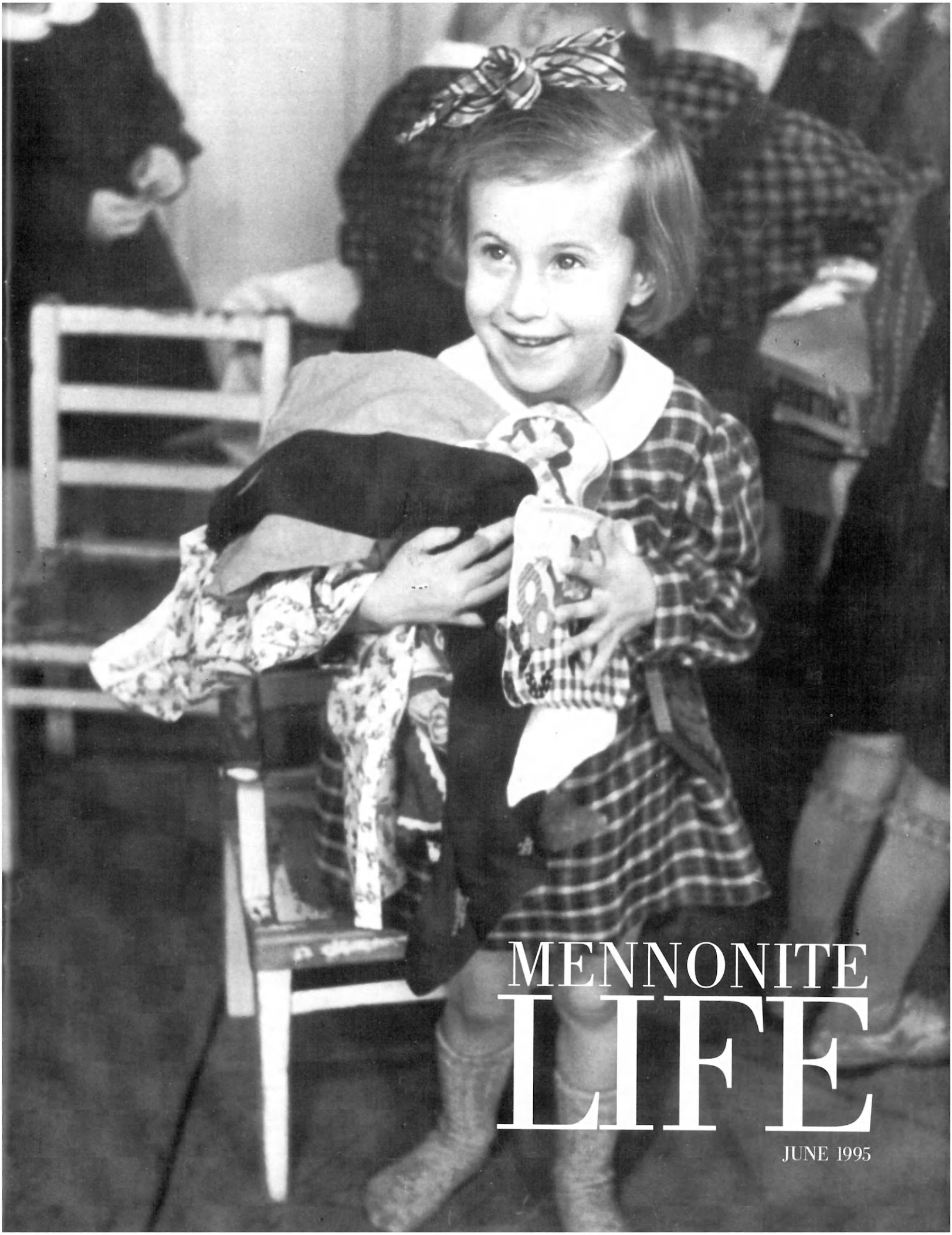

MENNONITE LIFE

JUNE 1995

In This Issue

The year 1995 marks the 75th anniversary of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a Christian benevolent organization of response to human need. During this year, the role of MCC is being celebrated in special publications, symposia, exhibits, and in other ways. The anniversary celebrations reveal once again that MCC is more than an agency for Christian witness and service. MCC also has played a decisive role in the development of Mennonite identity in the United States and Canada. In this issue *Mennonite Life* offers a contribution to the MCC historical memory.

Robert Kreider, a former editor of *Mennonite Life*, is a beloved elder statesman of MCC. His essay in this issue is a revised version of a presentation given at the MCC 75th Anniversary Symposium at Fresno Pacific College in California in March. Kreider is also the curator of a special museum exhibit on MCC history, "The Gift of Hope," at Kauffman Museum on the Bethel College Campus. The exhibit was funded in part by the Kansas Council for the Humanities. It will be open until June 1996.

MCC history is properly seen in a wider context of denominational, religious, and national history. The Mennonite impulse to Christian benevolence has been, and remains, a world wide phenomenon. The article by John B. Toews on German Mennonite relief work between the great world wars of this century, offers some possibilities for comparison. Toews, professor of history at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, has been a frequent contributor to *Mennonite Life*.

The Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography has been an annual feature of *Mennonite Life*. Barbara Thiesen is the Technical Services Librarian and Co-Director of Libraries at Bethel College.

It has been my privilege to serve as editor or co-editor of *Mennonite Life* for two terms, 1975-1980 and 1989-1995. I am now withdrawing from the editorship for a second time. My wife, Anna Kreider Juhnke, and I will spend the coming academic year as Center Fellows at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania. Communications regarding *Mennonite Life* editorial matters should be sent to John Thiesen and to Raylene Hinz-Penner, arts editor, at Bethel College.

James C. Juhnke

MENNONITE LIFE

June 1995 Vol. 50 No. 2

Front Cover
MCC clothing distribution in Vienna-Rosental, Austria, April 13, 1948.

Back Cover
Russian Mennonite refugee transport in Berlin, 1923. These were persons separated because of sickness and sent to Lechfeld. The numbered persons on the picture are: (1) David Becker, Berlin; (2) Alexander Fast, Berlin, representative from Caucasia; (3) Benjamin H. Unruh, representative of the Russian Mennonites; (4) Jakob Kroeker, Wernigerode am Harz, director of the "Licht im Osten" mission; (5) Mrs. D. M. Hofer, Chicago, Ill., representative from U.S.A.; (6) D. M. Hofer, Chicago, Ill., representative from U.S.A.; (7) Abraham Warkentin, Oberursel, Germany, representative of *Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe*.

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The Multiple Visions of MCC's 75 Years

by Robert S. Kreider

The birth of the Mennonite Central Committee was so ordinary. No energizing vision statement. No recognition of a breakthrough in inter-Mennonite relationships. Just thirteen men meeting in July 1920, in a frame church on Prairie Street in Elkhart, Indiana. Not a representative group: 10 from the Mennonite Church and three from groups of Prussian-Russian immigrant background. No photographs of the meeting. Just another committee meeting and only briefly noted in Mennonite periodicals. They drafted a working agreement, using the words "temporary" and "tentative." This new committee was to "function *with* and *for* the several existing relief committees ... and to take charge of all gifts for South Russia and [provide for] the equitable distribution of the same."[1] So matter of fact and so minimal. One wonders whether this inter-Mennonite committee would have been formed without the insistence of a delegation of four from Russia--outsiders telling North Americans what to do. One senses it was a reluctant marriage--affection developing later, much later. In that quite ordinary setting at Prairie Street, two young men met for the first time: Orie Miller of Akron, Pennsylvania, and P. C. Hiebert of Hillsboro, Kansas. But for our people, oh, the difference that partnership.

Probing for a vision for this infant MCC, one might find the seeds a year earlier in Clermont-en-Argonne, France. There sixty idealistic and impatient college-age Mennonite young men, who at war's end were serving with a Quaker reconstruction unit, met for a conference. They boldly called for an inter-Mennonite program in missions and service, a conference of historic peace churches, peacemaking, peace education, prison reform, attention to the problems of labor, and urban welfare--a sweeping agenda that is suggestive of the MCC that emerged in its second birth in the 1940s and 1950s--the World War II years and after.

A House of Many Windows

I step aside now and confess that I feel ill at ease with this term "vision." The vision format of a Martin Luther King "I have a dream" or a Harold Bender "Anabaptist Vision" seems to ill fit the MCC. Vision is defined as "the sight of things normally hidden from human eyes." It is especially characteristic of apocalyptic literature. The book of Daniel speaks of vision at least 14 times, but Jesus uses it only once. The essence of vision is seeing into the distance--taking a long view. I am, thus, drawn to the metaphor of windows. MCC is a house of many windows. Like any metaphor, it can be useful for a time, but often it becomes shopworn. As we saunter about in the MCC experience, we shall peer through many windows.

The Valley of Vision

Last August Tim Lind, a veteran of Africa service, returned from Rwanda with memories that haunt the conscience. In the aftermath of the massacre, Tim and country representative Catherine Hodder and a Rwanda pastor refugee drove from Goma in Zaire toward the Rwanda border. Tim tells of how along the side of the road lay wrapped corpses. Beyond them, huddles of refugees. The closer they approached to the border, numbers thickened. And then on a ridge, a broad valley spread below them. A staggering sight. Across the valley and into the distance, a solid carpet of humanity: 300,000 ... 500,000 ... 700,000 refugees. Numbers lost their meaning. Far below in the distance they saw the tiny form of a UN truck with food, surrounded by a tightly-packed mass of people. Tim thought of the enormity of the task of organizing an equitable distribution in that valley of misery.

The three knew that they must go down among the people. Tim tells of picking his way through the narrow, almost invisible spaces that separated family from family, "taking care to avoid the cooking fires, the bundles of possessions, the sick, the dying and those already [dead], the makeshift shelters." Everywhere they walked they were among those who had murdered and those who had lost family in the slaughter--Christians killing Christians. And then in Tim's words, "We saw sights more stunning than ... the hundreds of thousands: people caring for each other ... the dying not abandoned ... the sharing of food and water ... children aged six or seven holding in their arms and comforting baby sisters and brothers--the parents dead ... children looking up smiling."[2] Incomprehensible--that valley of death and life, cruelty and compassion, Golgotha

and the Resurrection.

A 17th century Puritan poet, inspired by the 22nd chapter of Isaiah, offers for us a biblical metaphor for that distant valley:

> Lord, High and Holy, Meek and Lowly,
> Thou hast brought [us] to the *valley of vision*,
> where [we] live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
> hemmed in by mountains of sin, [we] behold thy glory.[3]

Thus far we have peered through these windows:

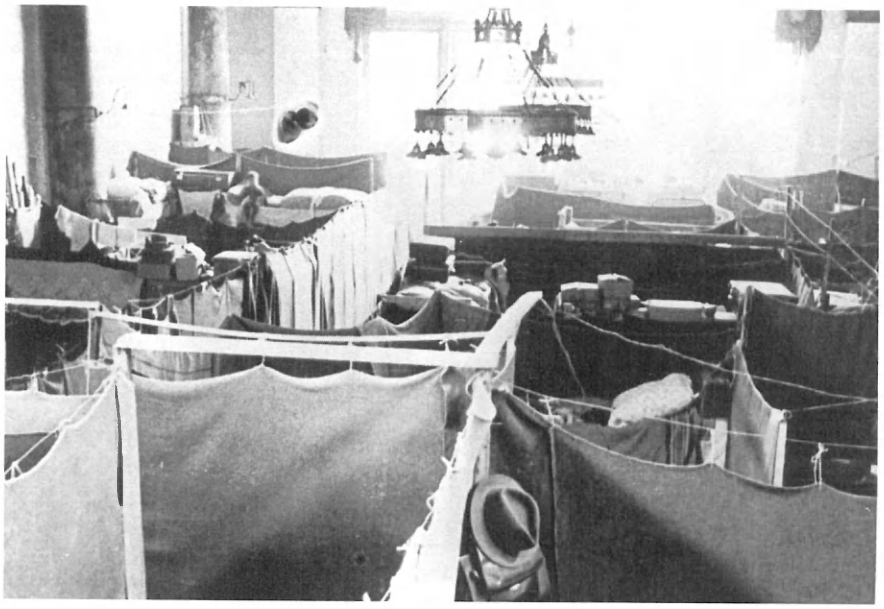
1. *MCC was born and is reborn in valleys of tragedy.* The Great War with its aftermath of revolution, civil war, hunger and famine. World War II with its 50 million dead, the Holocaust, the Gulag, nuclear terror. And a recent U.N. report that 1.3 billion persons live in utter poverty--70 percent of these women. In an unlovely world of domination and misery, exploitation and violence, MCC is called to be a conscience and, for others, to ignite conscience. Rebirth of hope in the valleys of tragedy.

2. *MCC receives the gifts of ordinary people doing ordinary things.* Surprised by grace, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. "We can do no great things," says Mother Teresa, "only small things with great love."

3. *It is in walking among the people, one finds Jesus already there.* He walks ahead among the hurting. He pauses to listen, touches and heals, feeds and comforts. He brings hope to the bruised and broken. And those who are hurt respond with their gifts. The christological core of MCC is expressed with biblical simplicity, "in the name of Christ." John Coffman, a worker in wartime London, suggested this motto--an early example of how many (or even most) of the creative ideas come from the field.

MCC as a Movement

Before proceeding further, we must reflect on MCC as an organization. We can appropriately view MCC as an *institution*: structure, organization charts, staff, priorities, headquarters, job descriptions, hierarchy of command, departments and sub-departments, power bases, in-house vocabulary, central files, secrets, marketing strategies, bottom lines, accountability. As an institution, MCC can be analyzed and quantified. It is an institution, but it is more.



Housing for Mennonite refugees in Gronau, West Germany, immediately after World War II. Each family stored their few possessions in a compartment curtained by blankets.

The Mennonite Central Committee is also a *movement*: fluid, organic, inclusive, fuzzy on the edges, a process as well as structure, evolving, a fabric of many threads, a body as in Romans 12, a fellowship, a peoplehood, a community of memory, a network of relationships, a people in pilgrimage, a spiritual journey. As a movement, it is an elusive sprawl, its parameters ill-defined. MCC may be understood as family, extended family, clan. In MCC's second birth during and after World War II, MCC's activities have done much to break down the "middle wall of partition" among Mennonites. The tent now encloses a larger peoplehood. And beyond, it has opened a door of access to a global circle of friends. Most certainly if it were dismantled, something like MCC would sprout from the roots.

Helpful as are definitions, MCC as a people's movement may be better understood in symbols and metaphors. In its literature, we observe a serious and sensitive concern for the symbolic: dove, cross and globe, hands and plow, salt and seeds, fabric and quilt, wheat and bread--all so earthy and elemental. MCC's identity is best revealed in stories, feeling and metaphor, photographs and images. The vision is even carried on the wings of song. Take note of the cover of the 1995 MCC calendar. We see two Hispanics, radiant and singing. I recall meetings of the MCC in the early 40s--in a working class neighborhood on South Union in Chicago, a dingy mission church; rows of men in somber dress; and every meeting at the end brightened with the hymn, "Blessed be the tie that binds." Not much, but a modest touch of the liturgical.

A Biblical Journey

In a search for metaphors that describe a movement, I am drawn to the one of a spiritual journey. That suggests mobility and change, false starts and breakthroughs, defeats and surprises. It allows for leaders doing the imprudent and workers frustrated. In the journey, to understand and to be understood, one must speak different languages. Consider as a treasury the wide range of language competencies on tap in the data bank of our people. I like to think that in the MCC family we

Edward Stutzman of Ohio packs shoes for relief in MCC warehouse in Akron, Pennsylvania.

share a familiar biblical language. To the poor and rejected of the world, speech that has biblical tone is prophetically and satisfyingly authentic.

Biblical resources are abundant for our spiritual journey:

- We leave a Garden of security and wander East of Eden into strange surroundings.
- We hear God's voice: "I am with you."
- At the end of a devastating flood, we observe God speaking to us in symbols of hope: a rainbow, a dove, and a green olive leaf.
- At Ur we join Abram and Sara who "by faith ... set out, not knowing where they were going."
- We journey with Abram to Shechem, one of the many ordinary places along the way where God appears.
- We share an interlude of peace in the land of Goshen--"the best part of the land."
- In Egypt, a backlash of hatred, oppression and then deliverance--"the parting of the waters."
- Followed by wanderings in the wilderness with murmurings in the ranks and seduction by popular cults. And yet a God who does not abandon his stumbling, forgetful people.
- Later a people exiled to Babylon--a strange and inhospitable society. But even there they learn to build, live, plant, have families, pray for the city and seek its welfare.
- Farther along the way we meet Habakkuk who asks God why evil ones prosper at the expense of the innocent. God gives an answer that does not satisfy. Habakkuk asks again. God responds, "There is still a vision for the appointed time.... If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay."
- Entering the New Testament, we walk the rest of the way with Jesus.

In our biblical walk with Jesus, a perspective emerges which we have come to know as Anabaptist:

- Christ the cornerstone
- Taking up our cross and following Him
- Covenanting with kindred souls to be co-workers with him in His church, the body of Christ
- Called into the ministry of peace and reconciliation
- Rejoicing in hope, patient in suffering, persevering in prayer

In the biblical record of God's people are tips for the MCC wayfarer:

- Stick-to-it-ive-ness
- Openness to the unexpected
- Surprised by grace
- Ordinariness transformed into faithfulness
- Forgiveness for disobedience and blunders
- Skepticism understood
- God close at hand
- God affirming our responsibility, but reminding us that we are not God
- A God who gives a second chance.
- Hope, always hope, that an answer can be found.

The Gift of Story

Embarked on a spiritual journey, speaking a biblical language, one tells stories. Eli Wiesel says, "God created people because he loves to tell stories." We might add, "Also, because he loves to hear stories." Where MDS volunteers gather, they tell stories. When trainees from overseas meet, they tell stories. When we see old friends at a World Conference, we share stories. These stories carry transcendent meaning because God tells stories and listens to the stories of his children.

The genius of MCC has been, is, and will be this grass-rooted, intimate way of seeing need incarnate in persons whom our workers meet. James Wall, editor of the *Christian Century*, asks, "Why do some Protestant visitors to the Mideast seek to relate to Palestinians while others do not?"[4] He observes that Lutherans and Episcopalians, both with strong mission connections in the Middle East, reach out in understanding to Palestinians. However, those without such connections (Baptists and his own Methodists) do not. Mennonites, with their MCC and mission connections in crisis areas, are wired up for empathetic response. This sensitivity and responsiveness is carried in stories told by persons we know and trust. So many problems today are intractable, insoluble--more than we can handle. Working in the barrios, on the rice paddies, along city streets, MCC workers meet persons. Problems are incarnate in particular people. When there is a face, one finds hope: Ezra, imprisoned for 12 years on Robben Island, South Africa; Gertrud, a widow, who guided her family of five through six years of refugee wanderings; Liu, who forgave those who tortured him. Stories about a person have power. Returning workers who go from office to office in Washington and Ottawa and tell their stories, command the atten-

tion of officials. They bring faces to problems that officials would prefer to ignore. Stories empower.

Stories help bridge cultural barriers. Stories lead to questions. I remember a meeting in Cairo with the head of Islamic studies at El Alazahar University, a university that dates back more than a thousand years. Seated in his office, our host having served us tea, we opened with the observation: "We have just come from the streets of Cairo--noise, traffic, confusion, complexity, congestion, seductive advertising.... Bombarded on all sides by this modernity, how do you pass on the Islamic faith?" He leaned forward and declared fervently, "I'll tell you. It is *not* this university. It is *not* the mosque. It is the family." We were now on common ground--the family--with stories and questions that can link two faith traditions. There are questions that bridge religious boundaries:

- How do you pass on the faith, pass on values?
- What gives you hope?
- Where do you find your support community?

To summarize, here are more windows to an understanding of the MCC:

- People bonded in a movement
- Pilgrims on a spiritual journey
- Speaking a biblical language
- Informed by an Anabaptist world view
- Following Christ
- Conscientious objectors to misery and violence
- Carried on the wings of story and song
- Learning to receive gifts from new friends
- People asking essential questions.

Again, a Digression

At this point, I fear I may be out of touch. Several paragraphs leap out of the *1994 MCC Workbook*. John Dyck, retiring Executive Director of MCC Canada, caught my eye with these reflections:

> MCC may be swimming upstream against society on issues such as sharing with the poor, peace, justice and crime policies. We may also be swimming against the stream in many of our churches.... Once we were poor and [outcast]; today we are socially and economically advantaged....
>
> When MCC speaks for the poor and marginalized, we sometimes speak against the very system from which we benefit. When we speak in behalf of restoring offenders to the community through mediation and other alternatives to prison, we are criticized by those who demand harsher punishment.... When we support refugees, we hear that [our country] has enough people from abroad--let them go somewhere else.
>
> The church will be judged by where it decides to make its stand--with the poor and marginalized, or with the powerful and affluent.[5]

Meat canning at Mennonite Brethren church, Buhler, Kansas, ca. 1956.

A second sobering report comes from Waldo Neufeld based on his interviews in 1993 with twelve youth pastors.[6] Youth attitudes may mirror us. It appears we have taught materialism and individualism well. In Waldo's findings, MCC comes across as low key, that is, boring. It carries the stigma of institutions. It means old people. Long term service is not an option because youth need money, education, and cars. The world of youth is a barrage of options, busyness, music that is always changing. They like to go where the action is. Packaging is important. Shock therapy helps: seeing poverty, prisons, soup kitchens. They are into the environment, but tired of talking about it. They like hands-on, short-term experiences. They relate well to young persons who have been in the action. Paradoxically, although they are individualistic, they are reluctant to do things alone.

In the task of programming for youth, we are on competitive and shifting turf. Other church agencies are experimenting anxiously in this area. MCC may be most helpful by continuing to do certain tested things well and, with its network of field contacts and experience, stand available to aid others with their experimental programs.

Again, that was a parenthetical section in which we acknowledge that for some--even many--of our youth, MCC may not be a popular, trendy, mainstream enterprise. True to its Anabaptist commitments, MCC finds meaning even if out of step with conventional political wisdom--consider Somalia, the West Bank, El Salvador. Deep inside we know that a minority can contribute to the whole--finding opportunities on the edges, even in the cracks of society. That, in the long view, may be both politically responsible and politically relevant.

The Gift of Hope

In recent months, I have been working on a team curating an exhibit that seeks to tell the 75 year story of the Mennonite Central Committee. You are invited to come to the Kauffman Museum in North Newton, Kansas, and see the exhibit that opened May 20,

Mennonite refugee families in Colony Volendam, Paraguay, ca. 1947.

1995 and continues for a year. The title is "The Gift of Hope"--the theme of hope running like a golden thread through the whole MCC experience.

We struggled in the effort to compress the complex, sprawling MCC experience into a limited space. We found an integrating idea from MCC fields of service: images of a Bedouin tent, a Navajo hogan, a Kalahari rondavel, an African village council fire. A concept emerged of a central arena for storytelling and discussion with movable stools for seating. To get a feel for this global undertaking, on the floor is a large map of the world. The map allows children and adults to locate MCC's diverse fields of service. The arena is encircled by seven theme clusters that offer glimpses into the program--the themes ranging from disaster intervention to speaking truth to power. And in every theme, the dove of hope.

Distributed throughout are the indicators of faith, biblical way markers. Each theme cluster carries stories supported by enlarged photographs and objects (artifacts). The photographs speak without words. The panels and sets are constructed of simple materials: exposed wood framing, natural colored Masonite, craft paper, common fabric, a palette of subdued colors. The artifacts, as carriers of memory, are visually arresting: from a Fordson tractor and Oliver plow of the 1920s to a Mennonite refugee's chest to a smokejumper's parachute to a plot of Buffel grass as sown in the Chaco to a bomb-shattered hoe of a Laos child killed in the field. The arena is enveloped by stories and sounds, photo images and three-dimensional objects. Visitors are thus invited into this inner circle to explore and enlarge the community of memory and to consider troublesome questions.

As a stimulus to the discussion, each theme cluster carries questions--one personal and one on public policy--such as these:

- What can volunteers do that professionals cannot do?
- When you are attempting to do good, can you be sure you are doing good?
- What can the poor, the hungry, and the homeless teach us?
- When a government says "no," do you take "no" for an answer?

Lest the exhibit be too celebrative, the voice of the skeptic is introduced--similar to the impudent gargoyle-like figure in the corner of an Oliphant political cartoon. In each theme cluster, one can lift a flap and be confronted by a question from the doubter:

- Why save lives when the world is overcrowded?
- If you choose to live in a disaster-prone area, isn't that your problem?
- Can outsiders bring constructive change to a culture not their own?
- Why do non-Christians do so much good?

I thank God that the MCC experience has disturbed our comfortable certitude with vexing, distasteful, even unanswerable questions. If we had stayed at home in Corn, Archbold, or Steinbach, we might never have talked with a Muslim, worked with a Marxist, lived under a dictator, or been forced to negotiate with a crook.

A series of captivating stories told enthusiastically can sound triumphal. For some, triumphalism offends. With many of the expected visitors being non-Mennonite, parochial language must be excluded. Hence, an effort to minimize language as used by headline writers that suggests that MCC is a super-person: "MCC says," "MCC protests," "MCC gives." Also, an effort to avoid institutional language, prideful sounding statistics, and congratulatory quotes. It is difficult to clean up one's language. In telling the story we have preferred to feature the lesser known rather than the big MCC names. Humility, let's face it, is the most fragile and elusive of virtues.

Outside Kauffman Museum is placed the biggest artifact of all, the renovated 1946-73 portable meat canner--a prologue to the exhibit. The 1946 meat canner symbolizes the second birth of the MCC: the upsurge in the 1940s and 50s of grass root support, the explosive expansion of postwar MCC programming. The canner section carries the theme of strength rising from the people--the populist base of the MCC, the hands-on and the practical, a job for everyone. It depicts the host of volunteers--at least 30 volunteers for every salaried worker--and from all ages, from many countries. The meat canner is an expression of a people's movement, a modern version of a barn raising or threshing ring. This canning of meat, making of soap, stitching of quilts may be institutional foolishness, but it suggests a folk wisdom. In the words of Paul, "God chose what is

weak in the world to shame the strong." Power from the people, from the congregations. *But, on second thought, does this not have the taint of triumphalism?*

Again to summarize, the experience of curating an exhibit on the MCC story has opened for us additional windows:
- an awareness of the multi-sidedness and the interwoven fabric of MCC
- the gifts of ordinary people
- the persuasive power of storytelling
- the steady flow of volunteers
- the gift of hope that touches every task.

Also something more.

The arena in the exhibit suggests a central motif in the MCC experience. At the heart of all is our base community, the church, the body of Christ. Support and workers flow from congregations. Wherever workers go, they seek a home and partners in the church at that place. Workers go out as individuals with their special gifts. More important, they go out as members of a team, but more than a team. They and their new partner-friends are a sojourner congregation that deliberates and worships together. Confronted by varied ethical dilemmas that trouble a conscientious worker, a support community is at hand to assist the perplexed in making choices between black and white and among the shades of grey. God gave us faith communities to help us work through the adjustments of living in the world and not being of the world. To all would-be agendas of change, a strong message goes forth. You cannot be an agent of change--in-season and out-of-season--without a support base. For some it may be a party, a cell or an action group, but for us it is the church. To serve "in the name of Christ" is to be bonded together in the body of Christ.

To point to the moral of this discourse on the MCC exhibit, the arena expresses for us a core affirmation: *the church is our base community*. MCC is planted in the church. This, too, is a window to the MCC experience.

Robert L. Snyder of La Junta, Colorado (left) and Darrell L. Albright of Pretty Prairie, Kansas. MCC voluntary service workers in agricultural demonstration work in Paraguay, ca. 1949.

Maintaining the Right Fellowship

In recent years I have conducted extensive interviews with several veteran MCC administrators: William Snyder, J. M. Klassen, Reg Toews, Peter and Elfrieda Dyck (on their work in the 1940s), and less completely, Edgar Stoesz and John Hostetler. Transcriptions of some of these interviews are on MCC library shelves.

In this final section I shall distill from the veterans their reflections on MCC patterns of doing Kingdom work. In traditional Mennonite language, these tenets relate to "managing the household" or "maintaining the right fellowship." Behind these respondents hovers the image of Orie Miller, the second Executive Secretary, who shaped profoundly the MCC administrative paradigm. He reflected an Anabaptist-Mennonite piety, a down-home Indiana farm upbringing, a shoe business savvy, a *New York Times* worldly knowledge, and an unapologetic biblicism. Traces of the Orie style linger in how MCC staff perceive of their activities.

I have grouped these tenets into seven categories:

Robert Kreider (left) and P. C. Hiebert in Germany, ca. 1947

Church and Polity
Servant of the church
Inter-Mennonite in control, staffing, and purpose
Rooted in supporting North American churches
Seeking partnership with local churches wherever it serves
People
Personal relationships primary
Accent on friendship building
Emphasis on establishing and preserving a network of trustful relationships
Where professionals and untrained work together
Affirmation that there is a job for everyone (traces of an old MCC adage: "We use what the church gives us.")
Delegation of much authority to workers in the field; trust of their judgment
Encourage self-reliance
Responsive to need regardless of race, religion, status, or gender
Scale
Preference for the small, the village, the neighborhood
A bias for the grass roots
An understanding of the macro to focus on the micro
Style
Understatement of purpose and achievements
Practical rather than ideological
Minimal need for immediate, measurable results
Not the last nor the first to use new technology
Staying with the job until it is done
Seeking to be at home in the host culture
Administrative
High tolerance for structural ambiguity
Allowing for many quasi-autonomous parts
Most of the creative ideas coming from the field, with Akron and Winnipeg testing, affirming, and empowering
Most good ideas in MCC having more than two parents
Emphasis on secondment--that is, providing personnel and resources to local organizations for *their* programs
Seeking to be partners with those in need
Political
Often out of step with conventional political passions (taking note of Vietnam, Central America, the Gulf War, Somalia, Native American affairs, criminal justice)
Reluctance to be partisan or factional
Prepared to work with varied agencies, governments, situations, political systems
Maintaining a bit of distance from U.S. agencies abroad
Wary of U.S. government funding
Encountering injustice in fields of service, then cautiously speaking truth to authorities
Faith
Preference for a quiet witness in the name of Christ
Maintaining simple faith criteria for service: commitment to Jesus Christ, relation to church, and attitude toward nonresistance/peace
Looking for partners in churches, missions, and local organizations

This less than precise administrative paradigm is another window to the MCC. For one coming from corporate North America, the MCC world is unconventional and sometimes exasperating. And yet for some, it is a refresh-

ing alternative. Reviewing again these unwritten tenets, we see paradox. MCC: *conservative*, boring, folksy, resisting the winds of modernity; and at once, unconventionally *radical*, nonconformist, counter cultural. An institution-for-all-seasons phenomena.

We must acknowledge that how the MCC household is managed is in flux. The ways of the marketplace do intrude. For a people in pilgrimage, there are many unresolved questions--these but three:

1. As we affirm localism, does not the center continue to grow? Can MCC decentralize and yet preserve and enhance its unique bi-national partnership?

2. As we develop our gifts of listening to our partners overseas, are we as gifted in incorporating the learnings of listening and partnering in our relations with home congregations, particularly the smaller groups of the MCC constituency?

3. With the increasing professionalization of MCC service, can significant service opportunities be found for the young and untrained?

Seventy-five years after that Prairie Street meeting, MCC has become many-sided, a house with many windows: born in valleys of tragedy, receiving gifts from ordinary people, serving in the name of Christ, people bonded in a movement, pilgrims on a spiritual journey, speaking a biblical language, carried on the wings of story, emissaries of hope, at home in the church, servants in the Lord's business. This rambling MCC house has many windows. There are more of which we have not spoken. Each of us has our room with a view. Each of has stories to tell--some painful and some joyful, some embarrassing and some satisfying. I conclude with three stories, my stories:

1. In September 1941 Orie Miller came to visit our CPS Camp at Colorado Springs. I was 22, a drafted conscientious objector doing alternative service. I was asked to take Orie out to see the men digging a diversion ditch for a local rancher. Apropos to something, he said, "Long ago I decided that when the church asks me to serve, my answer should be 'yes' unless there is a good reason to say 'no'." Fifty-four years later, I hear him now. A thousand times I have recalled those words—words that have shaped my life.

2. Five years later in 1946 I was in Germany responsible for relief distribution in the American Zone. I was having problems with *Evangelisches Hilfswerk*, the major distributor of MCC food and clothing. I saw the Protestant agency using MCC relief to advance partisan political interests. I sent distress signals in letters back to Akron. I waited anxiously for letters of counsel. Finally one came from J. N. Byler, MCC Relief Director. He expressed much appreciation for my reports and work and added that he looked forward to hearing more. Sincerely yours. That was all. No counsel in my distress. No answers to my anguished questions. And yet, in time, I realized he had answered me. In a paracommunicative way he was saying, "You know better than we, what to do. We trust your judgment." The incredible confidence Akron placed in youth in the field.

3. In the spring of 1945, the war in Europe drawing to an end, I was in Akron responsible for MCC's hospital units in CPS. On May 5, I convened a meeting in Chicago at the Mennonite Home Mission to review plans for the second year of MCC summer service for women. Edna Ramseyer, a teacher at Bluffton College, wrote that she could not attend because MCC had asked her to go to New York to meet a worker called home. She said she was sending as her substitute a college senior, one Lois Sommer. Our committee met. I asked Lois to serve as secretary. A few days after the meeting, the minutes arrived--well written, carefully typed. As administrators do, I wrote a note of appreciation. Letter led to letter. Seven months later, Lois and I were married. Accident? Chance? A touch of mystery? Providence? I choose to call it providence wrapped in the mystery of God's ways.

The MCC phenomena is so very personal--embedded in your stories and mine--accumulated memories. A house of a thousand windows.

My thoughts return to Tim, Cathy, and their Rwanda friend walking in the valley of refugees and I hear the words of the Puritan poet:

> Lord, High and Holy, Meek and Lowly,
> thou has brought [us] to the *valley of vision*,
> where [we] live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
> hemmed in by mountains of sin, [we] behold thy glory.

ENDNOTES

[1]P. C. Hiebert and Orie O. Miller, eds., *Feeding the Hungry* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1929), 51.

[2]Tim Lind, "Report on MCC Team Visit to the Rwanda/Burundi Region, 14-30 July 1994," Mennonite Central Committee, August 10, 1994.

[3]Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Press, 1994), 1.

[4]James Wall, "Ties That Bind," *Christian Century*, 18 Jan. 1995, 35.

[5]John Dyck, *1994 Mennonite Central Committee Workbook* (Akron, PA: Mennonite Central Committee, 1995), 117.

[6]Waldo Neufeld, "MCC: Bridging to Youth," Mennonite Central Committee, British Columbia, June 21, 1993.

Forgotten Goodness:
The *Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe* (1920-1932)

by John B. Toews

Concerned German Mennonites met at Ludwigshafen on the Rhine on November 22, 1920. They unanimously resolved to found *Mennonitische Fluechtlingsfuersorge* (Mennonite Refugee Aid) and appointed the well known Mennonite leader, Christian Neff from the Weierhof, as chairperson.[1] While broadly concerned with "religious, cultural and benevolent purposes," its primary task was to provide "spiritual and material aid" for their suffering Mennonite co-religionists in Russia.[2] The new society was not affiliated with any specific Mennonite group or conference in Germany and sought to recruit anyone wishing to respond to the catastrophe which had overtaken the Mennonites living in the Russian Empire.

The organization of *Mennonitische Fluechtlingsfuersorge* (MFF), which was renamed the *Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe* (German Mennonite Aid) in February 1922, has its origins amid a complex set of circumstances. Prior to World War I, Russian Mennonites were frequent visitors to Germany. They came as tourists, health-seekers, and students. The sudden outbreak of the war left many of these stranded and subject to impoverishment. The chairman of the Conference of South German Mennonites, Christian Neff, not only sheltered some of these unfortunates in his own village, the Weierhof in the Palatinate, but found employment for them in the surrounding region. He further persuaded his conference to establish a special fund for destitute Russian Mennonites.

At the same time, two teachers at the Wilhelmsdorf Boys School, A. Warkentin and H. Wall, compiled a list of all the Russian Mennonites scattered throughout Germany. Both men originally came from the Molotschna settlement and intuitively understood the dilemma confronting their co-religionists. When the first news of the Bolshevik Revolution reached Germany late in 1917, the two began circulating a newsletter called *Heimatgruesse*, first in handwritten, then in printed form.[3] The publication not only provided a link between Russian Mennonites, but kept them informed of the latest developments in their homeland.

Meanwhile in April 1918, Christian Neff organized a special consultation at the Weierhof for all interested Mennonites, where reports of widespread anarchy in the Russian Empire and especially the Ukraine were presented. In the years to come, whether at conferences or special meetings, the plight of the Russian Mennonites became part of the German Mennonite agenda.

In July 1920, the Conference of South German Mennonites appointed A. Warkentin of Wilhelmsdorf as its itinerant minister and instructed him to include the Russian Mennonite refugees in Germany in his travels. Now, as he circulated among them, he was able to learn more of the tragedy engulfing their friends and relatives in Russia. When he reported his findings to the delegates attending the Conference of South German Mennonites on September 23, 1920, they unanimously approved the formation of a relief agency. German-based when founded in November 1920, the MFF executive committee expressed the hope that it would soon be enlarged by additional Mennonite representatives from Alsace-Lorraine, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. When the young organization met for its fourth meeting during February 1921, both the Swiss and Dutch Mennonites sent a representative.[4]

In Europe, peace negotiations eventually produced the Treaty of Brest Litovsk on March 3, 1918. Under its terms, the Bolshevik government lost the Ukraine. Subsequently a complicated diplomatic scenario saw the creation of an autonomous Ukrainian Republic and the occupation of the Ukraine by German and Austrian troops. The German defeat in the west as well as civil anarchy in the Ukraine forced the Germans to retreat in November 1918.[5] Throughout 1919, the Mennonite settlements in the Ukraine not only endured the fluctuating fronts of the Russian civil war, but a reign of terror by various marauding bands, often driven by their hatred of all things German and eager to share the reputed wealth of the settlers. News of atrocities committed by the anarchist army of Nestor Makhno soon appeared in letters to Germany and North America where they were published by the Mennonite press.

In an attempt to deal with the economic and social crises confronting them, Mennonites in the Molotschna settlement elected a *Studienkommission* (Study Commission) late in 1919, which was to explore immigration opportunities in Europe and North America and link up with co-religion-

ists on both continents. The commission arrived in Europe during April 1920 and contacted Mennonites in Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. Two of its members, A. A. Friesen and C. H. Warkentin, remained in North America following a tour of both Canada and the United States. Another one of its members, B. H. Unruh, returned to Germany where he became a pivotal liaison between European Mennonites and their Russian brothers and sisters.[6] He not only provided reliable information about the plight of the Russian Mennonites to the MFF and German Mennonite conferences, but encouragement and inspiration as well.

Meanwhile in North America, the reports of the *Studienkommission* sensitized a large and wealthy Mennonite constituency to the catastrophe confronting their co-religionists in the Russian Empire. Mennonite periodicals soon took up the cause of relief. A response was not slow in coming. On the Pacific coast, relief efforts became synonymous with names like M. B. Fast, B. B. Reimer, and W. P. Neufeld. Amid incredible difficulties, Fast and Neufeld accompanied a large relief shipment to distressed Mennonite colonies in Siberia in 1919.[7]

Meanwhile mid-west Mennonites met in Hillsboro, Kansas, early in January 1920, and organized an inter-Mennonite relief committee which initially also targeted starving Mennonites in Siberia. Similarly the Emergency Relief Commission, the official aid agency of the General Conference Churches in North America, donated over one-half of its budget for famine relief between 1920 and 1923.

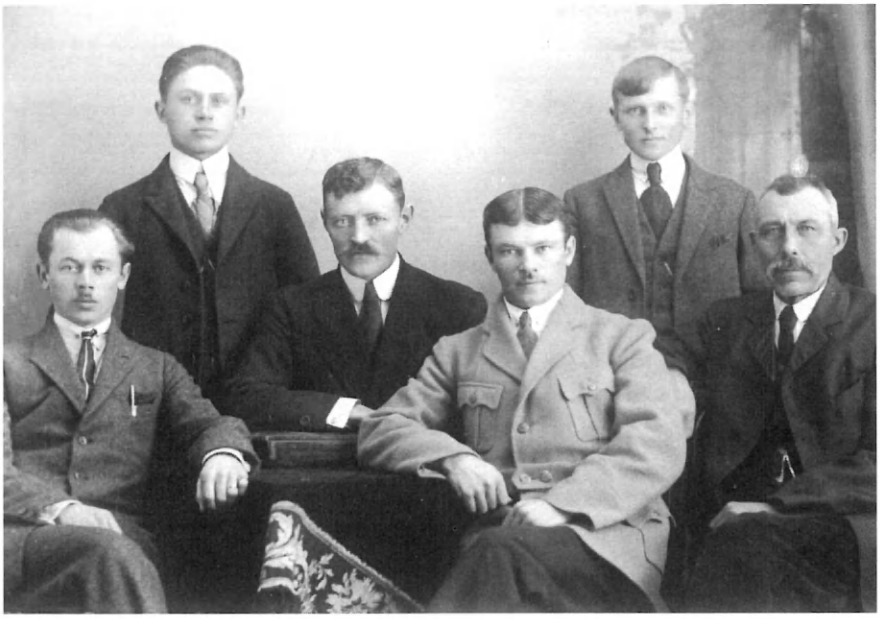
On July 27, 1920, delegates from all existing Mennonite relief organizations met in Elkhart, Indiana, and voted to create the Mennonite Central Committee. The new agency immediately initiated a Russian relief program and in early September sent a three-man unit to the Ukraine via Constantinople. Canadians organized the Canadian Central Committee on October 18, 1920, which in turn spawned the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (CMBC) on May 17, 1922. The CMBC would eventually play a key role in the immigration of over 20,000 Russian Mennonites to Canada. All of these agencies proved of inestimable value to the DMH. Not long after its founding, the DMH's aid efforts became increasingly vulnerable to the economic chaos engulfing Germany. Fortunately it could now rely on the helping hand of a large and concerned constituency in North America, which had not yet been devastated by economic depression.

Refugee group at Lechfeld

Lechfeld

Initially the new organization's agenda focused mainly on the growing number of Russian Mennonite refugees reaching Germany, most of whom were housed in former prisoner of war barracks scattered throughout the country. DMH representatives scoured the various camps in order to locate their co-religionists and to supply them with much needed food, clothing, and money donated by the German Mennonites. Anxious to concentrate Mennonite aliens in one location, the relief agency requested the use of the former military base at Lechfeld. The barracks were not only more spacious and comfortable, but the potential agricultural lands associated with former artillery ranges provided the transients with an opportunity to become somewhat self-sufficient.

Lechfeld, the site of the famous Magyar-Saxon battle of 955, lay some twenty-five kilometers south of Augsburg. The former military base was initially inspected by Horsch of the South German relief agency *Mennonitisches Hilfswerk Christenpflicht*[8] (MHC). The DMH, in cooperation with the MHC, approached the German minister for refugees who readily approved the project, provided the DMH enter into a direct contract. The offer of the German government, while generous, placed the DMH in a difficult situation. The government promised to provide the land rent free for a five year period, followed by a twenty-five year moderately-priced rent agreement. While some of the start up costs were covered by an outright grant, the long-range project was to be financed by an interest-free loan of one and a half million marks.[9] Encouraged by its Swiss and Dutch friends and hopeful of North American aid, the DMH settled its first Mennonite families at Lechfeld. By mid-summer of 1921, some twenty-one Mennonite families were resident in Lechfeld, almost all of them engaged in active farming.[10] MHC and DMH officials joined forces in order to purchase or beg the necessary farm machinery and equipment.[11]



The "Transmigrants Committee" at Lechfeld: (left to right) Jacob Braun, of Einlage, chairman; Johann Warkentin, of Grünfeld, age 18, stoker/fireman; Peter Penner, of Rosental, age 33, kitchen overseer; Franz Schellenberg, of Reinfeld, age 23, book keeper; Peter Letkemann, of Insel Chortitza, age 23, head cook; Johann Neufeld, of Neu-Osterwick, age 49, head cook.

Unfortunately the optimism with which the DMH and its friends began the Lechfeld project was soon dampened by several, as it turned out, unsolvable problems. Revolution and civil war within the Russian Empire not only generated Mennonite refugees, but Lutheran and Baptist ones as well. Since Mennonites only represented some ten percent of the Germans in Russia, it was inevitable that they would constitute a minority among the Russian Germans seeking asylum. By July 1921, some Baptist families were requesting residence at Lechfeld.[12] Eventually the DMH and MHC acquired a third partner, the *Bund Deutscher Baptisten* (Union of German Baptists). Before long, Baptists and Lutherans constituted the dominant population in a project spearheaded by Mennonites.[13] The DMH remained in contractual obligation to the German government long after Lechfeld and its other settlement projects ceased to serve its direct interests.

Rather sadly, a second major problem involved jursidictional disputes among the German Mennonites themselves. The tensions related to historic differences between north and south German Mennonite constituencies, but more immediately to personality clashes. Initially DMH appointed a certain Horsch of the MHC as its Lechfeld administrator. In August 1921, the DMH minutes already reported, "Horsch has done a good work, but must keep us informed as to what is going on."[14] The crisis intensified when it became obvious that Horsch would not cooperate with the DMH, indeed demanded that Lechfeld be placed under MHC jurisdiction.[15] Early in 1922 he was replaced as Lechfeld administrator. The MHC-DMH tension briefly re-emerged when discussions relating to the termination of the Lechfeld project and the dissolution of the DMH began in the spring of 1925. Horsch again demanded Lechfeld's jurisdiction be transferred to *Christenpflicht*.[16] Such action was both fiscally and legally untenable. On the one hand, there were large outstanding government loans which demanded renegotiation; on the other, the Lechfeld contract was specifically between the Bavarian government and the DMH.

The third major problem confronting Lechfeld related to the clients it intended to serve and the terms under which they settled. Lechfeld was never intended to be permanent or self-sustaining nor did it offer any of its inhabitants any real prospect of private ownership. The independently-minded Mennonite farmers from Russia had little interest in indefinite lease arrangements with no prospect of ownership. Then too, the Lechfeld settlement had barely begun when, thanks to the efforts of the *Studienkommission*, the prospect of immigration to Canada emerged. With no prospect of a future rootedness in Germany, it was little wonder the migrants were reluctant to participate in a project which offered temporary subsistence but no permanence.[17]

The Lechfeld project encountered a fourth unexpected complication. The agencies which would eventually transport thousands of Russian Mennonites to Canada were operational by 1923. During that year, some three thousand emigrants left Russia. The DMH was able to add over three hundred of its Lechfeld transients to the list. During February 1923, *Studienkommission* members B. H. Unruh and A. J. Fast, anticipating that Canadian medical authorities would disqualify some of the Russian Mennonites arriving in Latvia, met in Berlin with the German minister for refugee aid. The minister assured them that medically unfit persons would be granted a temporary residence visa in Germany on the condition the DMH provide them accommodation at Lechfeld. Assured of American support, the DMH agreed to the arrangement.[18] They were ill prepared for what followed. Over 650 of some 3000 emigrants were detained for medical reasons. Most eventually rejoined their families in Canada, but the interim cost to their DMH hosts would be high.

While DMH anticipated the necessity of a transit camp since the spring of 1922, they had thought only in terms of two or three hundred people. A special section of Lechfeld was set aside as a *Durchgangslager* (transit camp) and given the operational name *Dulag*. They were ill prepared for the 658 refu-

gees who arrived at the camp between July 28 and August 19, 1923, most of whom were suffering from trachoma. Two German eye specialists were immediately hired to treat the migrants. Since another medical inspection awaited the Canada-bound migrants in England, DMH officials invited English doctors to Lechfeld to speed up the medical processing. Both strategies were successful. Except for a few cases of stubborn trachoma, most of the refugees were able to leave during 1924.[19]

Dulag was run by a special committee which assigned various camp tasks and was responsible for law and order. Regular worship services were held with the help of visiting or refugee ministers. Such as were able worked in agriculture or local industry.

Most families arriving at Lechfeld obtained two or three rooms in the former barracks as well as a small land allocation for a vegetable garden. They were allowed to keep chickens, ducks, geese, pigs and even cows. This arrangement, combined with the actual farm operations themselves, ensured a minimum level of self-sufficiency. Non-agricultural workers at Lechfeld were employed in several small scale enterprises such as basket making, sewing, and even a brush making endeavor which at times employed as many as thirteen persons. Additional aid for DMH came when Mennonite cotton factory owners in Gronau offered jobs and housing to some of the refugees.[20] Eventually thirty-five Mennonite families were housed in company apartments while adult family members were employed in the nearby factories.[21]

Lechfeld proved an amazing success in spite of difficulties associated with the farm management, the availability of adequate farm machinery, and an interim labor force. Gradually a landscape pocketed by deep craters was transformed into productive grain fields. The sound of firing artillery gave way to the hum of three tractors and a threshing machine.[22] It never became economically self-sustaining, but did manage to significantly recover the expenses associated with its operation. After the collapse of the German currency during the second half of 1923, the stability of the foreign currencies contributed by DMH's partners played a significant role in stabilizing its continued operation.

Planting potatoes at Lechfeld, 1922.

Mecklenburg

In articulating its operational policy, the DMH ruled out an extensive settlement program in Germany from the very onset, justifiably arguing that neither lands nor adequate funds were available.[23] It nevertheless committed itself to a limited settlement program when the German government offered several permanent sites in the Mecklenburg region. After extensive negotiations, the DMH, its confidence bolstered by loans from west Prussian and south German Mennonites, agreed to purchase two sites, Lockwisch and Westerbeck.[24] Interest-free government loans to the settlers and generous repayment terms added to the venture's attractiveness. Nine to eleven Mennonite families were promised permanent settlement and eventual title to the land.[25] Unfortunately internal strife between the settlers and the DMH administrator erupted amid charges of unethical business practices.[26] A special commission dispatched to Mecklenburg found the accusations to be largely unfounded.[27] As negotiations with the government intensified, it became clear that permanent title to the land was not forthcoming, an action in part prompted by illegal land exchanges among the settlers.[28] Further discussions early in 1923 persuaded Mecklenburg authorities to give permanent title of the land to the DMH, an action which failed to satisfy the refugees' quest for permanence.[29] By the end of 1924, all but one of the settlers had left for Canada.[30] A long-term settlement of Russian Mennonites in Germany, it seemed, was not meant to be. In the end, the Mecklenburg project with its massive infusion of effort, time, and money was little more than a holding operation, providing a livelihood for refugees in transit. As the DMH minutes expressed it, "We very much regret this but nothing can be done to change the situation. We nevertheless feel that the purpose of our refugee program was accomplished."[31]

Liebeskasse

Circumstances introduced another item to the DMH agenda. Some Mennonites fleeing revolution and civil war in Russia tried to escape via Poland, only to be arrested and incarcerated by Polish authorities. Faced with the threat of deportation to Russia, these

Mennonite refugee congregation, Westerbeck, Mecklenburg, October 16, 1921

unfortunates appealed to the DMH. The agency dispatched Victor Guenther to Poland twice during the first half of 1922. He managed to rescue thirty-five persons, but not without incurring high costs. Thanks to the efforts of a pastor in Lemberg, safe accommodation was found for all refugees, except for four who were deported back to Russia. The cost of housing the migrants, their eventual transport to Germany, and a Polish bureaucracy accustomed to bribery raised the cost of this operation beyond the agency's ability to pay. The DMH decided to establish a special fund, the so-called *Liebeskasse*, which specifically targeted the needs of these Polish refugees.[32]

When an All-Mennonite Conference met in Oberursel on June 28, 1922, representatives from Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Russia and North America approved the fund. The *Liebeskasse* eventually facilitated the rescue of sixty Russian Mennonites, most of whom immigrated to Canada.[33] The overall success of the project was in no small part due to the generosity of the Dutch *Algemeene Commissie voor Buitenlandsche Nooden* (General Committee for Foreign Emergencies) which double-matched all funds raised in Germany.[34]

Books and Bibles

Another interim DMH effort involved the collection and distribution of German schoolbooks to refugees in Germany as well as the German-speaking populations in the Russian Empire. The project, inaugurated late in 1921, generated widespread interest and participation.[35] In September 1922, the DMH sent some 12,000 books and other literature to the Germans in the Ukraine. Unfortunately no further book shipments were possible as Soviet authorities refused to issue additional entry permits. Somewhat later, in response to a request from Russian-speaking churches, the DMH collected some 4,000 Bibles which, bureaucratic obstacles notwithstanding, finally reached their destination.[36]

Children's Work

After a sequence of refugee crises had passed, the DMH found itself active in a rather unexpected role. American Mennonite relief workers visiting Lechfeld witnessed the catastrophic effect of the German monetary inflation upon both refugee and German children. Through the Mennonite press, H. P. Krehbiel informed his American constituency of the emergency. Several thousand dollars soon reached the DMH treasury. That money was used specifically to facilitate a children's feeding program in the various schools, orphanages, and hospitals for crippled children.[37] Special kitchens open to all confessions were established in at least ten German cities and up to 900 children were fed.[38]

Reflections

The DMH story is a curious combination of the dramatic and the mundane, of vision and shortsightedness, of cooperation and enmity. The organization emerged in response to human suffering and when the emergency passed, its useful life ended. There was little of the heroic either in its projects or the actions associated with the projects. Here was a willful and calculated response to tragedy, a stubborn persistence amid contrary circumstances. Long hours of bureaucratic negotiations, of private and collective effort, produced initial triumphs and successes which in the end seemed little more than failures.

Throughout its existence, the DMH encountered rapidly changing circumstances which were beyond its ability to control or manipulate. The needs of a few Russian Mennonite refugees soon became the needs of many. At first the many had no place to go and so strenuous efforts were made to build up an agricultural land base and appropriate farming inventory. Rather suddenly all had a place to go and a carefully planned large-scale farm at Lechfeld became little more than a transient camp. In less than four weeks, orderly plans for anticipated medical rejects among the Canada bound migrants of 1923 turned into a medical emergency involving over 650 ailing people. The DMH agenda, it seemed, was always unpredictable. A few refugee malcontents, who should have been thankful to survive the Russian holocaust, ensured a steady drain of resources and energy from an already overextended relief agency. Then too there was little in post-World War I Germany that encouraged risky enterprises or ambitious ventures, yet the DMH did just that. Shortly after it committed itself to

broad ranging relief operations and major government contracts, the German currency collapsed. Objectively viewed, few of its projects turned out as originally planned.

The DMH records, especially the detailed minutes of its many meetings, at once reflect its precarious tenure and frustrations as well as its sense of persistence and optimism. Amid the growing complexity of its mandate and the constant shifting of its programs and priorities, there was always the abiding conviction that they were doing what the Gospel demanded. The documents reflect a constant reaffirmation of hope in spite of the internal strife between relief agencies and the tensions generated by obstinate personalities. Even in the later 1920s when successive meetings systematically planned the demise of the agency, there remained the abiding confidence that they had fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty. In some instances they had stood by their suffering co-religionists for weeks, months or even years. When the rescue was complete they were content to fold their tents.

The DMH could boast another achievement. During the early 1920s it generated an era of unprecedented cooperation among European Mennonites and between the Mennonites in Germany. Differences stemming from language and nationality, geographic distance or long-standing theological quarrels were eroded by the magnitude of the Russian catastrophe. As the minutes of June 28, 1922, expressed it:

> It is a unique event in the story of our people that representatives from all lands came together and unitedly worked at a common task. May this beginning make the desired headway and successfully attain its objective. We Mennonites who were separated for centuries have now directed our energies for the well-being of our people and all humanity.[39]

Lockwisch settlement, Mecklenburg, June 2, 1921

ENDNOTES

[1] Much of the information in this study is derived from the rather detailed minutes of the organization from November 22, 1920 to September 15, 1932. I want to thank *Mennonitische Forschungsstelle*, Weierhof, for permission to copy this and related material during my stay there in the fall of 1968. Protokoll No. 1 (November 22, 1920), pp. 1-2. The recording secretary mistakenly dated his first set of minutes 1921.

[2]Ibid., p. 3.

[3]"Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Deutschen Mennoniten-Hilfe," October 31, 1922 (DMH Files, Weierhof Archives). Copies of *Heimatgruesse* have been preserved in the DMH files.

[4]"Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Deutschen Mennoniten-Hilfe," October 31, 1922 (DMH Files, Weierhof Archive); Protokoll No. 4 (February 17, 1921), p. 56.

[5]See Arthur E. Adams, *Bolsheviks in the Ukraine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 3-24.

[6]On B. H. Unruh, see John B. Toews, "Die Taetigkeit Benjamin Heinrich Unruhs waehrend der Auswanderung aus Russland in den Jahren 1919-1923," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblaetter* XXVI (1969), pp. 29-43.

[7]See M. B. Fast, *Geschichtlicher Bericht wie die Mennoniten Nordamerikas ihren armen Glaubensgenossen in Russland geholfen haben* (Reedley, Calif., 1919).

[8]Protokoll No. 5 (April 8, 1921), pp. 76-82.

[9]Protokoll No. 6 (May 18, 1921), pp. 88-92.

[10]Protokoll No. 8 (July 18, 1921), p. 110.

[11]Protokoll No. 11 (November 12, 1921), p. 133.

[12]Protokoll No. 8 (July 18, 1921), p. 114.

[13]In early November 1922, Lechfeld housed 160 Mennonites, 167 Baptists and some 45 Lutherans and Orthodox. Protokoll No. 26 (November 6, 1922), p. 259. Near the end of 1923, there were 174 Baptists, 53 Lutherans, and 31 Mennonites. Protokoll 36 (December 3, 1923), Book II, p. 75.

[14]Protokoll No. 9 (August 18, 1921), p. 123.

[15]Protokoll No. 12 (November 29, 1921), pp. 140-141.

[16]Protokoll No. 43 (March 31, 1925), Book III, pp. 6-14; see also "Die Vertreter der Mennoniten im Lager Lechfeld an die MFF," June 1, 1921 (DMH Files, Weierhof Archives).

[17]See Protokoll No. 26 (November 6, 1922), p. 258.

[18]See A. A. Friesen Papers (Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas), B. H. Unruh to B. B. Janz, February 16, 1923; B. H. Unruh to B. B. Janz, March 23, 1923; B. H. Unruh to B. B. Janz, May 4, 1923.

[19]"Die Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe," (DMH Files, Weierhof Archives), pp. 18-21.

[20]Protokoll No. 10 (September 12, 1921), p. 130; Protokoll No. 13 (January 5, 1922), p. 146.

[21]Protokoll No. 24 (October 19, 1922), p. 233.

[22]Protokoll No. 26 (November 6, 1922), p. 258.

[23]Protokoll No. 2 (January 4, 5, 1921), p. 24ff.

[24]Protokoll No. 3 (January 25, 1921), p. 45; No. 5 (April 8, 1921), p. 83; No. 10 (September 12, 1921), p. 130; No. 11 (November 12, 1921), pp. 133-134.

[25]Protokoll No. 12 (November 29, 1921), pp. 136-138.

[26]Protokoll No. 19 (July 17, 1922), p. 217.

[27]Protokoll No. 20 (August 4, 1922), pp. 219-220.

[28]Protokoll No. 26 (November 6, 1922), pp. 251-257.

[29]Protokoll No. 30 (February 20, 1923), p. 18; No. 31 (March 2, 1923), pp. 21-22.

[30]Protokoll No. 41 (December 4, 1924), p. 128.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Protokoll No. 18 (June 28, 1922), pp. 187-188; 194-196.

[33]Protokoll No. 32 (May 3, 1923), pp. 41-42.

[34]"Die Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe," (DMH Files, Weierhof Archives), pp. 16-17.

[35]Protokoll No. 12 (November 29, 1921), p. 137.

[36]"Die Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe," (DMH Files, Weierhof Archives), pp. 14-15; Protokoll No. 43 (March 31, 1925), Book II, pp. 143-144.

[37]"Die Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe," (DMH Files, Weierhof Archives), pp. 21-22.

[38]Protokoll No. 43 (March 31, 1925), Book II, pp. 143-144.

[39]Protokoll No. 18 (June 28, 1922), p. 201.

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Book Reviews

James R. Coggins. *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation.* Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991. Pp. 240. ($29.95) ISBN 0-8361-3109-6

James Coggins' monograph fills a small but significant gap in church history. The author retraces the footsteps of John Smyth and the members of his covenant community on their physical and spiritual journey to the Dutch Mennonites. A group of approximately 150 English Separatists who immigrated to the Netherlands in 1608, the Smyth congregation joined the Waterlander branch of the Amsterdam Mennonites several years later.

Before that happened, however, there were two schisms in the Smyth congregation, each with significant consequences. Over half of the members, led by John Robinson, left shortly after arrival in Amsterdam because of theological differences and joined Separatists already established in Leiden; many of Robinson's following participated in the Pilgrim migration to America. A tiny faction under the leadership of Thomas Helwys went back to England, founding the church that came to be known as General Baptists.

Coggins' history of the Smyth followers—a revision of his 1986 doctoral dissertation for the University of Waterloo—may be too specialized for the general reader. However, those interested in English Separatists, the early seventeenth-century Dutch Mennonites, and the origins of the Baptists and American Congregationalists will find it a good addition to their libraries. While the stories of Smyth, Robinson, and Helwys have been recounted many times already, Coggins synthesizes, analyzes, and critiques much previous work on the John Smyth Separatists, plus adds a new dimension by emphasizing the importance of all the members in the covenant community. The result is a thorough discussion of the Smyth congregation that should stand, for now, as the standard work on the subject.

One of Coggins' contributions is his revised chronology of the events in question, even though some of his conclusions are based on rather shaky evidence, such as the order of manuscripts in the archives (p. 77). Some of the new dating, such as when the schisms occurred, adds greatly to our understanding of theological developments. For example, Coggins challenges tradition when he determines that Robinson's group decided to defect *before* Smyth advocated believers' baptism. Another important contribution of the book is the discussion of the Smyth-Mennonite merger. Here Coggins suggests that the English congregation's application to join the Mennonites actually contributed to the break-down of a fragile Mennonite alliance (the Bevredigde Broederschap). He further postulates, and rightly so, that there may have been practical considerations in the merger of the two churches, such as a need for suitable marriage partners for the numerous singles in the Smyth congregation. Coggins might also have explored the possibility that the English members were in need of material aid, which the wealthy Waterlanders were in a position to provide.

Coggins' strength is in his treatment of the theological dimensions of Smyth's congregation. The group was shaped by two fundamental concepts. First was their adherence to the Separatist view of covenant, resulting in requirements for strict obedience to God's way and commitment to one another within the group. Second was their belief in revelation beyond Scripture ("further light"), which led to commitment to the truth on an individual level. Coggins maintains that the splits within the congregation were so bitter because of the unavoidable tension between these two fundamentals. Another important Smyth doctrine was a strong Old Testament-New Testament dualism, which eased the congregation's acceptance of several Waterlander Mennonite beliefs, including their controversial christology in which Christ accepted none of Mary's flesh.

A thorough section on free will sheds light on Smyth's relationship to Arminianism. Coggins makes a convincing argument that the members of Smyth's congregation took their free will position from the Mennonites rather than the Arminians. In discussing state-church relations and other points of Anabaptist theology, Coggins' use of the 1527 Schleitheim Confession is problematic. He upholds it as an Anabaptist standard for the Dutch Mennonites, without demonstrating a connection between this Swiss confession and the Dutch Anabaptists. The writings of Menno Simons might have provided more appropriate comparison for the Dutch context.

The age-old question remains: What, if anything, did the Baptists absorb from their contact with continental Anabaptists-Mennonites? Apparently, Smyth and his group embraced believers' baptism before they had significant contact with the Amsterdam Mennonites. In a fascinating section on "the elect nation," Coggins shows how Helwys's religious nationalism prevented him from accepting the leadership and culture of the Dutch Mennonites. Nor could Helwys tolerate the Smyth and Mennonite rejection of Christian government. In the end Coggins concludes that the Baptist understanding of free will and the concept of church-state separation came from Mennonite influence via Helwys.

Coggins includes several useful appendices: annotated lists of members of the Smyth, Robinson, and Helwys congregations, and original translations of two Latin documents discussed at length in the book. The most significant of these is a defense of Mennonite leader Hans de Ries's "Short Confession," which Coggins attributes convincingly to Smyth.

The greatest weaknesses in this book might have been corrected by a research trip to the actual sites of the events in question. For example, although Coggins explains the importance of studying the community members rather than just the leaders (p. 26), he does not expand his Dutch sources

for these individuals beyond municipal marriage records. Regarding certain Smyth followers, he relies on second-hand information from the well-known Waterlander minutes, Reynier Wybrandsz's "*Memoriaal*" rather than making use of the original manuscript source (available on microfilm at the Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College). Had he delved further into the Amsterdam archives, Coggins could have found more information on some Smyth followers in other municipal and congregational sources, which may have clarified some of the many unknowns. For example, examination of the Waterlander church account books might help to pinpoint when the Smyth congregation moved into the so-called Bakehouse (a crucial point of contact with the Mennonites) and to what extent the members received material aid from the Mennonites.

It is unfortunate that the few illustrations are too small and dark to be helpful, such as the reproduction of signatures on page 89 which are not at all legible. In other cases, better pictures would have been available. For example, one small photograph shows the site of the congregation's meeting place, the Bakehouse, which is now torn down (p. 60), but several interesting illustrations of the building exist on contemporary bird's-eye maps of Amsterdam.

These problems do not diminish the overall significance of this book. Coggins' lucid treatment of the theological dimensions of the Smyth congregation and his re-establishment of chronology render this volume a valuable contribution to church history.

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Peggy Goertzen. *The Friesen Mill and Early Milling in Marion County, Kansas*. Hillsboro, KS: Hillsboro Historical Society and Museum, 1994. Pp. 182. ($9.95 paperback) ISBN 0-9641307-0-X

The book *The Friesen Mill and Early Milling in Marion County, Kansas* provides the historical background for the newly constructed replica of the Friesen Mill in Hillsboro. The author explores the history of not only the Friesen Mill and Miller Jacob Friesen's family, but milling in Marion County, Kansas. In addition, the process used to reconstruct the Friesen Mill is described in detail.

The original mill was built by Miller Jacob Friesen in 1875-1876 in the Russian Mennonite village of Gnadenau, southeast of present-day Hillsboro. The wind-driven grist mill was in operation for the next 15 to 20 years with modest success. The last verified date of operation was circa 1897. In the latter years, the mill served primarily the Gnadenau village. The only photograph of the mill was taken in 1904 and it is clear that it was no longer in use at that time. The author has researched extensively newspaper accounts, census records, and manuscripts to provide a detailed account of the Friesen Mill and the family that operated it.

The background of Miller Jacob Friesen is interesting and provides the modern reader with clues to life in Russia as well. The author notes that Friesen was an inventor and he had a patent from Czar Alexander Nicolai of Russia for his fanning mills. Friesen was also a skilled builder and cabinet maker. All of these skills he put to good use in Kansas. Friesen is credited with building several structures in Marion County in addition to the mill.

The chapter entitled "Reconstruction of the Friesen Mill" by Richard Wall was of particular interest. Wall describes the history of the project from the 1940s to 1991 when serious planning for the project was begun. He explains the sources consulted, any deviations from the original mill and how they arrived at their conclusions. Reconstruction of the mill was begun in May 1992. There was only one photograph in existence of the original mill and limited written material. The photograph was relied upon to determine external details and dimensions. Several artifacts, including the mill stones and cast iron bearing box from the original mill, were studied. A barn reportedly built by Miller Friesen also proved useful in determining the lumber used. This whole project illustrates that important information can be gathered from sources other than written. Every effort was made to reconstruct the mill accurately. The project is a good case study for how to go about reconstruction. The time and planning it takes to do it correctly is also evident. For example, lumber had to be specially rough-sawn and air dried for about a year to achieve the proper effect.

In later chapters, Goertzen discusses milling traditions among Mennonites and the importance of the mill to the community. The author includes a brief history of milling in Russia and notes that the occupation often became a family tradition. A section on "Wind Powered Mills in Kansas" shows that the Mennonites were not the only people that utilized the Kansas winds. A brief paragraph on each of the windmills is included. The problems of depending on the winds for power and the dangers of the occupation is also described.

The Friesen Mill contains a great deal of information about mills and milling in Kansas. The author has included genealogical information which at times gets in the way of the narrative with all the names and dates. To readers not familiar with the Friesen and Wiebe families, information on family connections, while interesting, is confusing. All of this information could have been combined in the chapters dealing with the family information at the back of the book, similar to how the author handled the early millers of Marion County. A general bibliography of sources consulted would also be helpful.

The chapter on Early Millers in Marion County will be an excellent resource for future reference. Arranged alphabetically, the "millers" in Marion County from 1870-1905 are listed and vital statistic information is included in a brief paragraph.

The book is an excellent source documenting the reconstruction of the Friesen Mill in Hillsboro. The book makes it clear that all sources available were utilized to ensure that the mill

was reconstructed as accurately as possible. Also included throughout the book are photographs of the Friesen family, their homes, the original mill, and other mills in Marion County and Kansas, which were very helpful. It is evident that hours of careful research and planning were the basis for the project and many individuals worked very hard to insure the success of the project. The book *The Friesen Mill* will provide the general reader with excellent background on the Friesen Mill and milling in Kansas.

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John A. Hostetler. *Amish Society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993. Pp. 435. ($14.95, paperback) ISBN 0-8018-4441-x

From the rich and productive farmlands of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and Holmes County, Ohio to the parched prairies of south central Kansas, the Amish have entered the American imagination. They have become a significant cultural curiosity. Every year millions of tourists visit Old Order Amish communities. Hotels, resorts, ethnic restaurants, campgrounds, bakeries, and antique shops surround their agricultural settlements, selecting from among the myriad symbols of an agrarian past those that suit their particular commercial needs. Like the Bushman in South Africa, they are exotic in our midst. As in the South African film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, American filmmakers draw from Amish images to explore an imagined past, our imagined past. The Amish replace the native American. We know more about them; they are "unspoiled" and "authentic." And like the Bushman or native American, they face questions about the nature and permeability of their communities and identities.

Nearly everyone, old and young, rural and urban, recognizes them--from the Amish-inspired fashion spreads in the fall 1993 Ralph Lauren collection to the commercial and museum exhibits of their quilts. An unlikely assortment of novelists, poets, historians, journalists, filmmakers, artists, anthropologists, sociologists, agronomists, and philosophers use them as a benchmark to determine how far we have removed ourselves from our precapitalist agrarian past or nature. Liberals and conservatives find in them inspiration for the discussion of place, community, locality, rurality, regionalism, family values, and the work ethic. To others—like the controversial plant geneticist and sustainable agriculturalist, Wes Jackson—the Amish are a window into the future, even a guidepost on our way to a sustainable society.

From Harvard and the Sorbonne to Northern Colorado State, students of religion, sociology, and anthropology are introduced to *our* "exotic other" through John Hostetler's pioneering work, *Amish Society*. Now in its fourth edition, Hostetler's work has played a prominent role in shaping both scholarly and popular representations of the Amish. In its third edition, *Amish Society* was an academic publisher's dream: it sold a stunning 50,000 copies. And in its fourth edition, Johns Hopkins University Press is happy to report that it is selling at an even faster pace. Hostetler, scholar and activist, has influenced the ways that the media, popular culture, social scientists, the Amish, other religious groups, and tourist and civic boosters, have constructed--in opposition to modernity--a uniquely "premodern" ethnic community. *Amish Society* remains the standard for amateur and professional alike.

The strength of Hostetler's oeuvre lies in his proximity to everyday life. A former Amishman, Hostetler captures the subtleties of the ordinary. From the first to the newest edition, he demonstrates mastery of the exotic particulars. However, herein lies the significant weakness throughout his work. In attempting to capture the unusual, Hostetler devotes little time to the important work of examining the growing importance of tourism and wage labor. In the second edition, tourism merits only a single sentence. In the third edition, tourism is discussed--without reference to the important debates and literature on tourism and commodification of cultural objects--on merely four pages. Yet the author acknowledges that "tourism as an enterprise had invaded all major Amish communities...."[1] And in the new edition, he writes that "today the Amish are the unwilling objects of a thriving tourist industry on the eastern seaboard." Had Hostetler focused his lens on the commodification of Amish clothing, quilts, food, and furniture, and the tourist marketing of their lifestyle, we might have learned about how the Amish/modernity opposition has contributed to their cultural distinction. MacCannell, for example, argues that ethnic identities can become "reconstructed ethnicity" due to pressures from the dominant culture and tourism.[2] Although recent (1940s), and a small part of a three-hundred year United States history, tourism among the Amish may be a defining moment where the "primitive" or "traditional" is made exotic and then sold as commodities to consumers of authenticity.[3] Hostetler views tourism as a necessary evil that Amish elders unwillingly manipulate and control to ensure economic viability within a highly competitive market economy (p. 4). The folk/urban opposition cannot, however, account for how a "constructed" Amish ethnicity is a necessary precondition for tourism. That is, tourists do not travel to see the Amish unless the latter have already entered the American imagination as "traditional" or "primitive." It might be argued that Amish ethnicity is in part constructed in the same way that Bell Hooks has argued that African-American ethnicity is constructed: we buy the "others" food, clothing and furniture to "spice up a dull dish."[4]

More important, however, is the conspicuous absence of a description and discussion of the increasing role of wage labor. In the second edition, 10 pages were devoted to the discussion of economics. In the third edition, an entire chapter was devoted to soil productivity and management, work and seasonal activities, and nonfarm work. In the new edition, it appears as if eco-

nomic life for the Amish has come to a virtual standstill: only ten paragraphs have been added and these accomplish little beyond a description of environmental concerns. Otherwise, no new data has been presented and there are no substantive changes. Yet scholarship abounds with descriptions of the many ways that the Amish are being transformed by the marketplace and the nation.

From the first to the fourth edition, Hostetler has portrayed the Amish as "folk" or "closed" and, as such, members experience face-to-face interactions, extended families, mutual aid, use of simple technology, strict age and sex division of labor, and oral transmission of knowledge. And unfortunately, this "autarkic" representation of Amish communities has been embraced by many scholars--as well as journalists, novelists, poets--to engage in the oppositional writing of history. It is often argued, for example, that we know about our own chaotic and differentiated nuclear family when it is compared with the integrated and extended Amish family. But instead of deriving our understandings of ethnic and cultural diversity from artificially *constructed* dichotomies, we should seek to *discover* their ethnicity by assuming that the Amish are as much "of the world as they are in it" (p. 22). By assessing how the Amish have become culturally distinct, how they assert differentiation, and at what social costs, social scientists could investigate the limits and potentialities of maintaining cultural differentiation through religious and other forms of autarky.

Hostetler has suggested that Amish separation of church and state—manifested in parochial education, military exemption, and non-participation in Social Security and welfare programs—is a cornerstone to their successful cultural persistence. Yet, might we use their unique church/state relation and their limited interactions with outsiders to explore larger questions about how culturally diverse communities relate to one another, as well as to the broader social totality--the nation-state? The Amish maintain partial differentiation because they refuse to participate in the institutions designed to build national identities, but they also exist because the state provides for unique exceptions to that very same national identity. In dozens of court battles, they have argued for parochial education and military exemption based on their right to specific privileges not assured other groups. The fact that the nation provides these guarantees is an irony of Amish persistence and raises significant questions about the limits and challenges of creating and maintaining national and local identities.[5]

There continues to be a conspicuous absence of women in Hostetler's work. There is the Amish family, mate-finding, married-pair living, personal relationships, children and parents, food and table, recreation and leisure, the mature years, retirement, marriage and birth, and death. All of this without women? What about the unmarried women? How do they fare in work, retirement and daily life? And those without family? What about the many women working a second shift?--at home in the burdensome work of maintaining a household with few technological inputs while engaged in baking or the production of crafts for the burgeoning tourist industry? With the current pressures placed on Amish household to work "out," Amish women shoulder the extra burden. Are they invisible farmers?

What remains consistently disappointing throughout Hostetler's oeuvre is the lack of comparison, the great strength of his discipline, cultural anthropology. His intimate familiarity with the Hutterian Brethren, for example—the historically related cousins of the Old Order Amish and communal agriculturalists on the Great Plains—would provide an extraordinary opportunity to account for the differences among these pacifist, religious, and putatively autarkic groups. Even though Hutterian communal expansion--from 700 to 35,000 members living on 350 colonies--is as impressive as the Amish, they have not entered the American imagination. The Hutterians are not the object of Hollywood films; their colonies are not the sites of million dollar tourist industries; and their crafts, furniture, and food are rarely marketed as "ethnic." Moreover, very few are acquainted with the Hutterian Brethren, yet nearly everyone knows the Amish. In comparing the Amish in the American imagination--with our lack of popular, scientific, and humanist interest in the Hutterites and other groups, for example--we might gain new insight into the idealization, legitimatization, and normalization of certain cultural groups while others are ignored or worse, maligned. These negative comments aside, I will continue to use *Amish Society* in my introductory classes, and we will all be the beneficiary of John Hostetler's important insights into the inner workings of Amish life.

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[1]John Hostetler, *Amish Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 308.

[2]Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 159.

[3]Bell Hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).

[4]Ibid., p. 21.

[5]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).