situation, where did young men, especially in MB circles, receive their grounding in the teaching of non-resistance? In all probability most men based their convictions, regarding the peace-stance, on the

example and precept the individual home provided. In this regard Pastor John Wall of Kitchener pays tribute to the influence of his father, ^{John Wall, Deacon of the Vineland Church} to Jacob K. Janzen, a minister in Vineland, ^{and to Siegfried Janzen, his son, and to Henry Penner, who served as youth sponsors when Wall was in his formative years.} (34)

Although many men entered CO camps with varying degrees of conviction, once there they found little room for fence-riders. Those who wavered in their beliefs initially, became either convinced in their stand as conscientious objectors, or else they realized that they were not in the right spot. There were those who did not return to duty after the first furlough. Such reported to recruiting officers and donned a uniform.

During the initial stages of the war it was not possible for COs to enter the Medical Corps. As in other divisions of the army, weapons-training was at first required of those who entered this branch of the forces. Furthermore, upon completion of training, there was no assurance that the recruit would be assigned to a medical unit, but instead, a distinct possibility existed that he might be shifted to active combat. Eventually these regulations were changed. The use of weaponry in basic training was no longer required, neither was the oath of allegiance exacted of COs, but an affirmation of loyalty instead. Boys in the Medical Corps were in uniform. Some of the men were killed in action. In addition to those COs who worked on farms, in industry and in forestry camps, there were a number of men from the Kitchener MB Church who joined various branches of the armed forces. As to the per centage of Mennonite Brethren who went into armed combat, there are no statistics available to disclose the exact figures for Canada. Asked about possible disciplinary measures taken by MB churches against men on active service, F. C. Peters replied that some churches applied excommunication, that Kitchener, however, ^{exacted no such penalties.} (35) According to Sara Isaak's diary, ^{4 young men (members of the congregation) served with the army in Europe, in addition to others, whose parents were members of the church. Furthermore 6 men served in either Air Force or Medical Corps and 9 men as Conscientious Objectors, (p. 12)}

In addition to performing alternate instead of military service in time of war, another urgent issue that faced the Mennonite constituency at this time was providing assistance and material relief for war-victims. A task of such monumental proportions, however, required the combined effort of a number of agencies. After much discussion and debate, three main agencies emerged among Mennonite groups in Canada:

- a) the Mennonite Central Relief Committee for Western Canada
- b) the Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee for Manitoba, and
- c) the Non-Resistant Relief Committee for Ontario. (36)

Following the outbreak of war, these organizations became very active in the dispensing of material aid in Europe. All goods dispatched were funneled through Akron, Pennsylvania, for no Canadian office had as yet been formed.

Of the relief organizations mentioned above, the Non-Resistant Relief Organization was the oldest, having been formed in 1917, during the days of the First World War. Having completed its objectives, ^{at the time} it suspended operations in 1924. A good decade later, however, it was revived again in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War. Victims of the Civil War sought refuge in southern France, where camps for refugees were in a deplorable state. ⁺ The efforts of an inter-Mennonite organization to extend material aid to others than those of the household of faith, was a departure from heretofore established policy. (37)

In 1927 after completing its mammoth assignment to bring relief to the famine-stricken victims of the Russian Revolution, the Mennonite Central Committee also appears to have considered the feasibility of either suspending its operations temporarily or permanently. At this critical juncture of its history, however, B. B. Janz, the eminent pleader of great causes,* stepped in to forestall such a move. Earnestly and with genuine sincerity

According to the C. J. Rempele,
 + Some members of M.C.C. personnel on assignment there, were interned for a year by German occupation forces during W.W. II.
 XVII-1/2 Anne Wiebe Mennonite Archives of Ontario "The Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario..."

he implored those responsible, not to dissolve the Mennonite Central Committee. With prophetic vision he analyzed the contemporary world situation, simultaneously anticipating future needs. Referring to the completed task of M. C. C. in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in Europe, he stated his argument for the continuation of the existence of this body thus:

"This practical unity in applied charity of all for all should continue. May this spirit of brotherly co-operation serve through God's grace in directing the service and gifts of those that have a loving heart, to all that may ever be obliged to pass through such great tribulations.

For this reason I wish you brethren of the Mennonite Central Committee, much success and grace for the conclusion of this great work of love; at the same time I plead with great insistence that the Central Committee may not be dissolved, but that it may continue at the disposal of the Lord to serve where He selects to use it." (38)

The Mennonite Central Committee continued to function, and with the progression of time the multiplication and diversification of its activities and services have become apparent.

The dissolution of the Mennonite Central Committee having been forestalled, the wheels of ^{its} operation never stopped grinding. In the interests of bringing material aid to the needy, the Committee has throughout its history, represented all shades of Mennonites, who in turn have rallied underneath its banner for united action.

In supporting the causes of M. C. C. the Kitchener MB Church marched in step with other groups of the brotherhood. From the beginning of hostilities in 1939, Kitchener encouraged its members to participate in an aid-programme designed to alleviate the acute suffering caused by the war. In great demand were articles of clothing and bedding for the United Kingdom, where children in large numbers, as well as old folk, had to be evacuated from industrialized areas to safer places in the countryside. In carrying out its relief programmes the church in Kitchener worked in close co-operation with the

Non-Resistant Relief Organization in channeling all contributions through Akron, Pa., for lack of a Canadian office.

Meanwhile a station, from which to guide operations in the United Kingdom, had been opened by M. C. C. at 68 Shepherd's Hill, in London. John S. Coffman, son of S. F. Coffman of Vineland, Ontario, was ^{put} in charge. This "London Centre" quickly developed into a multi-purpose establishment, serving M. C. C. as head-office for Britain and later on, after the conclusion of the war, as gateway to the continent. In addition to this it was used as a clothing depot, as hospitality centre for new personnel from North America, as a drop-in-centre for Mennonite boys from Canada in military training in Britain, and as a temporary shelter for fifteen British children evacuated as a result of severe bombing raids. For a period of eighteen months these children were under the care of a Mennonite nurse, Miss Edna Hunsberger of Preston, Ontario.

It was in 1942, at a time when navigation of the high seas was extremely dangerous due to lurking submarines, that Nurse Hunsberger crossed the Atlantic to begin her M. C. C. assignment in England. In addition to her work with evacuated and orphaned children in London, she performed similar duties in South England and in Cornwall near Land's End, where approximately twenty disabled and handicapped children from the Plymouth area were accommodated and cared for. M. C. C. however, was solicitous of the aging population, as well as of the young, and for a year and a half Edna Hunsberger took charge of a group of thirty-six old people in a home near Birmingham in the Midlands, a heavily industrialized area of England.

Two other Canadians involved in children's work in the United Kingdom, were Peter and Elfrieda Dyck (nee Klassen), also a nurse. They worked in an orphanage in Texaledge, where they cared for families of men, whose ships

had been torpedoed at sea. After the conclusion of the war, the Dycks became deeply involved with the moving of refugees from Europe to South America. (39)

With the passage of time the inefficiency and the duplication of services entailed in funneling all goods destined for European relief through Akron, became ever more apparent to Canadian Mennonites. Considerable discussion of this matter led to the establishment of a Canadian office in Kitchener, Ontario. Quarters were also set aside for a clothing depot.

Cornelius J. Rempel, a member of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church, was appointed director of the Canadian office, a position he held until 1951. Rempel brought to his position a background of business experience he had acquired in the employ of the Waterloo Trust and Savings Co., (now Canada Trust). In addition to practical experience, he had retained a store of childhood memories, memories of "hungry days" during the post-war famine in the Soviet Union, a famine from which he had been rescued personally through M. C. C. aid, prior to his immigration to Canadaⁿ 1924. With a feeling of gratitude and obligation to those who had made possible the relief operation in 1920 to "brethren in need", Rempel accepted the challenge to spearhead the work of M. C. C. in Canada. In managing the Canadian office, he hoped to return in part a debt of gratitude he felt for those also, who had tirelessly and unselfishly spent their means and energy to bring about the "Exodus of the 20s". In order to assume his new duties, he tried to arrange for a two-year leave of absence from his employer, the Waterloo Trust. When management would not agree to such a request, he saw no alternative but to terminate his ties with the firm.

The newly appointed head of M. C. C.'s Canadian office, found himself in

a somewhat nondescript position, seeing that no job-description was given him. In view of the fact that he had no precedent to follow, he had to chart his own course. His directive 'to work with the churches in Canada', was rather an "open concept". No doubt it included the promotion of M. C. C. with its goals. (40)

The cessation of hostilities in 1945 proclaimed the end of the war, but it brought no peace. Air raids were replaced by unleashed population millions milling about in Europe. Hundreds of thousands were dispossessed and driven from their homes. Again hundreds of thousands were fleeing from enemies in hot pursuit. Thousands were forcibly repatriated to places where they did not wish to go. Confusion and destruction were rampant. A new human breed, the Displaced Person had appeared.^{on the scene} Into this Maelstrom of human suffering stepped M. C. C., ferreting out members of the brotherhood, bringing help and hope to the despondent.

The M. B. Church in Kitchener took note of the horrendous conditions in post war Europe. Minutes of a business meeting recall some of the steps taken by the congregation to alleviate the suffering:

"Because the distress of our brethren of the faith is very acute, the congregation decides to can meat in sealers, which will be sent by the M. C. C. to Europe. John Thiessen and Peter Dyck (men who were employed by J. M. Schneider' Meats), are commissioned by the church to purchase a steer for this purpose. The carcass is to be dressed, and the Sisters Liese Dick and Nesa Loewen will supervise the canning of the meat.

"Furthermore, at the next business meeting the congregation will elect two brethren who will be responsible to continue to fan and keep alive the interest engendered among church members for the needs of the suffering brethren in Europe." (41)

Minutes of another business meeting report the following:

"John Thiessen reports that the carcasses of a steer and a hog have been canned for famine-relief

in Europe.

"As well, the church has contributed 235 lbs. of sugar (which was rationed at the time), and together with the United Mennonite Church of Waterloo, 1,036 jars of jam and fruit have been preserved. During the course of the year the men of the church have often assisted in loading freight cars of canned goods and bales of clothing for shipment overseas.

"Nesa Loewen reports that \$70.00 worth of material has been purchased and sewn into articles of clothing. In the M. C. C. clothing depot several women of the church meet semi-monthly in order to mend and repair the used clothing donated for shipment overseas. Women are encouraged to take a more active part in this branch of relief work." (42)

Yet in another annual resume Peter Dick reports that:

"Two steers weighing 1,418 lbs. have been processed, and have produced 984 cans of meat. In addition clothes and clothes were baled and loaded with other products six times. Participation in this activity was, unfortunately, weak. Men are encouraged to give more of themselves to this work.

"Sr. Liese Dick reports, that with the help of eight women, she has finished eight quilts. In addition they have mended used clothing and sewed new ones. An Englishwoman, unknown to the church, has knit many socks for the M. C. C. The church responds by thanking this unknown donor. Also, the church gratefully acknowledges all voluntary service.

"John Thiessen and Peter Dick are commissioned to see to it that approximately 1,000 cans of meat be processed in the following year."

To bring the relief efforts of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Kitchener into focus, it should be mentioned that membership in 1947 was 221, and that giving on a per capita basis to the church was \$60.11. The projected budget for 1947-48 was \$5,300.00. (43)

One of the staggering post-war questions facing governments of western Europe and North America, was the refugee dilemma. Where were the homeless to go? Who would grant them asylum? What of sponsorship? Canada's immigration policy at the time was very restrictive. Only physically able

would be considered. American immigration policy was equally as stringent. Among the refugees, however, were those who were old, sick, maimed and disabled, and many single mothers heading their families in the absence of their husbands who were the victims of battlefields. Understandably, war-ravaged Germany was anxious to get the influx of foreigners off her shores and shoulders. In this tense situation "Russian" Mennonites were in a particularly vulnerable position, because they were in constant danger of being 'found-out', only to be repatriated by force.

In dire attempt to find a solution to the pressing refugee problem, a commission of church leaders, including C. J. Rempel, was delegated by M. C. C. in 1947 to South America to find a state with a wide-open immigration policy. Only one country responded favourably. At a time when Mennonites in Berlin were trapped by the encircling Russian army, Paraguay opened its doors to them unconditionally. Their escape to freedom under the direction of Elfrieda (Klassen) Dyck, has at times been compared to the patriarchal exodus across the Red Sea. In support of helping to finance the expedition in transporting the refugees to Paraguay, the Kitchener church noted in its minutes, that a sum of \$2,091.00 had been collected. (44)

Teachers, medical personnel, ministers, business men, agronomists and other professionals contributed their expertise in order to assist in establishing life in all its facets for those, who went to live in the Chaco, not by choice, but by circumstance. By writing to MB congregations across Canada, B. B. Janz encouraged members to assist the brethren in South America in building their own churches. (45)

Assisting the Paraguayan Mennonites to establish an educational system, was another aim of Canadian churches and M. C. C. The Ontario MB Conference decided on having some youth participation in this matter. Under the leader-

ship of George G. Dyck, the young people of Kitchener contributed the proceeds from one Christian Endeavour programme annually toward this cause. (46)

However, not all refugees were obliged to go to South America.. By 1948 considerable numbers of immigrants from Europe were arriving on the Canadian scene. Some were sponsored by relatives, others came as indentured farm-hands. A goodly number of these folk settled in or near the Twin Cities. A number worshipped in the MB church, some joined the ranks. During the decade from 1945-55 the membership of the Kitchener church increased from 208 to 392. This gain was due in part to the amalgamation of the New Hamburg and Hespeler Churches with the Kitchener congregation in 1951 and 1953 respectively; in part it could be attributed to the large number of immigrants that chose to affiliate with the Kitchener church.

Inspite of the fact that many of the refugees had found homes by this time either in North or South America, the need for clothing in war torn countries was still great. At the annual business meeting in 1950, Mrs. Liese Dyck reported to the church about her committee's activities during the year:

"For M. C. C. 24 quilts and comforters were made. Flour bags donated from Sunday School 300, from the Women's Sewing Circle 100, and from the congregation 214; a total of 614 bags. (It should be kept in mind that flour was sold in cloth bags, which, when washed, were fashioned into all kinds of useful household articles.) The Sewing Circle has accepted 51 Christmas bundles. Material cut out for clothing has been distributed twice; so has wool for socks -- a total of 594 lbs.

"Sr. Dyck requested a budget of \$150.00 for the fiscal year 1950-51 in order to be able to carry on a similar programme." (47)

By 1951 the assignment to which C. J. Rempel had been called, was completed. The highest immigrant waves had crested, the most pressing needs of refugees had been met. This being the case, the director of M. C. C. operations at

the Canadian office closed his portfolio, and joined the ranks of the unemployed. In order to be enabled to accept the call from M. C. C. in 1944, Rempel had seen no alternative but to sever relations with his employer, the Waterloo Trust. When the Trust became aware of the fact that Rempel was once again in the job-market, they offered him a senior post with corresponding privileges. His new position with the Wills and Estates Department permitted him, to some degree, to continue his involvement in church and M. C. C. work. The expertise and knowledge he gained in drawing up wills, enabled him later, even after his retirement, to continue to serve the MB Conference across Canada, by assisting church members in drawing up wills in keeping with principles of Christian stewardship. (48)

Being removed a considerable distance geographically from the active theatre of war, was a great boon for Canada, and consequently civilian life within her borders continued to function during the war years on a remarkably even keel. To be sure, the loss of human life at the front was appalling. The enlistment programme continued to be a heavy drain on Canada's man-power. A large munitions industry sprang up over night, in response to demands raised by the growing war machine. This provided employment for the rank and file of the population, so that unemployment and soup-kitchen lines, familiar sights in some of Canada's large cities, came to an end. Demands for large additional quantities of agricultural products, caused food production to be classified as an essential industry. The effect on prices of agricultural goods, was an immediate and sharp rise. At this point Canada and the world were no longer languishing in the economic doldrums. The war effort swept Canada out of the "dirty-thirties". It spelled an end to the "Great Depression". Many civilian goods and services had to be rationed to avoid hoarding; in some instances jobs were declared essential, and "frozen".

Price ceilings were impended on various foods and commodities. The production of many consumer goods were temporarily relegated to a "back-burner" position, and were next to impossible to obtain. Civilian housing construction was suspended temporarily for lack of steel, nails and other essential products. Imbedded in this milieu was Kitchener, at that time a small industrial city of some 33,000.

Within the confines of this smaller world the Mennonite Brethren Church grappled with an agenda ranging from M. C. C. projects to Christian education, home missions, retirement of the mortgage of the local church, the engagement of a new minister in 1944, women's mission sales and the projection of new church budgets.

In the field of Christian education the "Virgil-Vineland Bibelschulverein" (the Virgil-Vineland Bible School Society) was organized in 1939. Under the direction of Bernhard B. Boldt, the school was inaugurated on November 22. When Boldt was commissioned to prepare courses suitable for use by other churches, Isaac T. Ewert carried on the work. The churches of New Hamburg, Kitchener and Leamington all showed a keen interest in Bible Schools.

In 1939 the congregation in Kitchener began to consider the possibility of hiring a custodian for the church, rather than "farming out" this responsibility among the members. The only applicant for the job was Peter J. Isaak, who was hired to do the work for \$15.00 per month. Isaak, who for many years served the church as deacon also, handed over his custodial duties after some years, to Cornelius Warkentin.

Responsible for the spiritual well-being of the church at the time, was H. H. Janzen as leading preacher (leitender Prediger). He continued to "shepherd" the Mennonite Brethren flock according to the pattern he had established since assuming his office in 1934. It had become an accepted fact, that

in addition to leading his flock, Janzen also spent considerable time away from the home-base, for he was in great demand as a speaker and lecturer. The invitations to preach came not only from MB circles across Canada and the United States, but also from groups of Russians who had emigrated from their homeland to America in search of freedom. Janzen's command of the Russian language, his expository skill, penetrating insight into scripture, and the love he cherished for his former countrymen, combined to open hearts and doors of Russian Baptist congregations to him in areas ranging from Alberta in Western Canada, to New York State on the Atlantic seaboard. Janzen was burdened for the spiritual welfare of all these people. In working among them he became aware of a great spiritual hunger, but also of the great dearth of workers in their midst. Regarding this he wrote in 1938:

"The Russians are approaching me more frequently, requesting my assistance.....I shall be travelling among the Russians in the U. S. A. during September and October. I was already there in May." (49)

In viewing this situation Janzen's spiritual sensitivity was deeply moved. He was burdened for a people, whose homeland the Mennonites had shared for more than a century. Similar sentiments he appears to have verbalized when telling his wife:

"It is my intention to make good to our Russian fellow-Christians in this country, what we were unable, and also neglected to do for them in Russia. Time is short, we must exert ourselves, for the fields are white unto harvest." (50)

Janzen' intermittent travel added to his already heavy pastoral duties at home. His congregation, however, had high expectations of him, including house-calls, sick visitations, the pulpit ministry as well as conducting and attending many meetings. Of these responsibilities he was fully aware. Concerning them he wrote to C. H. Unruh:

"I believe that I shall have to relinquish some of my

leadership responsibilities in the church, for my travels require so much of my time. The brotherhood is not yet ready, nor willing, to accept this line of thought, and they do not appear to be willing to relinquish their hold on me." (51)

Janzen considered the Russian appeal to him, as his "Macedonian Call", a plea he could not ignore. To his friend F. C. Thiessen of Winnipeg, he says:

"Yesterday a letter arrived from Bro. Deyneka, General Director of the Russian Gospel Association. He asks on his own behalf, and on that of Dr. Oswald Smith of the People's Church in Toronto, whether I would be willing to teach at a Russian Bible School, an institution they plan to open in Toronto on November 1st. The appeal for help from the Russians is speaking to my heart ever more urgently. Should I feel so led, I may perhaps consent." Somewhat later Janzen continues: "On November 20, 1942, I consented to teach in the Russian Bible School, which is to be opened on January 4, 1943." (52)

Janzen conducted the Russian Bible Institute to 1946. The student body was never large, however the enrollment increased from 11 in the first year to 29 in the fourth. Those who received training later worked in Russian churches, serving in such capacities as Sunday School teachers, ministers and missionaries among their own people. (53)

As indicated previously, the responsibilities imposed on Janzen while directing the Toronto Bible Institute in addition to leading his congregation in Kitchener, proved to be too strenuous. On April 7, 1944, at a church business meeting, Janzen asked the congregation to relieve him of his duties as of May 1st. With sincere regrets the church accepted the resignation, but assured their leader that it did not wish to impede his service in building God's kingdom. By rising to its feet, the congregation demonstrated its gratitude and its deep regard for the leader who had served them so well since 1934. (54)

In spite of laying down the leadership of the Kitchener church, Janzen continued to live in that city, as well as keeping up his membership in

the church, whose pastor he had been for ten years. He continued to direct his work at the Russian Bible Institute in Toronto from Kitchener. This required that he commute to Toronto every Monday morning, and return again on Friday. Janzen did not drive a car. A call from the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, brought this chapter of his life to an end in 1946.

Janzen shared his vision for an extended work among the Russians with other leaders of the Mennonite Brethren. On August 25, 1944, he reports to the Rundschau, the official MB weekly newspaper in the German language, as follows:

"At the meeting of the Special Committee for Missions among the Russian People, held from July 7-12, future strategy of operations among the Russians was considered, such as launching a missions project among the Dukhobors at Grand Forks of British Columbia."

In Alberta, where David B. Wiens had opened a Bible School at Arelee, work was to be begun among the Ukrainian population, as well. Abram Huebert of Leamington, who also had a good command of the Russian language, was commissioned to work in the environs of Edmonton.

"Both Wiens and Huebert", said Janzen, "are familiar with Russians and enjoy their confidence. This is of distinct value."

In order to prepare suitable material for use in Russian circles, a committee of three was appointed: A. H. Unruh, Winkler, J. Thiessen, Vancouver, and H. H. Janzen, Kitchener. Janzen was appointed to supervise and co-ordinate the missions activities carried on among Russian people. (55)

Reflecting in retrospect upon the projections for action made by the Special Committee for Missions among the Russian People, an invariable question arises: To what extent were these brethren able to realize the plans of the committee? Considering the lack of definitive information and data

available on this subject at the present time, it would hardly be possible to make a fair and accurate assessment on the situation. It should be pointed out, however, that in all probability the vision was brought at least to partial fruition. Abram Huebert worked for periods of time among Russians living in Western Canada. His years were advancing, however, and time took its toll. Abram Unruh, also advanced in years, was heavily involved in establishing the MB Bible College in Winnipeg, and institution that invited H. H. Janzen to join its faculty in 1946. D. B. Wiens continued to work among Russian people. Eventually he expanded the work to include radio broadcasting, thus broadening the sphere of contact with Russians by penetrating the Iron Curtain. Until his early death in the early 80's, he persisted to demonstrate his love and devotion for his erstwhile countrymen, by proclaiming to them the message of God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ.

As indicated, Janzen's tenure of office at the Russian Bible Institute in Toronto was terminated on May 8, 1946, when he accepted a call to teach at Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Concerning his resignation he stated:

"In as far as we understand the will of God, this is now my last year at this school.

The following reasons have led me to resign this position:

1. Four years ago, at the time of the school's organization, it was clear to me, that this was only a temporary position, for I felt no compulsion to sever my connection from my brethren in our congregation.
2. I have, during this time, by the Grace of God, been enabled to labour in this school for four years, and with his help I have been able to put this school on such a footing, that even though I leave, it will be able to continue functioning without any difficulty.
3. My dear family lives in Kitchener, where we own a home. In Kitchener my family has its church connection, which is so necessary and important for all. All this we were unable to find in Toronto. For that reason we have never made an attempt to change our place of residence. This, however, required that I be separated from them a great deal, for every Monday

morning I had to travel to Toronto, where I spent the week. At the end of the week I returned to Kitchener.

My other duties often demanded my absence from the family on week-ends as well, so that during the past years I have been away from home much more than present. To add to this, I noticed during this past year, that the future of the Bible Institute is perhaps quite precarious. The Board of Missions would like to move it to Chicago as soon as a suitable building can be found there. We believe that it was the Lord who called us to a teaching assignment at Mennonite Brethren Bible College." (56)

After Janzen's resignation from RBI in May 1946, the school functioned for only one additional year.

Some decades later, at Janzen's funeral, while reminiscing on the various facets of his life, Abram J. Dick, a former Sunday School Superintendent and Deacon of the Kitchener church, said:

"His keen spiritual insights and his command of Russian, enabled him to teach in the Russian Bible Institute of Toronto. It is true that in 1934 he accepted from his predecessor, Jacob P. Friesen, the responsibility of leading the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church, but he felt constrained to take on an additional assignment, that of the Russian Bible Institute.....
He gave to this institution four years of his time. The Russian Baptists would have greatly appreciated his continued services, but Bro. Janzen believed that his duty belonged first and foremost to his people. In this regard he followed the leading of the Holy Spirit." (57)

At some previous point reference was made to the fact, that Janzen's resignation from the pastorate of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church in 1944, was deeply regretted by the congregation. Many church members, however, were not taken by surprise, for Janzen's demand as a speaker, and his devotion to the Russian cause, were common knowledge. Therefore the congregation did not wish to impede their leader's labour in the Lord's vineyard. When the resignation was announced, therefore, immediate contingency plans were made at a church meeting for the continuation of smoothly running administrative wheels. A committee of three brethren, Jacob A. Kutz,

David Wiens Sr. and Victor Penner were elected. Under the chairmanship of Jacob Kutz, the committee, together with the Church Council, were to govern the affairs of the church until the end of the current year. (58) Nor was the church, at this point, totally without a minister. For some time the three resident teaching brethren, Isaac Ewert, Jacob Suderman and Henry Thielman, had already shared the pulpit ministry with Janzen from time to time. Now their services would be in demand more than ever, and for this purpose the Church Council was charged to draw up a preaching roster.

Selecting a replacement for Janzen became a priority for the Kitchener MB Church. In view of the fact that Janzen had not relinquished his membership, he was able to participate in church business meetings. At this critical juncture in the life of his former congregation, he used the confidence and the stature he enjoyed, to guide his fellow church members in the choice of a leader. At a business meeting held in his absence, a written recommendation, in which he suggested that the church choose Henry Thielman to succeed him, was read. Janzen suggested further, that Thielman be relieved from his factory job, be paid a decent wage, and be provided with proper living accommodation, to enable him to serve the church successfully. Janzen even suggested a brief job description. Thielman, he said, would be the leader of the church, the shepherd of the flock, responsible for the spiritual welfare of those entrusted to his care. Pulpit duty and house visitation of the members would be his responsibility. Should the entire pulpit service prove to be too much for him at the beginning, he would be able to call on the three preaching brethren (Suderman, Ewert and Janzen). These teaching brethren, however, would not be remunerated for their services.

Janzen's suggestions were contested by secret ballot. Church membership

at the time stood at 196, of which 105 were at the meeting. In principle 92 votes were with Janzen's suggestions, 6 disagreed and 7 abstained. Ballot- in the choice of a leader produced similar results. Henry Thielman was chosen by a wide margin -- 78 votes. In reply to this expression of confidence, Thielman told the congregation that he was able to accept this assignment only, after overcoming severe inner struggles. In obedience to the Lord, however, he was willing to serve where assigned, even though his actual goal was the foreign mission field.

With the election of a leading minister, the tripartite committee consisting of David Wiens Sr., Victor Penner and Jacob Kutz, elected to lead the church in the absence of a leading minister, was dissolved.

To facilitate the smooth transference of office to the new minister, and to assist him in becoming familiar with the various details involved in the process, Jacob Kutz was elected leader of the church to the end of 1944, at which time, i. e., on January 1, 1945, Thielman would be inducted into his new office. Because neither Thielman nor Suderman had as yet been ordained to the ministry, in spite of the fact that both men believed that the Lord had called them to this office, the congregation decided to make application to the next annual conference for permission to proceed with the ordination. (59)

Some weeks later the mundane aspects, such as the financial arrangements of the contract between Thielman and the Kitchener church, were negotiated. Following a lively debate by the membership, Thielman was informed that the church offered to pay him an annual stipend of \$1,650.00 with one month's vacation. The money was to be paid in equal monthly instalments. Intent of terminating the agreement by either party, was to serve three months notice prior to the end of the year. Thielman accepted the proposal with gratitude, but asked the church not to insist on a three-month notification period in

in the event he were to be called to the foreign mission field. The church agreed to the request.

At the same meeting Isaac T. Ewert notified the church, that the Ontario MB Conference had given its consent to the ordination of Thielman and Suderman. Thereupon the congregation decided that this rite was to be performed on Sunday, December 3, 1944 at 2:30 in the afternoon, and that all MB churches of Ontario be invited to attend. Rev. Isaac Thiessen was asked to preach the dedicatory sermon, and H. H. Janzen would perform the rite of ordination. (60)

On January 1, 1945, Thielmann was officially inducted into his new office. For another year and a half, H. H. Janzen, the man who had ordained him, maintained his membership in the Kitchener MB congregation, he continued to commute to Toronto on a weekly basis in order to direct the affairs of the Russian Bible Institute in that city. In May of 1946, however, he resigned this position, and accepted a teaching post on the staff of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. (61)

Accepting this assignment obviously meant a major upheaval for the Janzen household. This time it would be moved to Manitoba's capital, where there was ample opportunity for the entire family to find a church home, something that had not been available in Toronto. The Janzens lost no time in preparing for the move. Concerning this move, the diary of a church member reports the following:

"On July 18, our church arranged a farewell-celebration for the Janzens. Seven ministers from other churches and many guests attended the service. The sanctuary was crowded. The choir sang. Bro. Janzen based his farewell message on Acts 20:32 --'And now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.'

"The Peter Dicks and the Nick Fehderaus had prepared a

supper for the Janzens and friends. At neatly decked tables, arranged for this purpose in the Dick garage, about 90 guests partook of fruit-salad, Zwieback (rolls), cakes and coffee. A quartett provided music, and Frieda Dick a recitation of poetry.

After supper we assembled again in church, which was ~~once~~ more crowded. Following a choral rendition by the choir, Bro. Janzen related parts of his life-story. Never before had he unfolded his personal history in such detail. This interesting account was followed by expressions of good wishes from ministers, deacons, guests and members of the congregation. Often the eyes of well-wishers glistened with tears. Bro. Thielmann asked those in the pews, who had been baptized by Bro. Janzen, to stand. Many rose to their feet, including Janzen's wife. Janzen, however, did not wish to see the large numbers. He waved his hand, and fixed his eyes on the floor." (62)

In honour of this memorable celebration Sara Isaak composed a miniature epic, depicting the life and activities of H. H. Janzen against the backdrop of the congregation. It follows with an English prose rendition opposite:

In diesen Jahren die verflossen
Haben wir viel Segen genossen,
Seit Bruder Janzen angefangen,
Zu predigen in Gottes Namen.

Und ich denk es ist heut wohl die
rechte Zeit
Mal zurückzusehn in die Vergangen-
heit,
Denn wenn wir mal ernstlich rück-
wärts schauen,
Bekommen wir wieder Mut und Ver-
trauen,
Uns gänzlich auf den Herrn zu
stützen,
Sein Stab und Stecken wird uns
schützen.

Also der Anfang war sehr bescheiden,
Bruder Janzen mußte die Schäflein
weiden --.
Als Sonntagschullehrer führte er
diese
Zu frischem Wasser auf grüner Wiese.
Die Herde war immer fröhlich und
munter --
Ein mancher der Anwesenden war
darunter.

During the past years we have re-
ceived many blessings since Bro.
Janzen began to preach in God's
name.

I deem this to be the appropriate
time for us to consider bygone years.
By seriously considering the past,
we will again receive courage to
trust and rely completely on the
Lord's rod and staff for protection.

Our beginnings were very humble.
Bro. Janzen was in charge of shep-
herding the flock. As Sunday School
teacher he led the flock to fresh
springs of water and green meadows.
The flock was always happy and of
good courage. Many of those assem-
bled here today were members of that group.

Und pünktlich jeden Sonnabend kamen
Die Sonntagschullehrer damals zusammen.
Man nahm sich die Zeit, die Lektion
zu studieren,
Geriet dann auch öfters ins disputieren.

At that time the Sunday School
teachers assembled punctually every
Saturday night, in order to prepare
the lessons for the next day. This
often led into lively discussions.

An solchem Abend war es mal wieder --
Nachdem wir geprüft Geschichte und Lieder,
Da sagt Bruder Janzen mit ernstem Gesicht: **Janzen said very seriously: 'bro-**
Morgen abend, Geschwister, denkt an mich. **thers and sisters, think of me to-**
Ich soll nämlich eine Predigt geben -- **morrow night, for I am to preach a**
Und das ist die erste in meinem Leben. **sermon -- a first in my life.**

On one of those evenings, after we
had considered the lesson, Bro.
Janzen said very seriously: 'bro-
thers and sisters, think of me to-
morrow night, for I am to preach a
sermon -- a first in my life.

Als der Sonntagabend gekommen,
Stand Bruder Janzen, bleich und
beklommen,
Hinter dem großen Tisch im Lokal,
Und predigte uns zum erstenmal.
Die Ansprache dauerte grad zehn
Minuten!
So sehr hätt' er sich nicht brauchen
zu sputen.
Doch der Text war erschöpft, drum er
schliessen mußte.
Er hatte alles gesagt, was er wußte.
Wachner kamen ihm denn auch gleich
die Bedenken,
Der Feind wollte Kleinmut ins Herz
ihm senken.
Doch stärkte der Her ihn, gab Kraft
im Streite,
Wir sehn Bruder Janzen predigt noch
heute.

On Sunday night Bro. Janzen stood
behind the big table in the rented
hall and preached. In ten minutes
he was finished. He had exhausted
his text and his resources. He had
said everything he knew. Being de-
pleted, he had to conclude his ser-
monette. The enemy, Satan, natura-
lly tried to discourage him, but the
Lord gave him strength to continue,
and Bro. Janzen is still preaching.

Als er seinen Dienst im Weinberge
erkannt,
Wurde er bald als Pred'ger ernannt,
Und ordiniert mit Händen auflegen,
Der Herr gab dazu seinen heil'gen
Segen.
Der erste Schritt auf der neuen Bahn,
War nun mit Gottes Hilfe getan.
Nun hieß es mutig weiter wandern
Von einer Station bis zur andern.
Das Arbeitsfeld wurde immer weiter,
Erst Prediger, dann Gemeindeführer,
Und mit Stimmenmehrheit wurde er so
Konferenzleiter in Ontario.

When he recognized his ability to
serve in the Lord's vineyard, he
was soon chosen to preach. He was
ordained by the laying on of hands.
The Lord blessed these proceedings.
The first step in a new direction
had been taken. From here on the
watchword was to proceed from station
to station. The sphere of activities
broadened in time. At first he was
preacher, then leader of the congrega-
tion, and finally he became moder-
ator of the MB Conference of Ontario.

Doch wer da hat, dem wird gegeben --
Bald rief er die Bibelschule ins Leben
In Toronto, wo so viel Russen wohnen,
Diesen Dienst wird Gott ihm besonders
lohn.

But he who has, to him shall be
given, and soon he started a Bible
School in Toronto, where many Russi-
ans live. For this service God will
grant him a special reward.

Und wieviel ist er rumgefahren --
 Bald Eisenbahn, dann mit dem Karen,
 Und hat den Menschen, die viel gesündigt,
 Das teure Evangelium verkündigt.
 Chicago, New York, California,
 Von Ost nach West in Canada,
 Bei Sturm und Schnee, im Sonnenbrand
 Fuhr Bruder Janzen durch das Land,
 Und predigte Jesu Lieb' und Erbarmen,
 Die er hat mit den Sündern und Armen.
 In solchen herrlichen Segensstunden
 Haben viele den Herrn Jesus gefunden.

And how much he travelled far
 and wide, by train and car, in
 heat or cold, to preach the good
 news of salvation. He preached
 everywhere -- in Chicago, New
 York, California, as well as in
 eastern and western Canada.
 Through his ministry many have
 found the Lord Jesus.

Jetzt hat Bruder Janzen den Ruf vernommen,
 Als Lehrer nach Winnipeg zu kommen,
 Und an der Bibelschule zu lehren.
 Gern wir von diesem Plan nicht hören,
 Denn wir werden ihn sehr vermissen,
 Was die Gemeinden dort alle wissen.
 Aber Gott hat es so beschlossen,
 Darum wollen wir unverdrossen
 Sagen: 'Dein Wille, Herr, geschehe !'
 Er bleibt ja stets in unsrer Nähe.
 Und wo sich Gotteskinder kennen,
 Kann sie kein Weg voneinander trennen.
 Und wenn auch der Abschied verursacht
 viel Schmerzen,
 Wir wünschen Dir dennoch das Beste von
 Herzen. (63)

Now Bro. Janzen has received a
 call to teach at the Bible College
 in Winnipeg. We do not like to
 hear about this plan, for we shall
 sorely miss him. The churches in
 Manitoba know this very well. But
 it is God's decision, and there-
 fore we concur with pleasure and
 say: 'Thy will, o Lord, be done.'
 The Lord will always remain in ~~our~~
 midst, and nothing can separate
 the children of God from one ano-
 ther. Although this parting cau-
 ses us deep pain, from our hearts
 we wish you the best.

On August 9, 1946, the Janzen's left Kitchener by train. Many of the con-
 gregation accompanied them to the railway station, where they serenaded their
 former leader with a last hymn of farewell.

For the MB congregation at 53 Church Street in Kitchener, the decade of
 the forties was significant in various ways. Of major importance for the 208
 membership was the retirement of the church debt, which had been carried since
 the building was purchased in 1935. What exultant elation and sheer relief
 must have been felt by those present, to hear Jacob A. Kutz announce at a
 business meeting, that the mortgage on the church property had finally been
 retired. (64) Paying the church debt had been a long and arduous struggle,
 but after a ten-year effort it was accomplished at last. The mood engendered
 at the time was to some extent captured and preserved by the
 following description:

"In the fall we were able to complete the payments on our little church, and in that connection we had such a beautiful celebration. Behind the pulpit stood Bro. Janzen, Bro. Thielmann and Corny Rempel, the Church Secretary, who burned the mortgage. The congregation sang: 'Nun danket alle Gott' (Now thank we all our God). The occasion was solemn and uplifting." (65)

While the Kitchener congregation was struggling to rid itself of the debt owing on its church building, another debt, but of a somewhat different nature, was looming large on its financial horizon. This other debt was the "Reiseschuld", the debt owing the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for transporting some 20,000 Mennonite emigrants from the Soviet Union to Canada during the 1920s. This debt concerned not only Mennonite Brethren, but every member of the "brotherhood", regardless of conference affiliation, who had availed himself of the credit extended for transportation by the C. P. R. The total cost of the completed operation was horrendous, but *during* the early twenties it was the only way of expediting a mass exodus of poverty-stricken folk, people who had been bled white in the U. S. S. R. during the aftermath of World War I.

In order to open the doors of Canada for Mennonite emigrants from the Soviet Union, a means of transportation had to be arranged. For this purpose the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, under the chairmanship of Elder David Toews of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, was formed in 1922. It was this Board that approached the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for an extension of credit to this end. Having agreed to this project, the C. P. R. proceeded to draw up the terms for a contract. When the contract was presented to the Board, its terms were considerably stiffer than the Board had at first been led to believe. There was, however, no alternative to this route, if the destitute "brethren" in Russia were to be given the opportunity to emigrate. Toews, therefore, approached the Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada for permission to sign the contract, but because of the harsh terms, he was turned

down. This happened three times.

At this point in time the projected immigration movement hung in the balance, and might well have ended in the sand. Time was of the essence. Events in Russia were moving swiftly, and Toews felt that he could not fail the hopes and expectations of the brotherhood in the Soviet Union. Therefore he stepped into the breach and signed the "ominous" document in the name of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization. Toews' signature on "das verhängnisvolle" Dokument, was the key that opened the doors of Canada to some 20,000 Mennonites who consequently were able to find new homes here. . . *

Affixing his signature to the "ominous" document, brought in its wake untold blessings for thousands of people and their posterity, but on the other hand it heaped on Toews unlimited criticism and abuse. To all intents and purposes it heaped on him the burden and responsibility of the entire debt. Of Toews, no doubt ^{it} can be said: "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it." (66) Equally applicable to him would also be the words of our Lord: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (67) The burden he shouldered at this time, he was destined to carry for the rest of his life. Not until he lay dying, was the Reiseschuld liquidated. Toews departed this life a vindicated man.

From the day of their arrival in Canada, Mennonite immigrants were urged to pay their transportation debt as soon as possible, not only in order to fulfill the terms of the agreement made with the C. P. R., but to repay the debt was the key to keeping the line of credit flowing for later immigrants. Furthermore, it was impressed upon the immigrant conscience, that the Reiseschuld was a "debt of honour" personally, as well as corporeally. Failure to pay would blight the generally good reputation enjoyed by the Mennonite community in Canada. Failure to pay the Reiseschuld would also violate the

* See Chapter IV, pp. 15-17.

implicit trust and confidence in the Mennonite brotherhood, which Elder Toews had laid on the line when he signed the contract with the "Company". Failure to pay this debt would mean that the Mennonite brotherhood had failed its benefactor. Needless to say, every conscientious immigrant took these admonitions and explanations to heart. To carry them out, however, as most would have wished to do, was a difficult undertaking.

Generally speaking it was a hard and arduous task to pay a debt that was subject to a 6 per cent interest charge. Those who settled in Ontario were generally able to pay their debts somewhat faster than were their cousins of the Prairie Provinces, where industry was at that time practically non-existent. Sometimes sickness or even death prevented immigrants from paying their dues in part or total. Unfortunately there were those also, who were callous concerning their responsibilities or even recalcitrant. In this regard strange and bizarre things happened. Perhaps the classic example occurred in Kitchener, where a widow employed in a shirt factory, used part of her weekly pay-check to pay the Reiseschuld for a family-man who scoffed at the idea of having to pay the transportation charges for his family.

With the passage of time, however, it became increasingly important that the transportation debt be liquidated. When the economic depression of the thirties made this well-nigh impossible, especially for those of the Prairies, the Canadian Board of Colonization came to the rescue. It succeeded in negotiating more favourable terms of payment with the C. P. R., including bonus reductions on principal sums owing. The Board facilitated the collection of monies by having C. F. Klassen of Winnipeg criss-cross the country in an effort to contact the people personally for this reason. Although an overall reduction in the total debt gradually became apparent, vestiges of the Reiseschuld still lingered by the mid-forties.

During the forties leaders of the immigrant community became ever more

determined to make an all-out effort , collectively and co-operatively, to wipe the Reiseschuld off the books once and for all. To this end a plan of procedure was proposed by the delegates of the Immigranten Vertreter Versammlung (Deputies of the Immigrant Society), which convened in Vineland in the fall of 1945. It was here suggested that the unpaid portion of Ontario's transportation debt, and that part of the total overall Canadian debt which would be allocated to Ontario, be proportioned according to membership, and thereupon assigned to all "Russian Mennonite Churches", regardless of conference affiliation. This proposal was accepted by the Kitchener MB Church.

Thereupon Henry P. Rempel, Jacob Bergen, Peter J. Rempel, Henry J. Reimer, and Nicholai Fehderau were appointed to delete from the membership list of the Kitchener MB Church such as were unable to pay their portion of the levy, as well as non-immigrant members. The remaining adherents of the congregation were then approached concerning their willingness to contribute toward the liquidation of the Reiseschuld. (68)

Paying the debt for the brotherhood at large, required an unselfish spirit and a generosity to give sacrificially. Many immigrants, now up in years, had laboured long and arduously to clear up personal debts, only to be approached again to help pay for someone perhaps less conscientious. But pay they did. There were also such who had paid their own passage, and therefore owed the C. P. R. nothing. But these also did their share, for they too recognized the urgency of deleting this blot from the Mennonite name. People were also being reminded, that miles away, somewhere in Saskatchewan, Elder Toews lay dying, sorely burdened by the debt for which he at one time shouldered responsibility.

Early in 1947 the eradication of the Reiseschuld, provincially as well as nationally, became a fait accompli. The joyful announcement was made to the Kitchener MB congregation at a business meeting on January 12, 1947, by

Jacob Bergen. This pronouncement brought the church to its feet. As the burden receded, the voices of the membership mingled in a chorus of praise and thanksgiving, "Nun danket alle Gott", (Now let us thank our God). (69)

Meanwhile news of the debt liquidation was also brought to the man, who a quarter century earlier, in 1922, had initiated the debt in order to make the Mennonite migration a reality. Like an unresolved confession, the debt had weighed heavily upon him many years. But release and vindication came at last. Toews, the man who stood in the gap, had been granted grace by the Almighty, to see the fruits of his labours honourably vindicated in the face of his people and the world.

During the decade of the forties the Kitchener MB Church introduced a number of innovations into its order of service. One of the new practices started in 1941 was the use of individual communion cups, instead of the single chalice when serving the wine at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the same year black baptismal gowns were acquired, in order to lend dignity and solemnity to the rite of baptism. The acquisition of an indoor baptismal font was another innovation, for Mennonite Brethren had to this point baptized outdoors. Finding a suitable spot in the open had always been a major concern for those who were responsible to find such a locality. Finally, in 1943 the church in Kitchener decided to install a font, and initiated it on Good Friday of that year. Concerning this happy occasion Sara Isaak left this record:

"On Good Friday our congregation celebrated its first indoor baptism. In February we had a baptismal font installed, and great was our joy when we were able to use it for the first time. Among the baptismal candidates was Henry H. Dick, my former Sunday School pupil. (Dick shortly thereafter became involved in the Home Missions Project at Coldwater.)

During the morning worship service Rev. Janzen asked the congregation to come to the evening service, prepared to participate in a silent offering. What he really wanted was an offering of bills only, no silver. To our amazement the entire cost of the baptismal font was covered."

Another innovative practice introduced in 1943 was the beginning of the complete remuneration of the preacher, or pastor -- as he was eventually referred to. Among Mennonites this custom was new at the time, although Kitchener had paid its minister partially for some years previously. (70)

During the decades of the forties and fifties Daily Vacation Bible School, DVBS, a type of children's mission, became a popular form of outreach into "unchurched" regions. Such a programme was conducted by the Kitchener MB Church during the summer of 1947 in the near-by Puslinch area. Because keen interest was shown in the work by the local population, it was decided to attempt some form of follow-up programme. Peter J. Rempel, a member of the Home Mission Board, felt deeply burdened for the people of the Puslinch region, an area economically and spiritually poor. In the fall of the same year Rempel approached Corny Barg, David D. Wiens, Lydia Dick and Helen Boldt to join him in his quest for a possible mission-field. (71)

Subsequently the area was surveyed, people were interested, the trustees put a one-room school at the disposal of the Kitchenerites, and thus was born a Home Mission project, which for ca. 18 years was the protégé of Junior Endeavour and the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church. The work that was started in Puslinch, a Sunday School and for a while church services for adults once a month, were not easy to conduct. After the work had been in progress for two years, Peter Rempel reported to the church that the task was discouraging, attendance at Sunday School fluctuated from 4 to 25 persons, reflecting the general tenor of the district. The labour at Puslinch continued to require devotion and persistency, as well as determination to carry out the Master's commission at any price. During the intervening years 1947-65, between the start of the job and its completion, many devoted and faithful young people invested untold hours of time and energy in this field.

Herb Swartz took the leadership when P. J. Rempel stepped back from the Puslinch work. About a year later, in 1951, he reported to the church in Kitchener on the state of the Puslinch mission. He stressed the fact that it was a faith mission. From the mundane point of view he pointed out, that during the year 1951-52 the workers at Puslinch had served 52 times on Sundays, and in addition on three special occasions, Christmas, Easter and the picnic in summer. Numerically the enrollment had increased somewhat -- from 14-28. Budgetary items were grouped into three chief categories:

a) travel expenses for the year	\$39.65	
b) Sunday School materials	\$28.73	
c) special expenditures	\$51.38	
in total	<u>\$119.76</u>	(72)

When Herb Swartz returned to his studies in 1954, the leadership was taken by Hardy and Ella Klassen. This couple, as the people before them, tried hard to instill enthusiasm and new life into the work at School #7. During the summers of 1958 and 1959 an expansion of the work was attempted by conducting Vacation Bible School at a second location, School #11. (73)

Helen and Jake Loewen were asked by Rev. J. J. Toews to take charge of the new situation. After going the new route until 1965, however, an evaluation led the Puslinch workers to the conclusion, that the area was perhaps too far removed from Kitchener to keep up the contact indefinitely, and should, therefore, be handed over to a church located in closer proximity. The question was further discussed with the Christian Education Committee of the home church. Thereupon it was decided to approach the Hespeler Baptist Church, to see whether it would be willing to take over the Puslinch mission. Hespeler Baptist agreed to the request. Shortly thereafter the Mennonite Brethren Church of Kitchener handed over the mission which its men and women had tended for 18 years with much sacrifice, love and devotion. (74)

Alongside of the Puslinch outreach programme, Kitchener became deeply involved in another Home Mission project, the work in Hampshire, near Cold Water. Here a group of V. B. S. teachers from southern Ontario became acquainted, in the late 1940's, with a nucleus of believers who, for doctrinal reasons, had severed their former church affiliations. These folk were assembling together for worship, but they lacked a pastor to lead them. When this situation was brought to the attention of the Home Missions Board, a plan was soon devised to assist these people. Rev. Henry H. Dick of Kitchener was commissioned by the Board to examine the situation in the Cold Water region, with the result that he and his family soon located there.

H. H. Dick and his wife Erica both had their spiritual roots in the MB church of Kitchener. For this congregation to take a keen interest in the Hampshire mission, therefore, was natural. In order to provide the Dicks with reasonably comfortable living quarters, a suitable house was purchased at a cost of \$3,500.00. (75) This "Coldwater manse" then became, in the years to come, the home of every successive couple that served at the Hampshire mission.

Once in the area, Dick was successful in befriending the believers in Hampshire. He won their trust and confidence, and succeeded in coalescing the group into a unit. To aid in the work of planting a church, a small chapel was dedicated in 1952. The baptism of two persons represented the first fruits.

During his ministry in the Coldwater region, Dick gained access to many avenues of service. Entry into the public schools provided the opportunity for religious instruction. During the summer months he directed the Vacation Bible School programme in the area. For this purpose students from Eden Christian College came to Coldwater to help with the work. A number of them

remained for an extended period of time, in order to teach in the Public School System of the region. These young teachers also assisted in the production of the weekly radio-broadcast over CFOR Orillia, under the name, "The Chapel Speaks". For the student-teachers the Dicks provided a spiritual home.

Although Henry Dick's tenure of office lasted but a few years, 1951-54, his ministry was blessed, and the workers who followed him continued to build on the foundations he had laid. The men who carried on the work were John B. Epp. 1954-57; Herman Kroeker. 1957-67; Peter J. Klassen. 1967-81; Phil Hamm. 1981---

Since its beginnings the work in Hampshire has experienced considerable growth. In 1961 the congregation was organized into a Mennonite Brethren church. A new chapel was dedicated in 1972, but the older structure continues to be used by the Sunday School. When the Hampshire church became self-supporting in 1976, it ceased to be under the auspices of Home Missions. Membership in 1982 stood at 67. (76)

Another Home Missions project in which Kitchener took a keen interest, was Bethesda, the treatment centre for emotionally disturbed persons. The necessity for operating such an institution became evident shortly after the arrival of the emigrants from Russia in the 1920's. The strains and the stresses endured in Russia during the years of terror which followed after World War I, as well as difficulties encountered in trying to adjust to life in Canada, had been greater than some were able to cope with. A few of these people had to be hospitalized at the Ontario Hospital in Hamilton. On entering Canada in the 1920's, however, Mennonites had to promise, that in no way would they become chargeable to the state. Failure to abide with this regulation would mean deportation.

In the case of one woman, which was being treated at the Ontario Hospital

a few payments had lapsed, whereupon deportation proceedings must have been set in motion almost immediately, for when the family came to visit her, she was gone and on her way. Actual deportation was averted only on the instantaneous and decisive action on the part of the brotherhood. H. P. Wiebe, who had received training in the treatment of the mentally disturbed, while still in Russia, was dispatched post-haste to Montreal, from whence he retrieved the missing woman. Thereupon Wiebe and his wife, who had also received training in the treatment of the mentally ill, were approached concerning the possibility of setting up and heading a treatment centre for such as were mentally and emotionally imbalanced. The Wiebes consented. In 1932 they received the first resident in their home, a rented farm near Stratford. Others *patients followed.*

With an increase in the number of residents, the inadequacy of the rented farm became obvious. In 1937 the Wiebes were able purchase the 85-acre Stoner farm near Campden in the Niagara Peninsula. Here they relocated. At the time of occupancy the roomy 102 year old farm-house lacked plumbing facilities, hydro, as well as a central heating system, but nevertheless, it had great potential. The income from a mixed farming operation, to which grapes and fruit were later added, provided the necessary income to carry out a badly needed renovations programme, for which a great deal of voluntary labour was provided by both, the United Mennonite and the Mennonite Brethren churches. This participation of the "Home" aided in dispelling the fears that had prevailed for a while among the population of the neighbourhood about the place and its residents. (77)

The suggestion of starting a Christian institution for the treatment of the mentally disturbed, was first discussed in MB circles in Kitchener at a church business meeting in the fall of 1936. On this occasion a letter was read from the Welfare Committee of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Coloni-

zation. The letter recommended the creation of such an organization. The idea received whole-hearted support in Kitchener. A citation from the minutes of that meeting which express complete agreement with the idea, follows:

"Wir als Gemeinde sind voll und ganz für die Einrichtung solcher Anstalt, denn die Notwendigkeit derselben liegt auf der Hand."

"We as a church are entirely in favour of the creation of such an establishment for obvious reasons."

Concerning the finances required to realize this project, the suggestion was made to collect the necessary funds through the Provincial Immigration Committee, failing which, funds would have to be collected by the churches. (78)

By the fall of 1944, the Wiebe operation, still a private institution, had grown to the extent that the Ontario MB Conference made an arrangement with the owners to buy the institution. The final transaction was completed in 1945 for \$19,500.00. Two years later the Canadian Conference assumed responsibility for the work, and launched Bethesda on a great expansion period. A new building was added and dedicated in 1950. The addition of new facilities and new services have continued to enrich and to supplement existing programmes with the passage of time. (79)

The importance of congregational singing during a worship service has been recognized since the time of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther, the great reformer, contributed personally to the stock-pile of hymns suitable for praise and edification.

Mennonites also, including the Brethren, have laid great stress and emphasis upon the importance of congregational singing. When the newly organized Mennonite Brethren Church of Ontario began to gather for Sunday worship in a rented hall at 40 King Street East, the congregation opted for good singing from the start. The hymnal used was the Dreiband^{*}, a book brought

* Three Volume Book

from the Molotschna. Olga Friesen, daughter of the leading minister, Jakob P. Friesen, was the first pianist. When Olga Friesen soon thereafter entered a school of nursing in Hamilton, Manya (Marie) Fehderau took her place. In this capacity she served the church until 1940, when she asked to be relieved of her duties. A successor was then found in Katharina Swartz, with an alternate in Marga Rempel. (80)

In order to improve the quality of congregational singing and at the same time to increase the repertoire of hymns used by the church, Kitchener adopted the custom of electing a Gesangleiter, a song leader, someone conversant with the art of leading group-singing. This office first descended upon the shoulders of Gerhard J. Enns, the man who had conducted the church choir from ca. 1926-28, ^{he} took his assignment ^{very} seriously. At a business meeting in January 1942, he informed the church that within a space of four years, the members had learned 72 new songs. At the same time he suggested that 48 copies of Triumphant Service Songs be purchased for use in the evening service. Two years later the congregation decided to replace the Dreiband with Evangeliums-Lieder for use in the Sunday-morning service. The Dreiband was no longer available. (81)

After leading the song service of the congregation for 10 years, Gerhard Enns stepped down, vacating this position. Before doing so, however, he presented the following survey to the church. During the previous year, he said, the congregation had sung 237 songs. Of these 18 were sung twice, and one was sung three times. The congregation expressed their appreciation to Enns for a job well done. To succeed Enns, David Wiens Jr. was elected. At the same time John Goerz was elected to lead the singing Sunday evenings. For special music Victor Penner was made responsible. (82)

The Evangeliums-Lieder served the congregation for a number of years, but the repertoire of its hymns was somewhat limited in scope, and confined to

the lighter-type gospel song. Lacking were the chorales and the more majestic hymns of the Middle Ages, that call the believer to worship and prayer. It was, therefore, but a matter of time, until the need for a hymnal with a greater variety of songs, was called for in 1945 at the Northern District Conference (Canadian), held in Yarrow, British Columbia. A similar resolution, calling for the compilation of a new hymnal suitable for use in M. B. churches of North America, was tabled the same year in Dinuba, California, by the Pacific District Conference. These resolutions resulted in the production of a hymnal with a German text for use in Canada, and another one with an English text to be used in the United States. (83)

When the new hymnal rolled off the press, it represented the 7-year effort of a committee that had compiled a collection of 555 hymns, gleaned from an array of source-books ranging from: the Glaubensstimme, Frohe Botschaft, Jubiläumslieder, Reichslieder, Gesangbuch mit Noten, Heimatklänge, Sängerbote and others. The book was fully indexed, and all songs were arranged in four-part harmony. In his introductory remarks to the hymnal, B. B. Janz says at one point:

"Finally ways and means have been found, especially the proper brethren, to arrange according to tone and content, such an important book."

When the time arrived for orders to be placed for the new hymnals, Kitchener decided to purchase 175 books. (Membership in 1949 was 250.) * Fearing that such an expense might put too great a drain upon the Domestic Treasury, church members were asked to specify the numbers of books they might wish to pay for and then donate^{them} to the church. (84)

By the 1950's the Kitchener MB Church had three choirs, a 20-voice male choir directed in turn by John Goerz, Marwood Dick and Harold Fehderau, a

* Membership in the Kitchener MB Church mushroomed during the 1950's, partially due to the amalgamation with the New Hamburg and Hespeler churches, and partially due to the influx of post-war immigration from Europe and South America.

41-member youth choir directed by David D. Wiens, and the senior choir of 44 members under the baton of N. J. Fehderau since 1931. Singing and music-making played a prominent part in the life of the church in Kitchener, not the least of which were social benefits. In order to regulate the relationships among the various choirs, a Music Committee came into being, whose duty it was to keep its finger on the pulse of all music-related activities in the church. The following set of guidelines were to be observed by the committee in carrying out its duties:

- a) That conductors of all church choirs and leaders of congregational singing, as well as pianists accompanying congregational singing, the singing of any choir or other group serving at worship services, shall be chosen by the Music Committee, tested for proficiency, and then presented to the church for approval.
- b) That the transference of vocalists from one choir to another shall be regulated by the Music Committee in accordance to an agreement with the choir conductor. The Church Council is of the opinion, that every singer should serve a minimum period of three years in the Youth Choir, before he or she be promoted to the Church Choir. Such a stipulation, however, would not apply to persons having reached the age of 20.
- c) No singer may transfer from one choir to another without previous knowledge by the Music Committee.
- d) Whenever a choir member withdraws from any of the choirs, the Music Committee should be notified.
- e) The Music Committee regulates the size of the choir, so that the room it occupies is not overcrowded.
- f) In exceptional cases the Music Committee shall act according to its discretion.
- g) The conductor of the Church Choir shall participate in the deliberations of the Church Council.

When these guidelines were presented to the church for consideration, they were accepted with one dissenting vote. (85)

As the beginnings of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church had been small and humble in 1925, so also was the beginning of the church choir. The Lord's blessings, however, were not lacking, and growth was steady.

When N. J. Fehderau looked back in 1956 upon a quarter-century of conducting, he epitomized his view of service thus:

"Our chief responsibility to the church we considered to be the performance at the Sunday morning worship service. With few exceptions we occupied our places Sunday by Sunday...."

"During the 25-year period of service we have sung close to 6,000 songs at more than 1,500 occasions. We performed at 37 weddings, and at 15 silver weddings. We rendered more than 100 programmes (including programmes at weddings). We practiced and learned 776 new songs. We collected almost \$8,000.00."
(86)

At the beginning of Fehderau's career, however, when he took charge of the choir in 1931, he had very little material to work with. One of the first problems facing him was the acquisition of a varied repertoire. To find suitable German songs was not an easy matter. To find music books or sheet music in any quantity was almost prohibitive price-wise for a struggling immigrant church. Fehderau solved the problems confronting him by laboriously copying and duplicating -- at first by means of hectograph, any suitable materials he found. Eventually the church granted him permission to purchase a gastettner, which simplified matters considerably. Over a period of time, however, a repertoire of 700 songs had been collected and duplicated. Of this number 250 favourites were eventually chosen and bound into note-books entitled: Choice Choral Songs, volumes V and VI. (87) The following anonymous letter of appreciation to Fehderau and the choir, expresses deep sentiments of gratitude felt by many members of the congregation concerning the faithful ministry of music.

"Dear Conductor and Singers:

What a joy it was to see you again on Sunday morning. And with what freshness you sang! You do not realize how much you are being loved, even by those who are not converted. I know of unbelievers who come to church only in order to hear the choir.

You could not have chosen a better song for the conclusion of the service. You really mean what you say in singing: 'Make me more pure and humble', do you not? You are really evangelists, and such Satan is trying to silence. But I and many others are much in prayer for you, that your faith may make you strong. God bless you.

hear you sing.

From someone who loves to

When John Goerz, who later was to become Fehderau's successor, came to Kitchener in 1941 and joined the church choir, he was, in his own words, "immediately impressed with the organization of this choir and with the quality of its singing". The years from 1941-47 that Goerz spent in Kitchener, contributed much to his musical development. In addition to singing in the church choir, he also joined the K-W Philharmonic under Glen Kruspe. There he became familiar with such masterpieces as Handel's Messiah, Mendelssohn's Elijah, Hayden's Creation, Bach's Passions and others. Masterpieces such as these opened new avenues of thought, new vistas of delight for the budding musician. "It was like opening a great new realm for me, something I had hardly dreamed of," he mused.

An innovative effort Goerz put into practice during his early years in Kitchener, was the formation of an all-girls choir. He describes this venture as follows:

"In our church there was a group of teen-age girls that looked like good choir material. The parents gave me encouragement, and so I formed a girls-choir with 16 singers. We sang a-capella. I made my own arrangements of old familiar hymns and gospel songs. There is hardly a sweeter sound than that made by a group of young girls. Before long we were known in the community, and were invited to sing in various churches. We also visited hospitals and private sick-beds with our songs, and found a great reward by bringing comfort and a smile to the suffering. Nearly 30 years later, at our silver wedding, the members of this girls-choir, who were by then mothers and grandmothers, surprised me by a rendition of songs we used to sing when we were much younger." (38)

In 1947 Goerz left Kitchener for a period of time in order to improve his

Lieber Deregent u. Sänger:

Welche Freude war es Sonntag
morgen als ihr wieder da wart. Und wie frisch ihr
gesungen habt! Ihr wisst nicht wie sehr ihr geliebt
werdet auch von solchen, auch von solchen die nicht
bekehrt sind. Ich heime Ungläubige Seelen die nur
um den Chor zu hören kommen.

Das Schlusslied hätte
nicht besser gewählt sein können. Nicht wahr ihr
meint es so wenn ihr singt: "Mach mich reiner immer
kleiner!" Ihr seid ja Evangelisten u. die will der Teufel
still machen. Aber ich u. viele Andere beten viel für
euch das euer Glaube euch stark machen möchte. Gott
Segne euch!

Jemand der euch gerne hört.

knowledge of music. At the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg he studied conducting and other related subjects under Ben Horch. He also took voice training with Roberto Wood, who recommended him to Bernhard Naylor, director of the Winnipeg Philharmonic Choir. Of this prestigious group Goerz became not only a member, but a soloist for a short period. By 1950, however, he had returned to Kitchener, where he was again active in church choirs and the Philharmonic. When Fehderau, the veteran conductor, resigned his position in 1958, his mantle descended, by choice of the congregation, upon the shoulders of John Goerz. Regarding this confidence placed in him, Goerz says:

"This had been my life-long dream. The choir had 50 members, of ^{whom} several had taken voice training. It was a splendid group, as fine as any director could wish for. I began with great enthusiasm and was able to instill the singers with the same kind of fervour. At that time the church was still bilingual. Mr. Fehderau had left me a very fine collection of German anthems and songs, as well as some English material. I began immediately to build up our repertoire by adding new material. In doing so I discovered what a great wealth of choir music was available." (89)

An eloquent summation of Goerz's philosophy of the purpose and value of a choir's performance in the life of a congregation, follows:

"The choir served every Sunday morning with three numbers. In my estimation the most important function of a choir's performance is to support the preaching ministry, to inspire the congregation to praise and thanking the Lord, and to bring comfort and solace to those who are anxious and in distress.

"In addition we also rendered special programmes at Christmas, Easter, Song Festivals, Conferences, etc. A great occasion in the life of the choir was the opportunity to join other Mennonite groups of Ontario, to form a 700 voice choir that sang at the Mennonite World Conference in 1962.

"I led the Kitchener MB Choir for 21 years. There were some difficult times when singers were hard to find, but the choir always rallied, and God gave grace, renewed strength and enthusiasm, and blessing beyond expectation. I always sensed strong support from the congregation, which was a great encouragement. I look back on those years

with a grateful heart, for having been enabled to serve in the area which gave me the most satisfaction and joy." (90)

Long before Goerz completed his work with the church choir, the congregation had adopted the English language as its official mode of communication. For those who were more conversant in the German tongue, however, a special German service was provided. In view of the fact that there was no choir to beautify the German worship period, special music had to be supplied. In this capacity Goerz frequently served as soloist. The gratitude of those who heard him sing familiar strains and words, is expressed in the following anonymous letter: (in translation)

"Dear Brother and Sister Goerz !

We, the older members of the church, often wanted to thank you very sincerely for your love to us, the old church members. Brother Goerz, we thank you for the beautiful German songs you sing for us during the German service. Time and again one hears it being said, 'That was beautiful again, and a blessing. It does one good.' It is wonderful to hear the occasional German anthem even during the English service, such as 'Create in me a clean heart, oh God !' Please do it again and visit us with your singing during the German service. We pray for you and ask the Lord that he may uphold you and keep you for us, and make you a blessing for many old members. May the Lord bless you."

Choir conductors of the Kitchener MB Church have never received any financial remuneration. Tributes, such as the preceding letter, and the encouraging and appreciative verbal remarks given them, are their only rewards.

A considerable contribution in the field of music was also made by a male foursome, the Menno Quartett. During a part of the 30's and 40's Victor Penner, John Boldt, Peter J. Rempel and Corny Rempel did much to provide special music in the home church as well as in other churches of the Twin Cities.

Some years later the Menno Quartett was replaced by the Sacred Song

Liebe Geschwister Gengen!
Schon oft ^{wollen} wir alle Geschwister aus der
Gemeinde uns bei euch herzlich
bedanken für eure Liebe zu uns, alle
Geschwister Br. Götz für die schöne
Deutsche Lieder die Sie uns alleine
Morgens singen, in der Deutschen
- Andacht immer wieder hört man den
Sagen was das mal wieder schön
und segensreich auch tut er uns so
wohl wenn in der Englischen Stunde
null so wichtiger Deutschen Lied
geringer würde. Schenk Gott in
mir ein reines Herz. Bitte Sie bitten
Sie es mal wieder zu berücken Sie uns
auch mit ihrem Gesang in der Deutschen
Stunde was fliehen auch für euch ein
Gebet, möge der liebe Gott Sie uns
noch lange erhalten, in ein Segen sein
für viele Danke schön im Namen vieler
aller Geschwister, der Herr segne auch euch.

Quartett, which was singularly successful in its ministry of dispensing sacred music in many places over a long period of time. A certain form of continuity in its ministry was assured by the fact, that one of its members, Corny Rempel, had also belonged to the other ^{older} group, while Edward Boldt of the Sacred Song Quartett, carried on the tradition of his older brother, John Boldt, who had been a member of the former ensemble. David D. Wiens and Jake Willms were the other members of the foursome.

A new experience for the Kitchener MB choir was a type of outreach it carried into its immediate surroundings by means of radio. Between the years 1946-51⁴ programme, called "Hymns at Eventide", was produced and broadcast live over the local radio station CKCR. It was a demanding exercise for the choir, conductor N. J. Fehderau, announcer C. J. Rempel, and for the speaker, pastor F. C. Peters, who provided a short devotional. The choir and its leader had a particularly "tight" situation to face. Interrupting Choir practice on Thursday night in order to be on time at CKCR's studio in the Dunker Building, then once again to church, to finish the weekly practice-session, required devotion, determination, love for the cause of the gospel, and endurance. Expenses incurred by the broadcasts were covered by voluntary donations made by church members and by appreciative listeners.

Furthermore, to bring the gospel by radio to the many German-speaking people who had entered Canada during the post World War II immigration period, (not from Europe only, but ^{also} from South American countries), a committee was commissioned by the church to make arrangements for the production of a German radio programme. Here speakers such as I. T. Ewert and J. J. Toews provided devotional messages, while John Goerz was in charge of music. (91) As was "Hymns at Eventide", so these broadcasts were also financed by voluntary contributions.

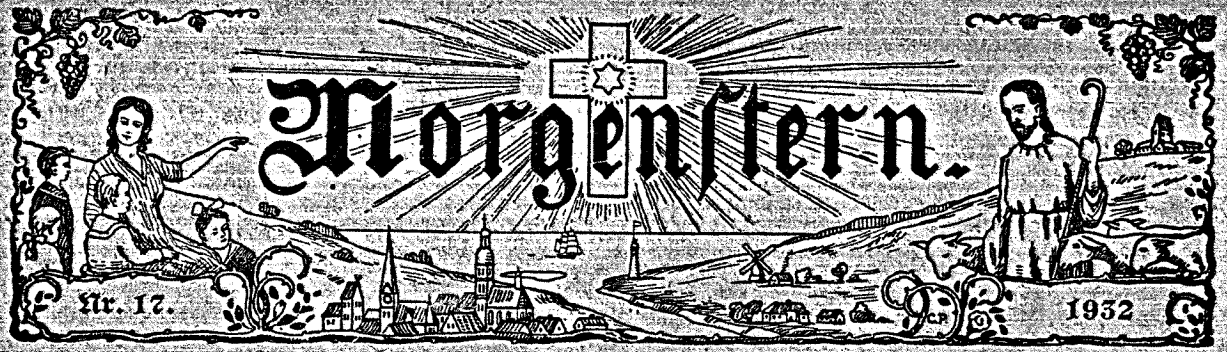
On October 3, 1948, the Kitchener MB Church was confronted with two resignations -- resignations to two key positions in the church. The pastor Henry Thielmann and Abram J. Dick, superintendent of the Sunday School for 20 years, laid down their offices on the same day.

In resigning, Dick told the congregation that he had served the Sunday School since 1928 according to the best of his knowledge and ability, but of late^{he} had lacked the joy of service he formerly possessed, and therefore begged the church to relieve him of his duties.

After some considerable discussion in respect to the resignation, the church passed the following resolution:

"The church thanks God and Brother Abram Dick for the job he has performed as leader of the Sunday School. It appreciates the faithfulness demonstrated by him as head of the Sunday School. During his administration the Sunday School experienced growth. The church hopes, that a harvest of fruit for eternity may result from Brother Dick's labours. In recognition of his services the church gave him the following verse of scripture: 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'
Matthew 25:21." (92)

Unfortunately it appears as if whatever Sunday School records were kept during Dick's administration, have been lost. Except for a few programmes produced by the Sunday School (such as those included here), very little other material has been preserved. From the minutes of church business meetings it is possible to glean a few statistics about enrollment figures and numbers of staff. Church records show that Dick introduced the practice of distributing to every Sunday School pupil a weekly newspaper, Morgenstern, (Morning Star). This four-page pamphlet was edited by a Christian tract society in Kassel, Germany, and was published by the Baptist Publishing House, I. G. Oncken of the same city. Besides containing informative articles



Die Gemeinde in Harbin mit ihren Gästen beim Liebesmahl.

Von der russisch-chinesischen Grenze.

Ein Brief von S. Mosgov, welcher von der Harbiner Baptisten-Gemeinde in die chinesischen Städte Mergin und Sachaljan geschickt wurde, um die materielle Lage der Brüder-Flüchtlinge aus Rußland aufzuklären, berichtet folgendes:

Nach längeren Strapazen und Aufregungen kam ich endlich in der Stadt Mergin an. Es waren zirka zweihundert Kilometer Fahrt auf den sogenannten chinesischen Arben (Holzwagen ohne feste Federung) durch Schlamm. Hier ist Regenperiode, und daher sind die Wege grundlos aufgeweicht. Ofter kam es vor, daß wir unterwegs stecken blieben, und dann hieß es, vom Wagen herunter und zusammen mit den beiden Pferden den Wagen aus dem Schlamm herausziehen. Ein etwas russisch-sprechender Chinese aus Harbin, der dort die chinesische Baptistenversammlung besuchte, fuhr bis zur Stadt Necho mit. Während der ganzen Reise bis zum Bestimmungsort war er mir ein hilfreicher Reisegefährte und Dolmetscher. Heute habe ich das erstmal in meinem Leben chinesische Gerichte mit chinesischen Holzstäbchen gegessen, halb ausgewachsene Bohnen (die sehr nach Würmern aussehen), Zwiebeln mit chinesischem Essig. Ja, wenn man Hunger hat — dann ist man alles!

Endlich bin ich gestern abend in dem chinesischen Dorfe angekommen, wo sich die Niederlassungen der ersten Gruppe unserer Brüder-Flüchtlinge befinden. Das Bild, das sich mir

bot, war außerordentlich traurig. In zerfallenen chinesischen Hütten mußten unsere Brüder-Flüchtlinge mit den heidnischen Chinesen hausen. Ich kam gerade dazu, wie sie ein krepierendes Pferd, welches einem unserer Flüchtlinge gehörte, verzehrten. Die Hütte wurde von 28 baptistischen Flüchtlingen bewohnt, und heute werde ich als der neunundzwanzigste ebenfalls dort die Nacht verbringen.

Ich schreibe diesen Brief mit heißen, strömenden Tränen angesichts der großen Not dieser Flüchtlinge. Ich kann mich noch immer nicht an den Anblick eines solchen traurigen und kümmerlichen Daseins, wie es unsere Brüder dort fristen müssen, gewöhnen. Als ich ihnen die mitgebrachten Kleidungsstücke übergab, glänzten Tränen in ihren Augen. Sie haben das Unglück gehabt, daß ein Pferd gefallen ist und ein zweites gestohlen wurde. Die Brüder dieser ersten Gruppe haben fast nichts und geben barfuß und fast nackt umher, besonders bei den Kindern ist es, was Kleidung anbetrifft, noch schlechter bestellt. Alles, was sie über den Amourfluß gerettet haben, ist ihnen auf der chinesischen Seite in Sachaljan von den Chinesen weggenommen. Ich wundere mich eigentlich, wie die Leute unter derartigen Umständen noch am Leben geblieben sind. Ein weiterer Kummer der Brüder-Flüchtlinge ist die Sorge um ihre Töchter, die sie gern, wenn es nur ginge, als Dienstmädchen nach Harbin geben würden. Wenn sie für diese Armen Mittel haben, schicken Sie bitte alles hierher. Eine zweite Gruppe von Flüchtlingen (Baptisten)

Programm

für die Weihnachtsfeier der Kitchener S.S. Schule am 24. Dez. 1934. Beginn 6 Uhr 45 Min.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Lied: Der Kinder Freudenfest St. 1 & 2
Schwarz. Büchl. N 13 | 18. Liedchen d. Kleinen: O Weihnachtszeit. |
| Allg. Gesang: Dies ist die Nacht da mir erschienen
Schriftwort: 1 Tim 1, 15 & Gebet. | 19. Verschen - P. Esau |
| Vortrag: Willkommen - Erich Riediger | 20. Gespräch über den Christbaum (8 Knaben) |
| Lied: Empor zu Gott. St. 1-4 Schm. Büchl. N 14. | 21. Gedicht: - Bolts Mädchen |
| Gedicht: Zum Begrüßung - | 22. Dekl.: Fünf Kerzen |
| Dekl.: Die größte Weihnachtsfreude | 23. Lied: Die Weihnachtsglocken St. 1-3
N 211 Singrög. |
| Weihnachtsevangelium: Luk. 2: 1-20. | 24. Gespräch: Lises Weihnachtswunsch |
| Weihnachtsgespräch: Fr. H. Bergen mit 7 Kindern | 25. " - " : Gabe an das Christkind |
| Lied: Still Nacht. St. 1-3 Singo. N: 203 | 26. Allg. Gesang: O du fröhliche... N: 205 Singrög. |
| Weihnachtsgespräch: - 7 Mädchen der IV Kl. | 27. Gespräch: Was willst du einmal werden? |
| Gespräch: An Bethlehems Krippe | 28. Aufführung: Weihnachtsstimmung. |
| Lied: Vom Himmel her. St. 1-3 Schm. Büchl. N 15 | 29. Lied: Nun ist d. schön Weihnachtszeit
St. 1-3. Singrög. N 223. |
| Verschen: - Grace Schwarz | 30. Gespräch: Wie wirst du Weihnachten feiern? |
| Dekl.: Ein Jahr ohne Weihnacht | 31. Aufführung: Weihnachtsgaube. |
| Verschen: - Bolts | 32. Anstreifen der Gaben |
| Verschen: - Edi Bolts | 33. Schlussgedicht |
| Dekl.: Ich liebe alle Kinder. Schmidts Knaben | 34. Allg. Gesang: Ich bete an die Macht d. Liebe
& Schlussgebet. |

and stories, the paper contained material entertaining to children, such as cross-word puzzles and riddles. In the interests of good singing in Sunday School, Dick introduced das Singvögelein, (the Little Song Bird), a book containing some 300 songs, published also by Oncken of Kassel. (93) Items 23, 26 and 29 of the 1934 Christmas programme here included, are songs found in the Singvögelein.

As the congregation increased in numbers during the 40's and 50's, the enrollment of the Sunday School went up.^{also} A few statistics tabulated at intervals over a decade, show the growth as spread over a ten-year period.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>Teachers</u>
1942.....	120 (average attendance)	12
1948....	Dick resigns. Peter J. Rempel elected superintendent,	October 3, 1948.
1949.....	146	20
1950.....	181	20, of which 16 were regular teachers, 3 were on supply, 1 song leader
1952	170 in 12 classes with	21 (94)

Between the years 1942-44 the following served as teachers in the Sunday School: Peter Wiens, Walter Dick, Katie Fast, Lydia Dick, Peter J. Rempel, Woldemar Dyck, Peter Dick, Henry Thielmann, Agatha Giesbrecht, Sara Harder, Margaret Woelk and Elviera Bergen. At the same time there were others who had given many years of service to this cause, but found it necessary to withdraw. Such were: Marie (Manya) Fehderau, Elisabeth Martens, Maria Braun, Helen Rempel and kaethe Friesen. (95)

As previously indicated, on October 3, 1948, both the Sunday School Superintendent and the pastor, asked the church to be released from their duties. Pastor Thielmann informed the congregation that he had received a call to the foreign missions field. The Mennonite Central Committee was assigning him to Japan as of January 1, 1949.

With deep regret the church took note of the pastor's words, but in view of the fact that the Thielmanns were deeply convinced that the Lord was lead-

ing them in this direction, it did not wish to impede their move. However, the church found the time-span allotted to it in which to find a replacement was very short -- less than two months. In view of this predicament, M.C. C. was willing to relent, and postponed the Thielmann's departure date for another two to three months. (96)

The Thielmanns left Kitchener toward the end of February, 1949. Recalling their departure, Sara Isaak recorded the following:

"The Thielmanns served us nearly five years, when suddenly the Lord called them to missions in Japan. I shall never forget that morning in church when Brother Thielmann announced from the pulpit, that Secretary of Missions, A. E. Janzen, enquired of them via telegramme, whether they would be willing to take on an M. C. C. assignment in Japan immediately. Following this announcement a deep hush descended upon the congregation. The call to the Thielmanns was very clear, however, therefore the church agreed to have them go." (97)

As soon as Thielmann's intention to leave had been made known, the congregation was much concerned about a new leader. About this time Sara Isaak says:

"We prayed much and fervently, that the Lord might send us the right person. It was a trying time for us, and although worries threatened to overwhelm us at times, we clung to the promise, that 'where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them'. It so happened that, at this time, Corny Rempel was in British Columbia on business for the Mennonite Central Committee. In Clearbrook David Quapp, a former member of the Kitchener MB Church, alerted Rempel to a possible candidate; a young teacher in the Bible School at Yarrow. C. J. Rempel's initial approach to Frank C. Peters, the teacher in question, was entirely unofficial. He explained his position and wished merely to determine whether or not Peters would be open to a call should the Kitchener church be interested.

"The interest was mutual. Brother Peters came for a week to deliver a series of sermons. Our church received the brother as sent by God. Hearts and homes opened to him. When the Peters family arrived in March, the church was again able to face the future with confidence, for the Lord had provided for his people. He would do so again." (98)

Concerning the financial arrangements made between Peters and the Kitchener

church, the congregational minutes state the following:

"Die Brüder haben mit ihm gesprochen und teilen mit, daß er sich bereit erklärt hat, die Leitung und Betreuung der Gemeinde zu übernehmen.....Was seine Vergütung anbetrifft, so glaubt er, daß er mit \$150.00 pro Monat, bei freiem Quartier, durchkommen kann."

"The brethren have spoken with him and report, ^{that} he is willing to accept the leadership and care of the church... Regarding his remuneration he believes, that he can get along on \$150.00 per month, plus free living quarters." (99)

Years later, when reminiscing about his move to Kitchener, Peters said in an interview:

"Regarding salary I had no demands. I was inexperienced at the time. This was my first church. I had really never intended to be a pastor. My preparation was for the classroom. To that end I had expected to teach in the fall of 1948 at the Mennonite Educational Institute upon my return from Kansas, after finishing my degree. It was the destructive flood in the Frazer Valley that brought these plans to naught. The berry-farmers were facing financial ruin, the M. E. I. was cutting back staff, and my expectations did not materialize. I was happy, therefore, to accept a short-term assignment at the Yarrow Bible School." (100)

With the offer of the MB Church in Kitchener, new doors and possibilities were opened to Peters. When he learned that Kitchener's twin-city, Waterloo, had not only a Liberal Arts College but a Theological Seminary as well, he made plans at once to continue his education in the Theological Faculty. Upon presenting his credentials at registration, Waterloo College immediately engaged him to lecture in Psychology. The additional finances received from this lectureship helped to supplement his income from the church. It was more than a boon to the young family, for without it, it would have been difficult to make ends meet. On being questioned about his relationship to the Church Council during the early days of his pastorate, his reply was: "Amiable. It was very amiable. They let me do anything I wanted to do, study, teach at the college, anything. Only stay." (101)

The salary paid Peters initially, was not sufficient to enable him to buy

a car. When he first arrived in Kitchener his mode of transportation was the bicycle. When making house-calls this form of locomotion was not impossible, however, if it was a matter of conveying his family from place to place (there were three little boys at the time), matters became somewhat more complicated. Eventually the decision was made that Peters would buy an English Austin for \$1,200.00. In order to finance the deal, Corny Rempel prevailed upon 12 brethren to loan Peters each \$100.00, interest free. To facilitate matters in repaying the debt, Peters signed twelve promissory notes of \$100.00 each, with due dates arranged for sequence of payment. For the remainder of his term in Kitchener, until 1953, the pastor was motorized.

To a question as to how he viewed the spiritual (niveau) of the Kitchener congregation when he first arrived in 1949, Peters replied, "It was atypical." Kitchener was pervaded by a distinct 'Alliance flavour', strange and new to him, who had come from the narrow and dogmatic confines of a Yarrow background. Eventually Peters himself adopted the broader, more liberal theology of an H. H. Janzen, but this required time for a maturing process to take place. In a hypothetical statement Peters said, that had he lived in Russia about the turn of the century, he would have belonged to the Alliance with Jakob Reimer and those that were like-minded.

The liberality of its Alliance doctrine that Peters referred to was partially to be found in the church's stand on baptism, ^{and} its emphasis on teaching the doctrines of the church rather than enforcing them by means of rules and regulations. Only as a consequence of its amalgamation with the General Conference in 1939, and the subsequent amalgamation with the Canadian Conference in 1945, had the Ontario MB Conference been required to make baptism by immersion a condition of membership. It appears that church discipline, with its resulting enforcement of various rules and regulations, was also tightened. The following excerpt from a church business meeting, might serve as an illus-

tration:

"Regulations to which baptismal candidates will have to reply.

"Principles of the Mennonite Brethren Church to be put before baptismal candidates.

1. The Word of God is for us the measure of all things and the only complete authority. We believe that this Word, the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is to be accepted as a gift from God.
2. We are a missionary church, and as such our main object in life is to spread the Gospel until our Heavenly Father calls us home from our labours.
3. We believe, that we as Christians, ought to assemble on the first day of the week to consider the Word of God. On this day work should be shunned, as God's Word teaches, except in case of necessity.
4. In our life-span we try to overcome evil by performing good works. We do not participate in war. During the course of a war, however, and also during the post-war period, we try to heal the wounds of a world led astray.
5. A child of God will not contract matrimony with an unbeliever. Unequally yoked marriages are not permitted.
6. Because none of us reaches perfection in this life, although we aspire to such an achievement, it is necessary that Christians admonish one another.
7. The use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages are not permitted in our church.
8. We believe that the Christian should shun places of worldly amusements, especially the theatre.
9. We regard the church as an enclosed garden. Matters discussed within this pale should not be carried to those without. (102)"

Within the next few decades, however, the Canadian Conference veered more toward a "middle of the road" approach in its theological outlook. On being asked what it was that determined this shift to a position reminiscent of the former Alliance stance enjoyed by Kitchener during the first 20 years of its history, Peters replied that this happened when he was much in leadership. He, together with like-minded colleagues from Mennonite Brethren

Bible College were convinced, that rules and regulations based on form, would have to be loosened. In the case of baptism, for example, it was sheer coercion to subject those, who had received baptism on faith, to submit to baptism a second time on the grounds of form. Similarly the church veered away from its somewhat legalistic position on church-discipline. It began to consider marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian as a point that should be taught, but no longer be considered ground for excommunication. Kitchener also clarified its position on movies. The church is not against motion pictures per se, but it does expect its members to exercise discretionary powers in choosing their viewing material.

Peters was also asked what he considered to be some of the major events that happened in Kitchener during his first pastorate there (1949-53). To this he replied, "The large influx of New Canadians after World War II, and the resulting increase in church membership." The enlarged membership, in turn provided the impetus to embark on a church-building programme, which resulted in the construction of the present building on 19 Ottawa St., N.W. Of great importance also, was the launching of the first Home Missions project at Coldwater, a joint undertaking of the Ontario MB Conference and the Kitchener church, and the co-operative liquidation of the Eden High School debt. When, after ca. six to seven years after its founding, Eden continued to stagger under an insurmountable debt-load, the Ontario MB Conference came to its rescue by distributing the deficit proportionately among the various member churches. This freed the school from its financial shackles, and enabled it to embark upon a period of growth and expansion. (103) The debt the conference undertook to liquidate was \$46,931.00, of which amount Kitchener's allotment was \$5,560.00 (104)

By 1951 the facilities available at 53 Church Street, were entirely inade-

quate for the expanding congregation. At a business meeting in the fall of that year, the church decided to venture forth upon a building programme that would provide a church with a seating capacity for ca. 600 people. Suggestions to split the congregation and form two churches were dismissed. As the vision to build sparked an increasing enthusiasm among the membership, the congregation began to send out its scouts to look for a suitable location. (105)

In addition to a suitable location for a church, a crucial question of prime importance at this point was the cost of construction. In order to get an overall view of what capital costs would be involved in a project of this magnitude, two builders were approached to supply estimates of possible costs. Contractor Schnarr's price, exclusive of building lots or pews, was an approximate \$70,000.00 - \$75,000.00, H. Hiebert's estimate was \$64,000.00. At the same time the finance-committee of the church came up with the following method by which the required capital would be raised:

1. a loan taken from the North American Conference.....	\$15,000.00
2. a mortgage taken on the manse of the church.....	\$ 6,000.00
3. low-interest loans taken from church members.....	\$15,000.00
4. a special fund-raising drive.....	\$10,000.00
5. sale of the church at 53 Church Street.....	\$15,000.00
6. a mortgage taken on the new church.....	\$29,000.00
	<u>Total.....</u>
	\$90,000.00

Having obtained an estimate, the church once more faced the alternative of a decision to act or not to act. A vote by secret ballot produced the following results: in favour of building 88.4 per cent, opposed to building 8.8 per cent, no opinion expressed 2.8 per cent. By previous agreement a decision had been reached, that a vote of 75 per cent would enable the church to proceed. The results of the tally were the 'go-ahead' signal. (106)

After considering several possible building locations, eight lots, located back to back between Ottawa and Brick Streets, were purchased for \$4,500.00 (107) Hope was expressed at the time that this land would provide ample parking

facilities for the congregation, which at the time owned no more than about half a dozen cars. During the course of the following decades, however, with the addition of the educational wing and the acquisition of one or more motor vehicles by most families of the congregation, the need for parking facilities became sorely inadequate. Toli Isaac, who drew up the architectural plans for the church-building in 1952, recalled the situation as it existed at the time. In an interview he said, that at the time of building, the entire block to Rosedale Ave. was free and available land, and could have been purchased for a nominal fee. Lots around the bend of Brick St. were then being offered for \$700.00 a piece, but the members of the Kitchener MB Church, at the time, lacked the vision, the foresight and the courage to take upon themselves additional financial arrangements. Pastor F. C. Peters, who gave superb leadership to the building project, acknowledged the lack of foresight displayed at the time, when he said: "We made one mistake while building. We did not buy enough land. Some men were much opposed, for money was tight." Had the church bought the block to Rosedale, or the blocks around the bend across Brick Street, the church could have built apartments for its senior membership eventually, and the acute shortage of parking space, which posed serious problems later on, would have been averted.

Having decided to build a new church, the Kitchener MB congregation commissioned Toli Isaac, one of its members, to prepare blue prints for a building 87' by 50'. Receiving architectural sanctions for these plans, was the green light for construction to begin.

From the beginning of the construction process the congregation was much concerned about keeping costs to a minimum. In order to achieve this objective, the members resorted to some unique practices. At the outset of the building period the church decided to dispense with the services of an overall contractor. It would rather "go it alone". It was fortunate to have

among its members two builders, Peter Boldt and Henry Hiebert. These men were an immeasurable asset at the time. Furthermore the church decided, that in matters such as heating, plumbing, electrical work and areas that required specialized skills, it would call for tenders, to whom the jobs would then be sub-contracted. (108) Some of the firms eventually engaged to perform particular jobs were: Rozell Plumbing to install the heating system at a cost of \$2,650.00, the Superior Stone Co. agreed to do the stone work for \$2,300.00, window frames were ordered from Kaufman Lumber Co., iron rafters from Hamilton Bridge and Martin Construction of St. Jacobs was hired to erect the roof, construct the gallery, the stairways and to be responsible for the wood-work in general. On being hired, Martin agreed to the proviso, that some of the labour he required to do his jobs, would be provided by the church itself. This was in keeping with the agreement made by all able-bodied men of the congregation, to give x number of hours of voluntary work to the church, in order to keep the cost of building down.

Financially also, the members agreed to support the building effort by pledging themselves, with God's help, to contribute 5 per cent of their 1952 wages. (109)

To lend efficiency to the voluntary work scheme, a committee of three was elected by the congregation, the pastor F. C. Peters, N. J. Fehderau and P. J. Rempel. This trio proposed that the following points be considered when organizing the able-bodied male population for gratis work:

- a. No coercion is to be used in this matter
- b. All able-bodied men are to register on ballots prepared for this purpose.
- c. All voluntary labourers are to work four hours per week. The time allotment for each man will be decided by the men concerned, together with their supervisors.
- d. All voluntary labourers are grouped into pods of four. One such pod works each evening. Each pod works under

a supervisor, who is in charge whenever his pod is working.

- e. The building committee is empowered to appoint three brethren to overlook this operation. These three brethren are not to be members of the building committee. F. C. Peters, J. A. Kutz and P. J. Rempel are appointed to this position. (110)

Following the sod-turning ceremony on March 22, 1952, the excavation of the cellar was started. By May 25, the congregation was informed that the cost of constructing the cellar was \$4,300.00 Voluntary labour was partially responsible for the low price. A month later the congregation learned that as of that date close to 2,000 hours of free labour had been donated. Proportionately distributed this amounted to ca. 20.8 hours per person.

In addition to the voluntary labour force, there were some hired workers who were paid current construction wages. Peter Boldt, a professional builder was hired in an overall supervisory capacity, while Henry Hiebert performed a similar job on a voluntary basis.

When the church at 53 Church Street appeared on the realty market in the winter of 1952, two prospective buyers appeared with bids. A group of Mormons offered \$25,000.00 and a Lutheran congregation bid \$23,000.00 Because the teachings of the Mormon faith was considered to be a false cult, the church was sold to the Bethel Lutheran Congregation for the sum they had offered. (111)

Throughout the summer of 1952 the building of the church on Ottawa Street North progressed. An enthusiastic and confident pastor at the helm was able to infuse his parishioners with some of his own fervour, ardour and zeal for the cause. Sara Isaak, the church's 'poet-laureate', caught some of the fervour of the moment in a lengthy poem entitled: Zum Kirchbau (About Building the Church). The following are a few selected stanzas with a corresponding prose translation:

26. Bald nach des alten Jahres Schluß
Ward Lebensraum ein dringend Muß,
Und die Gemeinde war bereit
Zu bau'n mit großer Freudigkeit.
27. Im Monat März, es war noch kalt,
Versammelten sich jung und alt
An diesem Ort gar feierlich
Zum allerersten Spatenstich.
28. Nun wurde mit vereinter Kraft
Und frischem Mut drauflos geschafft.
Die große Schaufel kam dazu
Und grub den Keller aus im Nu.
Aus Preston brachte man Zement,
Und goß ein starkes Fundament.
30. Der Eckstein wurde bald gelegt,
Und die Gemeinde tief bewegt
Sang Psalmen dem Herrn Jesus Christ,
Der seiner Kirche Eckstein ist.
31. Nun fing man gleich mit mauern an
Nach einem vorgelegten Plan.
Es wurden hier zum Bau verwand
Viel tausend Ziegeln, schön gebrand.
32. Viel wochenlang ward so gebaut,
Man hörte selten einen Laut.
33. Indeß bemerkte man sehr bald,
Das Haus gewinnt schon an Gestalt,
Die Mauern recken sich empor.
Es bilden Fenster sich und Tor.
Schon sieht den steilen Giebel man --
34. Da fängt ein lautes Lärmen an,
Ein großer Krahn nimmt Stellung auf,
Und hebt mit starkem Arm hinauf
Sechs Sparren, ganz aus Stahl gemacht,
Die sollen tragen nun das Dach.
35. Nach diesem großen Freudentag
Ertönt manch heller Hammerschlag
Von morgens früh bis in die Nacht.
In großen Gruppen wird geschafft.
36. Kein Wunder, daß die ganze Stadt
Den Atem angehalten hat.
Auch eine fromme Pilgerschar
Stets auf dem Weg zur Kirche war.
- Soon after the conclusion of the
old year,
Room in which to live became a
pressing 'must',
And therefore the congregation
was ready to build with great joy.
- In the month of March, when it was
still cold,
Young and old gathered solemnly
In this place
For the first turning of the sod.
- Now with united strength and new
courage, everyone went to work.
The big shovel (excavator) came along
And dug out the basement in a jiffy.
From Preston they brought cement,
And poured a strong foundation.
- Soon the cornerstone was put in place,
And the congregation, deeply moved,
Sang songs to the Lord Jesus Christ,
Who is the cornerstone of his church.
- Then the laying of bricks began at
once, According to a plan.
Many thousands of bricks were used
In the construction of the building.
- Thus they built for many weeks,
And made hardly a sound.
- Yet before long one noticed,
That a building was taking shape.
The walls were stretching upward.
Windows and doors appeared.
Even the pediment became visible.
- Then a great noise set in.
A great crane was shifted into place,
And with its strong arm
Put six rafters into position.
These were to carry the roof.
- After this joyous day
The hammers began to resound.
From early morn to late at night
They worked in large groups.
- No wonder that the whole city
Caught its breath.
A crowd of pious pilgrims was
Steadily on its way to church.

39. Nachdem der auß're Bau vollbracht,
Ward auch von Innen schön gemacht.
Nun fing das Hämmern wieder an,
Die Brüder standen ihren Mann.
Vom zarten Alter bis zum Greis
Ward hier geschafft mit großem Fleiß.
Der Leiter immer vornean,
So oft er's eben machen kann.
- After the exterior of the building
was completed, The interior was
beautified as well. The clanging
of the hammers began anew, But the
brethren stood their ground.
From youth to sage they worked
with great diligence. The pastor
was always in the lead, whenever
he could make it.
40. Auch unsrer Jugend ward gedacht,
Und Scheuerfeste angesagt.
Man scheuerte mit Sandpapier
Die Täflung an den Wänden hier.
- We thought of our young people also,
And invited them to polishing cele-
brations. They polished with sand-
paper The paneling on the wall and
the wainscoting.
41. Und da auf Festen überall
Man immer sorgt noch für ein Mahl,
So ward auch hier mit Hochgenuß
Ein "lunch" serviert nach
Arbeitsschluß (112)
- And because one always serves
A meal at a celebration,
So it was with great pleasure that
A lunch was served at the end of a
day's work.

Regarding the church-building episode, Sara Isaak made the following nota-
tion:

"Brother Peters was the main drive-shaft that motivated the congregation to erect the church on Ottawa Street. We had outgrown the facilities of the old church, and through his encouragement the congregation gained courage and joy to build a new one. The new premises are a gift from the Lord. The congregation has worked and prayed, and today our new church stands -- a monument to the love and faithfulness to our Saviour. How often I feel compelled to say a silent: 'Thank you, Lord'." (113)

The fervour in which the church had been caught up, was reflected, to some extent, in the following article as well:

90 Contribute Labour to New City Church

"With saw and hammer, shovel and trowel, 90 members of the Mennonite Brethren congregation on Church Street are making a substantial personal contribution toward the building of their new church on Ottawa Street, North.

"But that is not the only contribution of this group of voluntary workers.

"In order to lessen the debt which most new churches saddle upon their congregations, the members have decided to con-

tribute five per cent of their annual earnings into a building fund this year.

"'This', says the pastor, Rev. Frank C. Peters, 'should pay more than half the cost of the church, which will be approximately \$80,000.00'.

.....

"The voluntary work, which has helped to keep the total cost down, is being done under a system by which each able-bodied member of the congregation gives four hours a week. Most work between 7 and 9 p. m., but some, on night shift work, do their bit in the daytime.

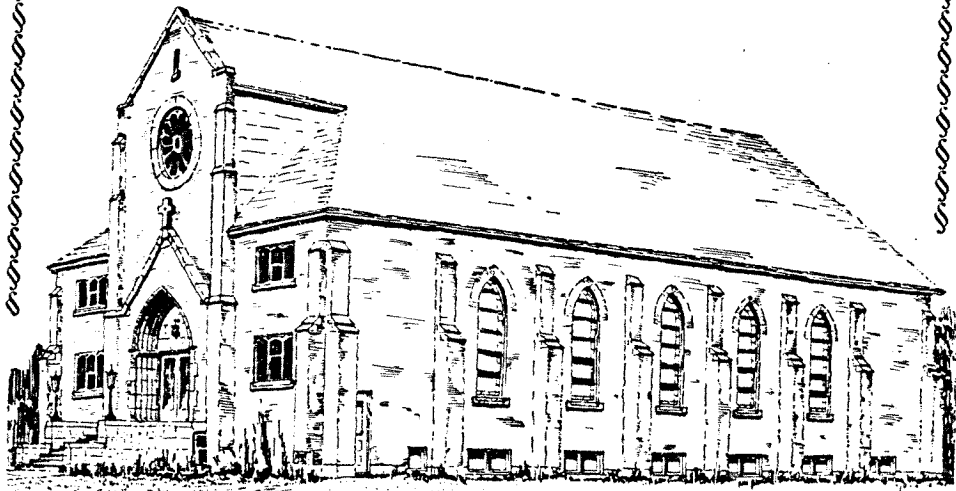
"Rev. Mr. Peters is in charge of the voluntary labour organization of the church while Henry Hiebert and Peter Boldt, both builders, are in charge of construction." (114)

In reminiscing on the preceding statement almost a quarter century later, Peters recalled that, being in charge of the labour force, it was his duty to contact the various people. "Noone wanted to turn me down," he chuckled, "so everyone chipped in. Experiences such as these," he said, "cemented us so much with the church." No doubt they were to some extent responsible in bringing him and his family back for a second term, when he again assumed the pastorate, and later on to make Kitchener his permanent home.

As the construction process approached its completion, the congregation cast about for a suitable inauguration date. January 18, 1953 was chosen for the official opening and dedication of the new church. H. H. Janzen of Winnipeg, former pastor of the congregation, was invited to be guest speaker, while the dedicatory address would be delivered by F. C. Peters, the pastor who so courageously had borne the standard of the Lord's work throughout the building process. In order to commemorate this singular event, a commemorative leaflet, containing important historical facts and dates about the Kitchener MB Church, was prepared for distribution to the attending guests. For a brief description of the events that transpired on that day, we again turn to notes made by Sara Issak:

Programm
zur
**KIRCHEN-
EINWEIHUNG**

der Mennonitenbruedergemeinde, 19 Ottawa Street North



Kitchener, Ontario

18. Januar 1953

*"DIES IST DER TAG, DEN DER HERR GEMACHT; LASSET UNS
FREUEN UND FROEHLICH DARINNE SEIN."*

—Psalm 118, 24

"On January 18, the church was dedicated. We had invited H. H. Janzen from Winnipeg to be the guest speaker. Mrs Janzen accompanied her husband. The church was beautifully decorated with chrysanthemums. In the morning the dedication took place. Three brethren participated in the dedicatory prayer: H. H. Janzen, Isaac Thiessen, and F. C. Peters. We, the choir members, wore black gowns. This enhanced the spirit of worship.

"In the afternoon the service was English. Representatives from various churches were present. They conveyed greetings and good wishes. The church was filled to overflowing.

"In the evening the programme was composed of a variety of items. The various committees reported: Building Committee, Trustees and Finance Committee. Nicholas Kaethler recited a poem containing a significant message. The youth choir sang beautiful songs. The programme was concluded with coloured slides by C. J. Rempel. These pictures illustrated the entire building process. They were very good and spoke for themselves. A wonderful day had come to an end.

"Adjoining the dedication ceremony followed a week of special services, in which Brother Janzen expounded the Sermon on the Mount." (115)

The move from 53 Church Street to 19 Ottawa Street, North, brought the second phase in the life of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church to its conclusion. The first phase, the period from 1925-1935, had been spent largely in rented quarters, in a hall on the third floor of an office block at 40 King Street East. Amid great rejoicing the congregation moved in 1935 into its own church building, which it had purchased at 53 Church Street. At that time its congregation numbered 151 members, but in the intervening years it had expanded to 326, not counting children. By 1951 the church was literally bursting at the seams, and therefore the congregation had deemed it not only necessary, but essential, to enlarge its tents so it might welcome guests. With the dedication of the building on Ottawa Street the Kitchener MB Church was turning a leaf in the story of its development. It was beginning a new chapter in its life. It was a time of rejoicing, a

time of celebration, and a time of re-dedication to the Lord.

Following the move into new quarters, events moved along smoothly without major upheavals for some months. In September, however, the waters were suddenly troubled, this time by the pastor himself. He asked the congregation to relieve him of his duties. He informed the church that he had accepted the presidency of Tabor College. The call to the class-room was beckoning, a call he was prepared to answer. The congregation was stunned. No one had anticipated a bombshell of this magnitude. Sara Isaak captured the event thus:

"In September 1953 Brother Peters resigned his leadership position in the church. This was entirely unexpected for all of us. We could hardly believe it. After all, he was the one who had spurred on the church to dare to build. He himself had donated many hours of manual labour. He even carried bricks. Without his personal, sacrificial effort, his implicit faith with which he got the ball rolling, the venture would not have succeeded. He believes that the Lord is calling him to a teaching ministry at Tabor College." (116)

During Peters' relatively short pastorate (1949-53), he both preached and demonstrated the importance of launching out into the deep, into the unknown, in faith and obedience to God. Abraham became a familiar example, frequently cited as a model of faithful obedience when he left home and kindred for "a land that I will show thee." Peters, too, was on the move, and in the meantime Kitchener went shopping "for a pastor."

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Chapter IX

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- (44) Ibid., April 27, 1947.

- (45) Ibid., October 3, 1948.
- (46) Ibid., January 7, 1950.
- (47) Ibid., September 30, 1950.
- (48) Rempel op. cit., interview 1986.
- (49) Rundschau, op. cit., March 16, 1977.
- (50) Ibid.
- (51) Ibid., From a letter of H. H. Janzen to C. H. Unruh, July 19, 1938.
- (52) Ibid., April 13, 1977.
- (53) Ibid., April 20, 1977.
- (54) Minutes, op. cit., April 7, 1944.
- (55) Rundschau, op. cit., May 4, 1977, -- a report by H. H. Janzen, which originally appeared in the Rundschau on August 25, 1944.
- (56) Ibid., May 18, 1977, -- from Janzen's last report to the Rundschau regarding his duties at the Russian Bible Institute, May 8, 1946.
- (57) Ibid., May 4, 1977.
- (58) Minutes, op. cit., April 7, 1944.
- (59) Ibid., October 15, 1944.
- (60) Ibid., November 19, 1944.
- (61) Rundschau, op. cit., A report which appeared first on May 8, 1946, then again in "Seine Lebensgeschichte", Katharina Janzen, May 11, 1977.
- (62) Sara Isaak, op. cit., her unpublished diary.
- (63) Ibid., an unpublished poem (Gelegenheitsgedicht).
- (64) Minutes, op. cit., October 21, 1945.
- (65) Isaak, op. cit., unpublished diary.
- (66) Proverbs 11:15.
- (67) John 15:13.
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- (70) Kutz,^{JA.} op. cit., Er fñhret, p. 65.
- (71) Rempel P. J., op. cit., unpublished report on work done at Puslinch.
- (72) Herbert Swartz, Minutes, Congregational Business Mtg., Kitchener MB Church, September 27, 1951.
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- (78) Minutes, op. cit., October 4, 1936.
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- (80) Minutes, January 1, 1940.
- (81) Ibid., September 10, 1944.
- (82) Ibid., September 29 and October 20, 1946.
- (83) Gesangbuch der Mennoniten Brñdergemeinde, Vorwort, (The Christian Press, Ltd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1952)
- (84) Minutes, op. cit., April 11, 1948.
- (85) Ibid., March 31, 1951.
- (86) N. J. Fehderau, Choir Album 1931-1956, published in commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of Conductor N. J. Fehderau, by the choir of the Mennonite Brethren Church, Kitchener, Ontario, p. 12.
- (87) Ibid., p. 13.
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- (93) Ibid., January 1, 1934 and March 30, 1934.
- (94) Ibid., October 1, 1950 and September 19, 1953.
- (95) Ibid., October 2, 1942 and January 2, 1944.
- (96) Ibid., December 12, 1948 and October 3, 1948.
- (97) Isaak, Sara, op. cit., unpublished manuscript.
- (98) Ibid.
- (99) Minutes, op. cit., November 21, 1948.
- (100) Frank C. Peters, Interview June 19, 1985.
- (101) Ibid.
- (102) Minutes, op. cit., June 12, 1949.
- (103) Peters, op. cit., June 19, 1985.
- (104) Minutes, op. cit., november 20, 1950.
- (105) Ibid., November 25, 1951.
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- (107) Ibid., December 16, 1951.
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- (110) Ibid., March 16, 1952.
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