

THE GERMAN IDENTITY OF MENNONITE BRETHREN
IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA, 1930-1960

by

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B.A., Fresno Pacific College, 1985

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF HISTORY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 1990

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ABSTRACT

Little scholarly research has been done on the function of Germanism among Mennonites who immigrated to Canada from Russia in the 1920's, and what has been done often relies on an oversimplified "desire for separation" to explain the phenomenon. At the same time, it has been argued that the enthusiasm for Nazi Germany among Mennonite immigrants in Canada is to be understood as part of a larger "Volks-German awakening".

In fact, the Mennonite experience of brutal treatment during the Bolshevik Revolution, the economic conditions of the Great Depression, and assimilationist pressures from Canadian society put them in a naturally receptive position for the cultural, political and ethnic ideas associated with the "new Germany". The Mennonite ethno-religious culture which had emerged in Russia appeared to be breaking down, more rapidly in some areas than others; at the same time, distinctions between political and cultural Germanism were just beginning to be understood, as they were bound up in a single "package" which seemed to offer answers to the problems of fragmentation, instability and loss of identity.

Germanism, and the German language in particular, functioned as an instrument of socio-religious integration for the Russlaender Brethren in the 30 years after their arrival in Canada. In the interwar years, Mennonite Germanism took on certain political, "Volkish", and nationalistic overtones; by the end of the Second World War, these elements had largely faded. In the postwar period Germanism becomes more clearly identifiable in its primary role as symbol and agent of the distinctive configuration of religious faith,

sense of peoplehood, and way of life which had emerged in Imperial Russia. The Germanism which was expressed in the Canadian context was in large part a conservative response to the challenges posed by the forces of assimilation and acculturation, the effects of anti-Germanism brought on by two World Wars, and an inherent tendency of the Brethren to identify with North American "English" evangelicalism and to denigrate their cultural heritage because it was felt to detract from effective evangelism.

A variety of sources have been used in writing this thesis, including church records, newspapers, personal papers, interviews, conference minutes and school committee minutes, as well as a wide range of secondary sources, including unpublished theses, dissertations and papers. In addition to outlining the contours of Brethren Germanism itself, efforts have been made to portray adequately the context in which Brethren Germanism was expressed, including that of the Brethren constituency as a whole, other "evangelical" groups, and the larger social and political currents of Canadian society. Extending the analysis into the decades after 1945 adds conclusive evidence that the Brethren Germanism of the 1930's was related more to Mennonite goals and aspirations than those of Nazi Germany, despite the presence of a significant (misguided) sympathy for the Hitler regime.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Warm thanks to Paul Toews and Kevin Enns-Rempel at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Fresno, California, for their encouragement, help and friendship. Ken Reddig at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, Manitoba provided courteous assistance as well. I am grateful to Lawrence Klippenstein at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg for his helpful and relaxed attitude. Joe Springer at the Mennonite Historical Library of Goshen, Indiana gave me a place to stay while there, as did Gilbert and Susan Brandt while I was in Winnipeg. Richard and Billie Wiebe also provided friendly accommodations on one of my trips to Fresno. Thanks to John B. Toews for helping to conceptualize this project. Finally, special regards to John Conway, who has been a good friend, critic, interlocutor and hiking companion. His support has been greatly appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

Mennonites trace their origins to Reformation Europe and two primary ethnic groups, Dutch North-German and Swiss South-German. Menno Simons was a leader of Dutch origin who brought a number of Anabaptist groups together, through his leadership and writings. The earliest Anabaptists emerged in the context of the Zurich Reform and the "social-revolutionary movement" associated with the Peasants' War (1525), and strove to effect a radical transformation of prevailing socio-religious structures following the New Testament example of the early church, and Christ's teachings. It was only with considerable opposition and persecution that they became conscious of themselves as an alternative community, a fellowship of the redeemed.¹ The congregation or "worshipping community" became the "organizing principle" of Anabaptist-Mennonite life, and has remained so to this day.² While it is perilous to try to locate a doctrinal core of the early Anabaptist vision, principles such as adult baptism (voluntarism), nonresistance, anti-clericalism, the renewal of the Christian life, discipleship, and bearing the cross of Christ have all been a part of the movement, which is based on a literalist biblicism.

Extreme persecution caused the various strands of the movement to turn inward and migrate to areas where they were tolerated. Many of the Dutch North-Germans gathered in Prussia, before moving on to Russia in the late 18th century. The Mennonites in Prussia maintained Dutch as their congregational language for 200 years after their arrival, switching to German shortly before their migration to Russia in the late 18th century.³ Closed settlements were founded in the Ukraine, and Mennonites prospered

there for the next 150 years primarily as agriculturalists. By the turn of this century a rapid cultural and economic expansion was taking place,⁴ and by the First World War a population of 120,000 was spread across 50 colonies and 2,300,000 acres of land.⁵ The colonies were essentially self-governing and autonomous until the 1870's, when Russification pressures began to increase, and service in state forestry camps was demanded in lieu of military service. At this point 18,000 Mennonites migrated to North America, with 10,000 settling in the United States and 8,000 in Canada.

The attempts at Russification tended to reinforce Mennonite identity, and its Germanic aspects.⁶ Mennonites conversed in High German in church and at school, and spoke a Low German dialect at home; Russian became the compulsory language of the schools between 1897-1899. The relationship with Germany was of a cultural and spiritual nature, as a steady supply of German educational and devotional materials flowed into the colonies. Mennonite political allegiance, when it was acknowledged, rested with the Czar and the Russian fatherland, as events surrounding the outbreak of the First World War demonstrated.⁷

The Mennonite Brethren were a religious subgroup within the larger Russian Mennonite society. German-Baptist and -pietist influences had reached the colonies by the 1850's, and in the early 1860's a renewal movement began simultaneously in the two largest colonies, stressing personal religious experience, conversion, evangelism, and a cohesive religious brotherhood (sic), hence the Brethren name. Mennonite Brethren church historian J.A. Toews has listed Brethren theological distinctives thus: 1. Practical Biblicism 2. Experiential Faith 3. Personal Witnessing

4. Christian Discipleship 5. Brotherhood Emphasis 6. Evangelism and Missions 7. Christ-centred Eschatology.⁸ Theology as a Mennonite Brethren literary genre has been sparse until recent years; traditionally Mennonites have distrusted theologizing, focussing instead on the ethics, morals and lifestyle of the body of believers as the most significant expression of religious principles.

The traditional explanation for the Brethren movement cites a decline in voluntarism, religious experience and morals in the colonies as having been the grounds for renewal. Colony power structures had become intertwined with congregational life, and birth rather than belief had become the determining element in church membership.⁹ While ideological factors were undoubtedly central in the emergence of the movement, it has recently been argued that the Brethren belonged to an educated, landless, upwardly mobile group which had been excluded from colony and congregational power structures, and hence sought to find its own niche in civil and religious affairs.¹⁰

In any case, by the turn of this century the Brethren were becoming increasingly reintegrated into the socio-economic and cultural life of the larger Mennonite community, and participated in the general "era of prosperity and progress" which took place between 1895 and 1914.¹¹ Previously there had been some harrassment and oppression of Brethren by the larger Mennonite society, brought on largely by a negative reaction to early Brethren emotional excesses, fanaticism and despotism.¹² One interesting aspect of early Brethren identity was the use of the more informal Low German dialect in worship services, clearly aimed at breaking down the perceived formality and rigidity of Russian Mennonite religiosity. This eventually gave way to High German, as the movement solidified and became more

systematic.¹³ The Brethren displayed a "genius" for organization, forming the first all-Russian Mennonite church conference body in 1872, twelve years after the movement began. They also exhibited an ongoing concern with evangelism, and an openness to non-Mennonite groups like the German Lutherans and Baptists. By 1925, the Brethren constituted 15% of the population of the two original Mennonite colonies, and 40% of the many daughter settlements.¹⁴

The First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution were disastrous for the Mennonites in Russia, as it was for all successful farmers, or "kulaks". Although there were many twists and turns in this period of their history, the overall effect was a steady destruction of all that had been built in the previous 150 years, and the loss of the Russian Mennonite fatherland.¹⁵ By the early 1920's, serious efforts were being made to allow for the emigration of Russian Mennonites to Canada. Although many more wished to leave, 20,201 Mennonites were able to escape the USSR between 1923 and 1930, and settle in Canada. The bulk of the immigrants came to Canada between 1923 and 1926.¹⁶ Their primary reasons for leaving were loss of economic and socio-religious freedoms; the latter loss, especially, convinced Mennonites that there was no future for them in Soviet Russia.¹⁷ The majority of the immigrants settled in the prairie provinces; migration trends during the 1930's and after were to Ontario and British Columbia. By 1939, 17% of immigrant families were living in Ontario, 71% resided in the three prairie provinces, and 12% in British Columbia.¹⁸

The Canadian Mennonite population prior to the 1920's migration numbered 59,000, and was concentrated in the five westernmost provinces.¹⁹ This number was divided into 18 congregational families, with Mennonites of Swiss South-German origin predominating in Ontario, and those of Dutch North-German

stock (i.e. former Russian colonists) inhabiting the prairies.²⁰ The Swiss Mennonites had generally adopted the English language,²¹ while the Russian Mennonites on the prairies conversed in Low German among themselves, reserving High German for church, school and written communication.²² The Mennonite immigrants of the 1920's, or "Russlaender", tended to speak more High German, although the dialect was still very much in use. They had become increasingly Germanized, culturally, in the period after their more conservative members emigrated from Russia in the 1870's.²³ No precise figures exist on Low German/High German usage. Interviews indicate that some Russlaender families spoke High German in the home, and that Low German was perceived to be a threat to the maintenance of the High German in Canada.²⁴ E.K. Francis found high rates of High German usage in the homes of the Russlaender, with a tendency to replace the Low German dialect with High German as time passed.²⁵ The Russlaender "had come to view Low German as a language too low and uncultivated to pass on to their children," according to Frank Epp.²⁶ Some of the Russlaender felt that the 1870's immigrants to Canada, or "Kanadier", spoke a lower-grade High German.²⁷ This study will be concerned primarily with the role that High German played in the maintenance of Mennonite Brethren identity. The relationship between Low German and High German is further discussed in Chapter Six.

In 1931 the total number of individuals in Canada listing German as their mother-tongue was 362,000, or about 3.5% of the Canadian population. On the prairies the ratio was higher, with Manitoba German-speakers comprising 8% of the total population, in Saskatchewan 15%, and Alberta 9%.²⁸ Thus the majority of the Russlaender settled in areas with relatively large numbers of German-speakers.

It is estimated that 5,000 of the 20,201 Russlaender were of Mennonite Brethren affiliation.²⁹ Prior to this influx, there were approximately 1800 baptized Brethren in Canada;³⁰ the addition of family members would have meant the total Brethren community numbered between 3000-5000 individuals. These Brethren were the result of the missionary efforts of American Brethren from the 1870's Russian emigration among Canadian Mennonites and other German-speakers. Four-fifths resided in Saskatchewan, although the church in Winkler, Manitoba, was the first and largest of the Canadian Brethren congregations, having been founded in 1888. The year 1924 "marked the rapid expansion of the Mennonite Brethren church throughout Canada."³¹ The aggressive Russlaender soon assumed positions of leadership in the Canadian Mennonite community, "taking over" many of the existing institutions, and starting many more themselves.³² A prominent example is the Winkler Bible School in Winkler, Manitoba, started by Brethren Bible expositor A.H. Unruh and others, upon their arrival from Russia in 1925.

The Brethren rapidly integrated themselves into the existing North American Brethren conference structures, which included an American General Conference and a Canadian Northern District Conference, which was both a division of the American General Conference and a semi-autonomous Canadian body. The Canadian Brethren counted over 6300 baptized members by 1939;³³ this growth was due both to the recent immigration and normal familial growth, and to the Brethren ability to absorb other Mennonites. As Frank Epp put it,

Russlaender Brethren soon knew where they belonged, and so impressive and attractive was the Mennonite Brethren sense of missionary purpose, the clarity of their doctrine, and the predictability of their church discipline that they not only won all their own but absorbed...(other Mennonites as well). The Brethren were more numerous, had stronger leaders, and offered a more lively, committed,

and simple religious experience.³⁴

The Russlaender of all congregational families found themselves in a society which had recently become suspicious of both Mennonites and Germans. Prior to the First World War, ethnic Germans had generally been considered among the best of citizens;³⁵ but the war and the Mennonite education crisis of the late 'teens and early twenties combined to discredit pacifist and German-speaking "enemy aliens" in the minds of many.³⁶ Close to 8,000 conservative Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan emigrated to Latin America during the 1920's, due to increasing pressures for Anglo-conformity in the schools brought on by the First World War. Anti-Mennonite feelings had become so intense that all Mennonite immigration to Canada was forbidden from 1919-22, by a special government Order-in-Council. Declining nativist sentiment³⁷ and the renewed desire for economic expansion helped to pave the way for further immigration in the mid and later 1920's, which was carried out under the Railways Agreement of 1925-30. The Russlaender were part of a larger migration of 165,000 central and eastern European immigrants who came to Canada under this agreement.

By the later 1920's another nativist reaction set in, especially towards sectarian groups like the Mennonites, who had become "locked together" in the public mind with "unassimilable" groups like the Doukhobors and Hutterites a decade earlier.³⁸ By 1930, with the onset of the Great Depression, attitudes toward immigration had become totally negative, and immigration was reduced to a trickle for the next decade.³⁹ Mennonites who had immigrated from Soviet Russia had cause to feel both grateful to their hosts for being let in, and alienated towards them, when only a small number of their desperate co-religionists who had assembled in Moscow during 1929-30 were admitted into

Canada, amidst a loudly negative public reaction to the prospect.⁴⁰

The Russlaender were not able or willing to duplicate the closed colonies of Russia. A strong element of individualism and the lack of consensus on land-settlement policy ensured the demise of various attempts to duplicate the Russian experience. Mennonite "clustering" was due more to the unconscious adhesion to other Mennonites than to conscious policy.⁴¹ This lack of physical integration would make cultural and ideological factors more important. The Mennonites who had migrated from Russia to western Canada in the 1870's were much more successful in forming closed settlements, due at least partly to the fact that their migration was a voluntary, conservative phenomenon, as well as to the emptiness of the prairies upon their arrival. In the intervening years the Mennonites remaining in Russia had, as already indicated, become relatively prosperous, educated, and sophisticated. And as E.K. Francis observes, the "better and more enterprising classes" of these were primarily the ones who were able to emigrate in the 1920's.⁴²

Thus the Russian Mennonite immigrants of the 1920's were known to be "progressive" and interested in finding a niche for themselves in the larger society, in contrast to the indigenous Mennonites from previous migrations. They were positive towards education and relatively eager to learn English, at first primarily for economic benefits. As well, they displayed a greater tendency to urbanize, despite the fact that the conditions of their entry into Canada required they settle on farms.⁴³ The majority were in fact settled on farms, but Depression crop conditions and high unemployment rates among recent immigrants⁴⁴ caused a high degree of mobility among Mennonites, paralleling the general trend on the prairies.⁴⁵

It is the aim of this study to chart the contours and meanings of the

German identity for the Russlaender immigrants, particularly the Mennonite Brethren, in the thirty years subsequent to their arrival in Canada. It is an important but little-studied aspect of Canadian Mennonite history.⁴⁶ The Germanism issue evoked great emotions and was a factor in many of the developments which took place in this period among the Brethren. In the first three chapters, the Brethren are considered alongside other Mennonites, because a strong sense of belonging to a larger Mennonite community prevailed, especially in the period immediately following immigration, and periodicals like the Mennonitische Rundschau were read by all types of Mennonites. Brethren often worshipped with other Mennonites in the early years of settlement, until numbers and resources were sufficient to form separate congregations. The Brethren have been selected for particular scrutiny because they were a cohesive, rigorous, identifiable sub-group within Mennonite society, and because I feel that the inherent Mennonite problem of reconciling theological beliefs and aspirations with earthly needs and realities is vividly and poignantly illustrated in their experience.

In the most recent and comprehensive treatment of Mennonite society, Calvin Redekop argues that at the root of Mennonite identity is a utopian ideology, and that instead of becoming solely an ethnic group, as some have argued,⁴⁷ Mennonites developed into a "religious people...that maintained it was keeping the truth and the vision of Christianity alive."⁴⁸ Ethnicizing tendencies have always been present, but the consciousness of living out a "faithful original Christianity" has remained a powerful ideological animus which distinguishes Mennonites from groups which are constituted primarily by ties of culture, kinship and common history.⁴⁹ On the other hand, there is much to the assertion by another Mennonite sociologist that:

A common history, a collective biography, a transgenerational cultural legacy and a shared fate constitute the ethnic glue which fuses Mennonites together above and beyond religious experience...A powerful tribal memory recalls that "we were in this together," and a collective anxiety worries about the common future "that we face together."⁵⁰

The present study will indicate that both religious and "tribal" or ethnic factors were involved in the concern over the German identity, and that as such they were both important components of Canadian Mennonite identity for the period under study.

While the German identity of the Mennonite Brethren in its various forms is the general topic of this study, the German language was the most important component of this identity, and garners the most attention. Edward Sapir lucidly described the communal function of language thus:

Language is a great force of socialization, probably the greatest that exists. By this is meant not merely the obvious fact that significant social intercourse is hardly possible without language but that the mere fact of common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language.⁵¹

H. Richard Niebuhr echoes this assertion in analyzing European immigrant churches in America, and notes further that;

Conservatives in...(immigrant) churches have always maintained that the abandonment of the old, European tongue and the adoption of English as the language of worship and instruction involved the abandonment of all the ways of the fathers and introduction of a new "English or American religion."⁵²

The insights of Sapir and Niebuhr provide an important theoretical background for understanding the Russlaender experience in Canada. During the 1930's, other forms of Germanism, in addition to the language, performed the function of maintaining the social and religious integrity of the group. After 1945, these other elements declined, leaving the German language as a primary reference point for Russlaender Brethren socio-religious identity.

Finally, a few terms require definition. "Germanism" is generally used

to refer to a conscious affirmation of any of a wide range of actual or perceived components of the German culture, nation, "race", and way of life. "Militant Germanism", a term which is used primarily in the 1930's context, has nationalistic and militaristic connotations and implies a strong feeling that Germanism, in one form or another, provided solutions to pressing problems and fulfilled certain inherent personal or communal needs. As indicated, "Russlaender" were immigrants of the 1920's migration, and "Kanadier" were primarily those who came in the 1870's from Russia. The term "Volk" has been left untranslated. It implies a group of people sharing a unique history, landscape, culture, spirituality, ethnicity and way of life. For the Mennonites it could mean all these things, or more simply, "our people". The term "Volkish" refers to the 19th and early 20th century ideology of Volk which originated in Germany and tended to exalt the Germanic "race", and was anti-modern and -semitic.⁵³

In regards to the terms "assimilation" and "acculturation" I have followed E.K. Francis, who defines the former as the process "whereby individual members of a minority (group) are transferred into the host society with permanent loss to the...group;" and the latter as "the acceptance of culture traits from the large(r) society."⁵⁴ Each term implies a certain measure of the other, although "assimilation" is clearly the more general term, implying a large degree of acculturation. A distinction is sometimes made in the text between Brethren "membership" and "affiliation". Baptized adults were members, while their families were Brethren by affiliation. This distinction, which can also be used for other Mennonites, was especially important to the Brethren, who stressed individual conversion and baptism by total immersion as crucial conditions for inclusion in adult

Brethren churchly society. At other points the ethnic side of Mennonitism is acknowledged by use of the terms "Brethren" and "Mennonite" to denote the totality of the Mennonite community.

Although I argue that the Germanism which was expressed in the Canadian context is best understood as a function of the attempt to maintain the socio-religious integrity of the Russlaender Brethren, I do not wish to imply that Mennonite life in Russia was monolithic. There were differences in class, status, wealth, education and dialect among Mennonites, and a certain degree of "regionalization" had begun to take place among the scattered Russian colonies by the turn of this century.⁵⁵

However, it is undeniable that the Russian Mennonites, and perhaps especially the Brethren, belonged to a relatively integrated and cohesive society in which a distinct configuration of language, religious faith, way of life and sense of peoplehood had emerged. In addition, it has been argued that the common experience of migration and settlement in Canada helped to bind the Russlaender closer together.⁵⁶

As to the actual ethnic background of the Russian Mennonites, the majority originated in the Netherlands, while a smaller percentage of Germanic and other central and eastern European peoples joined the Mennonites along the way.⁵⁷ What is important for this study is less the actual genetic makeup of the Mennonites than their own perceptions of their origins.

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23. The movement towards more High German usage probably began as part of the reaction to Russification pressures beginning in the 1870's, and the general trend towards greater sophistication during the "golden years" of 1895-1914, which was accompanied by a "conscious cultural-intellectual journey in the direction of Germany." See John B. Toews, Czars, Soviets and Mennonites, chapter 3. Quote from p. 45. See also Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940 pp. 242-47.

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37. Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, p. 61, 72; Mott, "The 'Foreign Peril,'" p. iii, 111.
38. Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, p. 53, 111, 116; Avery, Dangerous Foreigners, pp. 108-112; Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 242ff; Alan B. Anderson, "Assimilation in the Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 1972), p. 73.
39. Avery, Dangerous Foreigners, pp. 111-12; Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, p. 127; Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 247-48.
40. A total of 1344 of the estimated 13,000 individuals who had gathered in Moscow were allowed into Canada. Another 4600 migrated to South America, and the rest were banished to Siberia or exiled elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 327; Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, pp. 118-19. E.K. Francis writes of a "collective resentment" by the Russian immigrants toward Canada, due to the hardships and injustices suffered during the immigration process, as well. While cases of this must have existed, Francis has overstated the case. Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 207.

41. Peter F. Bargaen, "Mennonite Land Settlement Policies," Mennonite Life, October 1960, pp. 187-90; Aron Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta," pp. 108-09, 137-39. See further discussion on this topic in Chapter Three below.
42. Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 187. George K. Epp estimates the migration to have included at least 60% of the Russian Mennonite "intelligentsia". George K. Epp, "Mennonite Immigration to Canada after World War II," Journal of Mennonite Studies (1987):109.
43. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 188, 242-45; Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta," pp. 113-14, 134; Epp, Mennonite Exodus, pp. 207-09; Francis, In Search of Utopia, pp. 208-12; Dawson, Group Settlement, p. 158.
44. Avery, Dangerous Foreigners, p. 114; Jonathan F. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1981), p. 19.
45. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 352ff; Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, p. 272, 388-89; Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta," p. 132. The Great Depression hit the Russlaender especially hard, as they had both personal and collective debts, the latter incurred in their migration to Canada. See E.K. Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 209.
46. The one significant work on the topic is Frank Epp's analysis of the Mennonite newspaper Der Bote during the 1930's, which is discussed in Chapter Three. Gerald Ediger, professor at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, is currently writing a doctoral dissertation on the Brethren German identity. Otherwise, little has so far been done which goes beyond cliches and generalizations based on personal experience or individual cases, to analyse the topic in any depth.
47. E.K. Francis, "The Russian Mennonites: From Religious to Ethnic Group," The American Journal of Sociology LIV (September 1948):101-107.
48. Calvin Redekop, Mennonite Society, p. 322.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
50. Donald B. Kraybill, "Modernity and Identity: The Transformation of Mennonite Ethnicity," in Calvin Redekop, ed., Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 157-58.
51. Edward Sapir, "Language," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences IX (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 159.
52. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (Hamden, CT: The Shoestring Press, 1954), p. 212.

53. A good review of the intellectual origins of this movement is George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964).
54. Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 275.
55. Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 206; H.A. Peters, "Das mennonitische Volkstum: Eine Skizze seiner Entstehung und des Verfalles," Der Bote, 8 December 1964, p. 10; Thiessen, "A New Look at an Old Problem: Origins of the Variations in Mennonite Plautdietsch," pp. 285-97; James Urry, "Through the Eye of the Needle: Wealth and the Mennonite Experience in Imperial Russia," Journal of Mennonite Studies (1985):7-35.
56. Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 206; Frank H. Epp, "Problems of Mennonite Identity," in Leo Driedger, ed., The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978), p. 284.
57. Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 30; J.A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 11; Epp, Mennonites in Canada, pp. 526-27; Thiessen, "A New Look at an Old Problem".

CHAPTER ONE

The Canadian Context and the Impact of National Socialism

Historical circumstances had brought about the dissolution of the Russian Mennonite commonwealth at the same moment that a powerful movement of Volk-unification was emanating from Germany. It was very easy to appropriate the ideas and rhetoric of this movement and apply them to Mennonites scattered across 2000 miles of western Canada. Pro-Germanism in this context meant not only the separation from the "worldly" Canadian environment, but the possible reintegration of the scattered remnant on a linguistic, religious, and ideological basis. Thus while Germany did become a surrogate fatherland for some, the pro-German and Nazi-Volkish rhetoric espoused by Mennonites during the 1930's must be interpreted within the framework of specifically Mennonite concerns and aspirations. As the forces of assimilation and acculturation absorbed them into Canadian society with great rapidity,¹ the Russlaender saw their ethno-religious community not only fragmented, but dissolving before their very eyes.

The most important event of the 1930's for people of German ethnic or linguistic affiliation was the rise of the "new Germany" under Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists (NSDAP). This movement seemed to hold great promise for Germans, and initially brought substantial benefits to many German people, if it also persecuted others. As well, it inspired Germans everywhere to be proud of themselves and their abilities, and to rise above the shameful image engendered by the defeat of the First World War and the negative interpretation placed on the treaty of Versailles.

The movement meant different things to different people; cultural,

psychological, religious, economic, ethnic and national renewal were all associated with National Socialism under Hitler.² At a basic level, the pride in all things German which was a part of the movement was an important encouragement to German-speakers who, living in non-German environments, feared for the loss of their cultural and linguistic identity. The unconscious emotional attachment to the German language and customs should not be underestimated as an important impetus for Mennonite Germanism in the 1930's and beyond. In addition, German benevolence toward Mennonites, along with Nazi anti-communism, were key factors in Mennonite pro-Germanism during the 1930's.³ For many Mennonites, Hitler became a divinely appointed figure who was sent to right past wrongs and save Germany and the world from communism; thus the "cognitive dissonance" created by the tension between Mennonite faith and trust in God, on the one hand, and the apparent success of the "godless communists" and the subsequent persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union, on the other, could be alleviated.⁴

It was the combination of all these factors which gave Canadian Mennonite Germanism its particular intensity during the 1930's. After 1945 the desire for socio-religious solidarity and integrity remained a potent factor in Mennonite Germanism, while the other elements quietly evaporated. Harsh economic conditions and a high rate of mobility during the Great Depression undoubtedly contributed to the unease and uncertainty which gave rise to pro-German sentiments, but cannot in themselves be conclusively cited as causing them.⁵

The National Socialist movement in Canada was itself weak and never able to gain a large following among German-Canadians. In the most extensive study of the National Socialist movement in Canada, Jonathan Wagner concludes

that although "significant numbers" of ethnic Germans probably sympathized with Hitler's cause in one way or another, Nazism was too unrelated to Canadian social and economic realities, and ethnic Germans identified too heavily with Canadian institutions, for it to appeal to large numbers of them, despite the efforts of the approximately 100 Nazi-Party members to gain a following.⁶ According to Gerald Friesen, ethnic Germans were "divided into so many parts and so affected by the events of world politics that they never achieved a pan-German identity in Canada."⁷

The "focal point" of Nazi activity was on the prairies, which had absorbed some 70,000 German-speaking immigrants (including most of the 20,000 Mennonites from Russia) during the 1920's.⁸ There were seven German-language newspapers published on the prairies during the 1930's, and of these, five expressed pro-Nazi sentiments. Three of these were Mennonite publications, and a fourth, Der Nordwesten, was widely read by Mennonites.⁹ Before the large 1920's influx of German-speakers, German culture had been in decline in Canada, acculturation and assimilation having been aided by the anti-Germanism engendered by the First World War.¹⁰ The majority of the new immigrants, like the Mennonites, were "Volks-Germans", i.e. those who had settled outside Germany as part of the widespread diaspora throughout eastern Europe, and were agriculturalists.¹¹ But the Mennonites differed from many of their German-speaking counterparts in that they were not, as Jonathan Wagner has argued, previously a part of a central and eastern European "Volks-German Awakening", with its nationalistic and expansionist overtones. Wagner's attempt to explain Mennonite support for National Socialism solely in terms of the larger Volkish movement is spurious and based on little research or understanding of Mennonites.¹²

The migration of German-speakers to the prairies during the 1920's was part of a larger influx of immigrants in the first three decades of this century. With a sixfold increase in prairie population between 1901 and 1941, cultural diversity was, as Friesen has shown, a "striking feature of prairie society" in these decades. It resembled a "stew" of different ethnic groups simmering in the same pot, each retaining its own flavour. Most immigrants conversed in their mother-tongue, as "ethnic identity remained a real and important factor in the life of many prairie Canadians in the 1930's."¹³ By 1931, 35% of the western Canadian population was of central and eastern European origin.¹⁴

The "British" character of the prairies predominated, however, the typical town existing as "an outpost of British-Canadian civilization."¹⁵ Political parties, schools and churches exhibited a "militant view of British civilization," and were instruments of Anglo-Canadian conformity and assimilation.¹⁶ Public schools, in particular, were important in this regard, as "The lessons of the education system in each province were consciously directed at the creation of a new British-based Western-Canadian race."¹⁷ Although anti-Germanism was often superseded by negative sentiment towards labour "radicals" of eastern-European origin,¹⁸ it was still a prevalent feature of the interwar period and beyond.¹⁹ The Great Depression also exacerbated negative feelings toward "foreigners" who were thought to take jobs away from Anglo-Canadians and swell the relief rolls.²⁰

The general Canadian reaction to National Socialism was negative or indifferent. Although the influential editor of the Winnipeg Free Press, J.W. Dafoe, repeatedly warned that a world crisis was looming, Canadians were largely apathetic to the deteriorating international situation of the

1930's.²¹ It was unthinkable for Canadians that they might again have to send their sons to fight Europe's battles, and thus isolationist sentiment grew as "gangsterism" increased in Europe. While this isolationism would, in the event of war, prove to be illusory,

It took Canadians a very long time to come to the understanding that Italy and especially Germany were on an unalterable collision course with the international interests and domestic values of Britain, many of which Canada shared.²²

In 1936 the Canadian Olympic team gave Hitler the Nazi salute at the Berlin games, and Canadian fascist activities were largely ignored by the Canadian public until a number of newspaper and magazine articles covering their activities began to appear in early 1938. It was only with the provocative events of 1938-39 that Hitler began to generally be viewed as a menace, and that serious anti-Nazism emerged in Canada. The Anticosti affair, Munich and the Sudeten crisis confirmed the growing anti-German, pro-British sentiment; the Royal visit of May-June 1939, which evoked great emotion from Canadians, sealed the Commonwealth connection.²³

On the other hand, it is incorrect to give the impression that Canadians were unconcerned with Nazi Germany until the late 1930's, as some historians have done.²⁴ The Canadian press, as perceived by German-Canadians, was a source of "constant adverse criticism of Germany."²⁵ A cursory perusal of the Saskatoon Star Pheonix and Winnipeg Free Press indicates that the dangers and excesses of the Nazi regime were publicized from the beginning of its tenure.²⁶ On the prairies, at least, Nazism was consistently portrayed as a threat to democracy and human rights. Nor was the public response to these events entirely apathetic. Shortly after the outbreak of the first Jewish pogrom in late March and early April of 1933 (the so-called "Jewish Boycott"), 7000 Winnipeg citizens converged on the Civic Auditorium "in one

of the biggest single-purpose demonstrations in the history of the city." Over 60 organizations were represented at this "firm protest" against Nazi persecution of Jews.²⁷

It was in this context that Russlaender Mennonites found themselves during the 1930's. A recent analysis of the Coaldale, Alberta Mennonite community during the interwar period provides an excellent view into Russlaender life at this time. Coaldale is significant because the Mennonites who settled there were exclusively Russlaender, and it became home to one of the most prominent Brethren communities in Canada during this period. The Coaldale Brethren church counted 350 members by the mid-1930's, and had grown to almost 500 by the end of the decade.²⁸ Part of the reason for this growth stemmed from Coaldale being located in an irrigation district which didn't suffer as heavily as some communities during the Depression, and hence attracted those looking for work. There had been no Brethren communities in Alberta prior to the 1920's; besides Coaldale, other congregations were started at Gem, La Glace, Lindbrook, Namaka and Vauxhall. By 1939 Coaldale was home to over 50% of Alberta's Brethren population.²⁹ Alberta's 800 Brethren and their families were among 63,000 native German-speakers in Alberta, or about 9% of its population (1931).³⁰

In her study of the Coaldale Mennonite community, Joanna Buhr found that "controlled accomodation" to the norms of Anglo-Canadian society was a dominant feature of Mennonite identity maintenance. This entailed both the accentuation of certain aspects of Mennonite ethno-religious identity, including Germanism, as well as the formation of "certain symbiotic social and economic ties with the Coaldale establishment."³¹ Mennonite immigrants were anxious to acquire land of their own, and were well-represented at the

local "English" farming demonstrations. There was immediate interest in learning the language, as it quickly became clear that command of the language was an economic asset. The predominantly Anglo-Saxon host community was "generally congenial" towards the newcomers, and offered enticing social and economic prospects, especially to the young people. Generous debt-terms extended to the Mennonites during the decade gave them hope that they could succeed in Canada despite the effects of drought and depression, and they were eager to prove themselves worthy of the confidence placed in them by the Canadian establishment.

It was in this milieu that Mennonite leaders recognized the need for well-defined boundaries to maintain the essential contours of Mennonite identity. As the language of religious communication, German was perceived to be a crucial component in the long-term persistence of the group and its vision: "To many Russian Mennonites, the replacement of German with English represented a crucial step in a movement toward alignment with the 'world'."³² A German lending-library was established in Coaldale in 1927, and the Brethren started a German "Saturday school" in 1930.

The language issue became divisive among Coaldale Mennonites by the later 1930's, as it became clear that an almost complete language transition (from German to English) was taking place in one generation. One side felt that group cohesion and integrity was dependent upon retaining the German language, while the other saw the imminent alienation of the youth if more wasn't offered to them in English. The Brethren emphasis on religious conversion and evangelism, combined with a desire to relate to the host community in an acceptable way, gave rise to some interaction with local English-speaking evangelists and the staging of an English outreach program

by the youth on Sunday evenings. These activities were eventually stopped because of the threat they posed to Brethren identity.³³

Politically, Coaldale Mennonites were "keenly loyal" to the Canadian government, and supported William Aberhart in provincial politics.³⁴ Yet culturally and socially they remained aloof; gratitude towards Canada and the hope of becoming economically successful did not deter Mennonites from their goal of maintaining a specific ethno-religious identity. The greatest threat to the Mennonite vision "lay in its destruction from within through internal fragmentation."³⁵ The second generation was rapidly becoming "Canadianized" through the public school system; this, coupled with the stress of immigrant economic life, tended to outweigh the effects of the German Saturday school and other such institutions in promoting a positive identification with the Mennonite heritage and its accompanying Germanic aspects.³⁶

There seems to have been an inherent tension between the desire for economic success and social respect, on the one hand, and the maintenance of a distinct Mennonite identity, on the other. The predominantly Anglo-Canadian host community put pressure on Mennonites to assimilate, and the second generation responded. This in turn brought on a more self-conscious Germanism which was directed towards the maintenance of ingroup unity and doctrinal integrity. Indeed, "To some, Germanism and opposition to war were inseparable tenets in the ethno-religious package...In the process of de-emphasizing German cultural loyalties (during WWII), nonresistance also came into jeopardy."³⁷

This helps to clarify the relationship between Germanism and the principle of nonresistance. Militant Germanism challenged nonresistance among some first-generation immigrants who hadn't been socialized in Canada

(see Chapter Two); on the other hand, the loss of the German identity threatened the principle among the second generation, because it implied absorption into Anglo-Canadian society, and participation in its military endeavours. Buhr's study indicates that pro-Nazi sympathies, when held in an environment like Coaldale's, would have been muted. More importantly, it demonstrates that most new arrivals were eager to find a niche for themselves in Canada, were responsive to the host society, and felt that their future lay in Canada. This fact, coupled with the rapid acculturation of the second generation, indicates that the pro-Germanism of the 1930's was largely a reaction to the threatened dissolution of the remaining contours of Russian Mennonite society.

Parallels exist between the experience of Coaldale Mennonites and those who settled in Ontario. Approximately 1000 Russlaender settled there; 38 of these, around 25% were of Brethren affiliation.³⁹ The Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church became the mother-church for the Brethren in Ontario, counting 150 members, or approximately 50% of the Ontario Brethren church membership, by 1935.⁴⁰ There had been no Mennonite Brethren in Ontario prior to this migration. Many also settled on the Niagara peninsula, in the areas of Vineland, St. Catherines and Virgil. These Brethren joined approximately 80,000 other native German-speakers in Ontario, or 2% of the total population (1931).⁴¹

In his study of the Russlaender in Ontario during the interwar period, Henry Paetkau found that "Without the familiar structures of the Mennonite commonwealth to give form and content to their lives, the immigrants were at the mercy of the forces of acculturation and assimilation."⁴² Economic considerations brought about the rapid acquisition of English and influenced

settlement patterns, causing a third of the immigrants to locate in cities and towns, despite pressures from both the host community and immigrant leaders to find rural occupation. Schools were a powerful force of acculturation for the scattered immigrants, and thus "A language crisis ensued in many families as early as the mid-thirties, precisely when 'das Deutschtum' was becoming increasingly meaningful to older immigrants."⁴³

It was in this familiar context that leaders and organizations like the Ontario Provincial Immigrant Assembly (Vertreterversammlung)⁴⁴ attempted to draw Mennonites together and perpetuate a common identity, which included the important components of "German and Religion". Saturday and Sunday schools, Bible schools, youth groups and German lending-libraries were instituted, but economic and geographic factors caused only "sporadic support" of these endeavours by the immigrants.⁴⁵ The rise of Germanism, according to Paetkau, "appears to have been more sympathetic than overt, more ideological than real."⁴⁶ Despite the general desire on the part of most immigrants to become established Canadians, there was enough of a pro-German feeling present to give rise to rumours in some areas that Mennonites were Nazi sympathizers, and that they stored weapons in their churches. One Ontario church was set on fire by anti-Nazi arsonists and later raided by police, while another was vandalized as an anti-Nazi protest.⁴⁷

Declarations by Mennonites of loyalty to Canada in the later 1930's were common, and the degree of assimilation into Canadian society was proven by relatively high enlistment figures, for Mennonites, at the outbreak of the Second World War. Germanism was delivered a "devastating blow" by the war, and "Only the influx of another group of Russian Mennonite refugees after 1945 prevented a complete language transition within a single generation."⁴⁸

In a recent article, Paetkau has argued that a general feature of the Russian Mennonite immigrant experience was a tension between a desire to reestablish the lost unity of the Russian settlement, and an individualistic impulse toward economic and social success in Canada. "While a few leaders strove valiantly and eloquently to rebuild a people...individuals sought primarily to rebuild their lives and their families."⁴⁹ The general thrust of Paetkau's work has been to indicate that although the Russlaender may have desired to reestablish in some way a lost community, it was not to be at the expense of participation in Anglo-Canadian social and economic structures. Buhr's study also illustrates this, if to a lesser degree, given the more rural and isolated atmosphere of southern Alberta.

Thus it may be more profitable to see the Russlaender as being primarily concerned with in-group reintegration, on various levels, than with separation from the host society per se. Separation could at most be ideological; geographic dispersion, coupled with assimilationist trends, tends however to make the ideological medium, Germanism, look as much like an agent of group cohesion and doctrinal integration as of separation from Canadian society.⁵⁰ It was a carrier of an identity which had meaning in itself; thus it did not merely set one apart from the rest of Canadian society, although this was clearly important. Germanism, especially during the 1930's, brought with it a whole host of associations which helped to define what it meant to be Mennonite, and it held out the possibility of being the source of communal and religious perpetuation and renewal.

The prairie provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan evidenced similar trends as in Alberta and Ontario, with the possible difference that the generally more isolated, homogeneous communities fostered a stronger sense of

pro-Germanism and -Nazism.⁵¹ Discussion here will centre on Manitoba, owing to the availability of sources. Mennonites from Russia had settled on two large blocs of land in southern Manitoba during the 1870's, and when some of them left in the 1920's for Latin America, a number of Russlaender took their place. Figures vary, but it is clear that a sizeable number of immigrants, perhaps a few thousand, settled on farms abandoned by the emigrants on the West Reserve.⁵² Winkler was an important Brethren centre there, and attracted some of the newcomers. Other congregations were formed in Arnaud, Niverville, Steinbach, Morden, Newton Siding and Manitou, among others. Winnipeg also absorbed a number of Brethren, with three congregations meeting by the mid-1930's.

The total Manitoba Brethren church membership increased sixfold with the immigration, numbering 2000 baptised members by 1934.⁵³ These Brethren and their families were part of a larger population of 30,000 Mennonites in Manitoba, and a total German-speaking population roughly double that, or 8% of the provincial population (1931).⁵⁴ A total of 2081 Russlaender families, or a third of the Russian migration, initially settled in Manitoba.⁵⁵

Studies by C.A. Dawson and E.K. Francis have outlined the general trends of acculturation and assimilation among Russian Mennonite immigrants already discussed. Dawson, writing in the 1930's, saw a class of Mennonite "small townsmen" coming into existence, and felt that the influx of the "liberal" Russian Mennonites during the 1920's, along with the emigration of the most conservative Mennonites to Latin America, helped to speed the process of secularization and assimilation among Manitoba Mennonites.⁵⁶ He found that young people in Mennonite towns like Winkler and Gretna spoke English to each other on the streets, and that the Brethren, especially, were tolerant of

"new ideas." Mennonites were currently midway in the transition from sectarian to secular culture, and their absorption into Canadian society was seen to be inevitable.⁵⁷

E.K. Francis, writing 20 years later, agreed that acculturation had taken place, but argued that widespread assimilation had not. The Russlaender in particular had been eager to learn English, promote public schools, and adopt Canadian ways; but by 1945 a "newly gained pride" in Mennonite traditions was evident, and the Manitoba Mennonite community showed no signs of breaking up.⁵⁸ This is understandable given the fact that by 1931 a third of the prairie population was of non-English (mostly continental European) origin, that a large influx of German-speakers accompanied the Mennonite migration to the prairies in the 1920's, and that Manitoba was home to over a third of all Canadian Mennonites.⁵⁹ One half-hour to one hour of German instruction was given in some public schools, and in some of the predominantly Mennonite communities, Low German was spoken by everyone, including non-Mennonites.⁶⁰ Even urbanization did not have the same impact as in other areas: Mennonites moving to Winnipeg tended to congregate on the North Side and in East Kildonan, both predominantly non-English European immigrant communities.⁶¹

Interviews indicate that pro-German and -Nazi feelings ran high among southern Manitoba Mennonites during the 1930's and into the Second World War; individuals who were children at the time have vivid memories of the pro-Hitler atmosphere, primarily among the Russlaender, and of the impression that "great things were happening in Germany."⁶² Wagner reports that Steinbach Mennonites turned out in significant numbers to hear the travelling Nazi-propagandist Karl Goetz in 1936, and that some Mennonites were present at the provincial "German Day" in Winnipeg.⁶³ Francis notes that the

"ideological dividing-line" on the issue of pro-Germanism among Manitoba Mennonites was drawn essentially between the Russlaender and the Kanadier. The Russlaender evidenced a stronger sense of German nationalism, while the Kanadier "were more sensitive to public opinion and more emphatic about loyalty to Canada."⁶⁴

There also appears to have been some Mennonite involvement with indigenous fascist organizations. The high-water mark for this activity was reached in 1934. In early 1934 a Brethren leader from Winkler reported in the Mennonitische Rundschau that:

Here in our little town a movement is becoming noticeable. Hitler is known as a striving, Christian young man, and we hope that the same qualities are present in the local organization of the Canadian Nationalists.⁶⁵

The "Canadian Nationalist Party" was a fascist organization led by William Whittaker and centred in Winnipeg. As the quote indicates, direct links were made between Nazism and this Canadian movement.⁶⁶ It appears that attempts were also made to organize in the largely Brethren community of Yarrow, B.C., in early 1934.⁶⁷ It is difficult to estimate what degree of success such efforts had at this time, but the comments of one Brethren leader in early 1934 are significant:

The rush of political waters, that quickly becomes a wild flood, is coming ever closer to us...this flood has come so close that it has begun to wash a portion of our Volk away with it. Therefore it is our duty to warn our people against participation in political and nationalistic organizations.⁶⁸

It was in Winnipeg during the summer of 1934 that the most notorious Canadian Mennonite encounter with fascism took place. As reported in Der Bote, young Mennonite "hotheads" had taken part in a June 5 scuffle between Whittaker's "Brownshirts" and Communists, and had sustained some injuries. The most significant aspect of the whole affair was that, according to the

writer, there was widespread sympathy among Mennonites for the Brownshirts. This was due, in his opinion, to the general wish to see the communists "get their just deserts".⁶⁹

Concern over participation in fascist organizations was indicated by a resolution taken at the Canadian Brethren Conference (the Northern District Conference) meeting in early July of that year. In the context of a resolution on nonresistance, it was stated:

It must be stressed that it is contradictory for the Conference to work towards guaranteeing freedom of conscience for us (in regards to military exemption), while at the same time some Brothers take part in Volk-movements in which force is used.⁷⁰

In addition to the above cases, there are reports that a few young men enlisted in the National Socialist cause and travelled to Germany sometime in the 1930's,⁷¹ and that an undisclosed number of Ontario families who sympathised with the Third Reich also migrated there.⁷² It should also be mentioned that in 1934 Bernard Bott, who was a Nazi Party member and editor of the Deutsche Zeitung fuer Kanada, organized a "Saskatchewan German Committee" which included the Saskatchewan Mennonite provincial organization in its membership.⁷³ These instances should not be ignored, but overt involvement of Canadian Mennonites with fascist groups was minimal, although constituting enough of a threat to bring forth condemnations. A more pervasive and widely cited occurrence was the purchase of shortwave radios to tune in to broadcasts from Germany.⁷⁴

In general, the trend toward acculturation and assimilation into Anglo-Canadian society was present on the prairies, but counter-forces were also at work which mitigated it. These included a greater concentration of Mennonites, German-speakers, and non-English Europeans in general; greater homogeneity of Mennonite communities; a large proportion of Russlaender

immigrants; and in Winnipeg a centre of western Canadian Nazism.⁷⁵ A broader use of the German language, a more prevalent support for the "new Germany", and even a few cases of involvement with fascist groups were a few results of these factors.

There were no Mennonites in British Columbia prior to 1928. At that time, ten families settled at Yarrow in the Fraser Valley, initiating a migration which would see over 5000 Mennonites living in the province by 1941, and three times that number by 1951.⁷⁶ A majority of these were Russlaender Mennonite Brethren, and they were concentrated in Yarrow, Sardis, Chilliwack and Abbotsford. The Yarrow Mennonite Brethren congregation formed in 1929, and grew to 365 members by 1939. A Brethren congregation with over 100 members had also formed in Vancouver by this time.⁷⁷ The 1000 Mennonites present in B.C. in 1931 were among 12,000 German-speakers in the province, or about 2% of the total provincial population.⁷⁸

By all accounts, the 1930's were years of hard work and many pressures on the newcomers. Young girls worked as maids in Vancouver (as Mennonite girls did in most Canadian urban areas), and many Mennonites worked as labourers in local hopfields or in Vancouver. Delegates from B.C. present at the annual Brethren Canadian Conference meetings lamented the unwholesome contact with "worldly" influences brought about by this, and the strong assimilationist pressures present.⁷⁹

The Mennonitische Rundschau reported in late 1934 that a number of Anglo-Canadian nativist meetings had taken place in the Fraser Valley, with concern being expressed over the high immigration rate of "poor Europeans" from the prairies, and the high birthrate of the oriental population. The Mennonites were clearly objects of concern, and motions were even made proposing B.C.

become an independent nation, in order to control the "flood" of unwanted newcomers. The host community was obviously quite open about its nativist and racist feelings.⁸⁰

Peter Ward has argued that the "structurally plural" nature of the British Columbia population gave rise to a longing by Anglo-Canadians for racial homogeneity, which was openly expressed in terms of racial prejudices.⁸¹ Although Asians were the targets of most harassment, the fact that Anglo-Canadian nativism was a "cultural norm" means that there was an inherent psychological tension between Anglo-Canadians and all non-British immigrants.⁸² John Norris downplays these tensions, but does point out that both Germans and Mennonites were objects of hostility by the host community in the interwar years.⁸³ Rumours circulated in the 1930's "to the effect that Mennonites were similar to Doukhobors and detrimental to the state,"⁸⁴ and during the Second World War there was resentment at Mennonite unwillingness to join the armed forces.⁸⁵ Recollections by a Mennonite in the mid-1940's reveal the extent to which Mennonites wanted to be seen as successful members of B.C. society.⁸⁶ It was ironically this success which engendered resentment toward the Mennonites.⁸⁷

A study of B.C. Mennonites done in 1955 by John Krahn indicates the typical set of responses to this environment. The Brethren started German "Saturday schools" in nearly every community, and eventually two high schools and three Bible schools.⁸⁸ Retention of the German language was generally a goal in all such educational efforts, and not just the Saturday schools (see Chapters Four and Five). Krahn argues, like Buhr, that a basic goal of leaders was "controlled integration" with the larger Canadian society.⁸⁹ Urbanization, acculturation and assimilation were basic trends from the

1930's onward; by the 1950's Low German was still spoken by older Mennonites, but the younger people spoke English among themselves and at home. High German was still used in church services, but that too was headed for decline.

Krahn feels that Brethren integration into Canadian society was "perhaps attributable to educational and missionary contact with the environment."⁹⁰ A recent study by Robert Burkinshaw adds weight to the notion that the Brethren missionary emphasis had an effect on other aspects of Brethren identity. Burkinshaw locates the Brethren in the general growth of evangelicalism in B.C. from the late 1920's onward. The Brethren pietistic and evangelistic emphases led its members and churches to identify gradually more with the wider evangelical community in the province than with their own heritage. The Brethren were still a distinct group in 1941 from others like Baptists and Pentecostals, due to remaining linguistic and cultural "barriers", but they displayed characteristics which would "encourage increasing cooperation and identification with the wider evangelicalism."⁹¹

While Burkinshaw underestimates the strength of attempts to preserve the Mennonite socio-religious identity, he has identified a key element in bringing about rapid acculturation and assimilation among the Brethren. The fact that the less evangelically-oriented General Conference Mennonites were also more conservative on linguistic and cultural issues adds weight to this conclusion.⁹² In British Columbia, the Brethren tendency to identify with North American evangelicalism, along with strong assimilationist pressures, the presence of nationalistic schools which wouldn't hire Mennonites,⁹³ and a small non-Mennonite German community with a weak base of support for the "new Germany",⁹⁴ mitigated strong and open identifications with Nazi Germany.

On the other hand, these trends were the background to those Germanist reactions which did occur. Wagner provides part of the reason why Canadian Nazism would have appealed to groups like the Mennonites: it was anti-assimilationist, and appealed to those who felt inferior or the victims of injustice or discrimination.⁹⁵ The Mennonite experience of brutal treatment during the Bolshevik Revolution, the economic conditions of the Great Depression, and the threat of rapid assimilation put them in a potentially receptive position for the cultural, political and ethnic ideas associated with the "new Germany". Russian Mennonite ethno-religious culture appeared to be breaking down, more rapidly in some areas than others; at the same time, distinctions between political and cultural Germanism were just beginning to be understood, as they were bound up in a single "package" which seemed to offer answers to the problems of fragmentation, instability and loss of identity.

The essential argument of this thesis is that Germanism, and the German language in particular, functioned as an instrument of socio-religious integration for the Russlaender Brethren in the thirty years after their arrival in Canada. In the interwar years, Mennonite Germanism took on certain political, "Volkish", and nationalistic overtones; by the end of the Second World War, these elements had largely faded. In the postwar period Germanism becomes more clearly identifiable in its primary role as symbol and agent of the distinctive configuration of religious faith, sense of peoplehood, and way of life which had emerged in Imperial Russia.

NOTES, CHAPTER ONE

1. It is generally agreed that the Russlaender were more prone to assimilation than most other Mennonites had been. A few general studies which acknowledge this are George G. Thielman, "The Canadian Mennonites," (Ph.D. dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1955), pp. 195-96; E.K. Francis, In Search of Utopia (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 208; Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-40 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), p. 243.

2. George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); Martin Broszat, "Die voelkische Ideologie und der Nationalsozialismus," Deutsche Rundschau 1 (January 1958):53-68; Ernst Christian Helmreich, The German Churches Under Hitler: background, struggle, and epilogue (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), Chapter 6, esp. pp. 128-32; John S. Conway, The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968), pp. 142-57; Jonathan Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1981), pp. 14-15.

3. The appeal which Hitler's anti-communism held for Mennonites is widely cited. John A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1975), p. 327; Frank H. Epp, Mennonite Exodus (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1966), p. 323; Watson Kirkconnell, Canada, Europe and Hitler (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 120; Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 207; Interview with Anne Funk, Vancouver, British Columbia, May 6, 1990.

4. The theory of cognitive dissonance was first proposed by Leon Festinger in 1957. The theory has been defined thus:

An emotional state set up when two simultaneously held attitudes or cognitions are inconsistent or when there is a conflict between belief and overt behavior. The resolution of the conflict is assumed to serve as a basis for attitude change in that belief patterns are generally modified so as to be consistent with behavior.

From Arthur S. Reber, The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985), p. 129. For Mennonites, one way of making sense of what had happened to them was to interpret events as a battle between the forces of good and evil, embodied in Hitler and the Bolsheviks, respectively.

5. It is beyond the scope of this study to document a correlation between Mennonite economic conditions during the 1930's, and Germanism. The discussion contained in the rest of this chapter indicates, however, that Mennonites felt positive about their economic prospects in Canada at this time, and worked hard to "make it" in Canadian society. It should be added that the typical Mennonite response to problems was mutual assistance, and thus they looked first to the larger Mennonite group for solutions, rather than nation-states. For Mennonite efforts at mutual aid during the 1930's see Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, Chapter 8, "Overcoming the Depression," esp. p. 361ff.
6. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 59, 145-46; See also Elizabeth Gerwin, "A Survey of the German-Speaking Population of Alberta," (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1938), pp. 120-25. The author was intent on distancing German-Canadians from the Nazi regime, arguing that the majority of German-speaking immigrants in Alberta had "the mixed feelings of a sympathetic bystander," but no real nationalistic feeling for Germany.
7. Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 262. See also Alan B. Anderson, "Assimilation in the Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan: A Comparative Study of Identity Change Among Seven Ethno-Religious Groups in a Canadian Prairie Region," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 1972), p. 102.
8. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 7-9; Kirkconnell, Canada, Europe and Hitler, p. 119.
9. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, p. 102; Kirkconnell, Canada, Europe and Hitler, pp. 120-33. In the Russlaender community of Coaldale, Alberta, Der Nordwesten was as popular as Der Bote, a paper published by and for Russlaender. Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 317.
10. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 3-6; Arthur Grenke, "The Formation and Early Development of An Urban Ethnic Community: A Case Study of the Germans in Winnipeg, 1872-1919," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1975), pp. 403-20; Anderson, "Assimilation in the Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan," p. 66; Kirkconnell, Canada, Europe and Hitler, p. 119; John Norris, Stranger's Entertained: A History of the Ethnic Groups of British Columbia (Vancouver: British Columbia Centennial '71 Committee, 1971), p. 104.
11. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 10, 20-21.

12. Jonathan F. Wagner, "Transferred Crisis: German Volkish Thought Among Russian Mennonite Immigrants to Western Canada," Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism 1 (1973):202-220. There is little evidence that Russian Mennonites had any part in the Volkish movement prior to coming to Canada. See John B. Toews, Czars, Soviets and Mennonites (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1982), p. 31ff., 76; Francis, In Search of Utopia, pp. 197-98; Alan B. Anderson, "Assimilation in the Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan," p. 102; Harry Loewen, "The German-Russian Tensions Among the Mennonites In Russia (1789-1917)," paper on file at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg, Box 7, Folder H, No.5, pp. 15-16; John B. Toews, "The Russian Mennonite Intellect of the 19th Century," paper on file at CMBS, Winnipeg, Box 7, Folder H, No. 4; H.A. Peters, "Das mennonitische Volkstum: Eine Skizze seiner Entstehung und des Verfalles," Der Bote, 8 December 1964, pp. 10-11.
13. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, pp. 272-73.
14. Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), p. 95.
15. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, p. 273, 325; See also Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), pp. 22-23.
16. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, pp. 341-47; Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, pp. 41-47 and passim.
17. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, p. 346, 290; Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, p. 46, 139; Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 97. C.A. Dawson, Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936, reprinted by Kraus Reprint Co., 1974), pp. 144-59.
18. Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners', p. 76; Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, pp. 132-37.
19. Interview with Gerhard Ens, editor of Der Bote, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 20, 1989; Interview with Anne Brandt, Kelowna, B.C., June 3, 1989; Gerwin, "A Survey of the German-Speaking Population of Alberta," p. 125 and passim.
20. Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners', pp. 91, 108-12; Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, pp. 126-32.
21. John Herd Thompson with Allen Seager, Canada 1922-39: Decades of Discord (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 303. Examples of Dafoe's feelings toward Nazism include "Germany and the World," Winnipeg Free Press, 1 April 1933, p. 11; "Hitler's Reichstag Speech," Ibid., 2 February 1937, p. 11.
22. Thompson and Seager, Decades of Discord, p. 322.

23. Ibid., p. 320ff; Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 124-28.
24. This is the general impression given by Thompson and Seager, Decades of Discord, Chapter 13, "Canada on the Road to War".
25. Gerwin, "A Survey of the German-Speaking Population of Alberta," p. 125; Wagner, "Transferred Crisis," p. 203. Lita Rose Betcherman, The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975), p. 72. My analysis of the Mennonitische Rundschau confirms the existence of this general feeling of German denigration by the Canadian press.
26. e.g. "German Massacre Widely Rumoured: Nazi Plot to Wipe Out Leftists Reported," Saskatoon Star Phoenix, 1 March 1933, p. 1; "Editorial", Ibid., p. 13; "Democracy, Communism Doomed as Nazi Vote Assures Big Majority," Ibid., 6 March 1933, p. 1; "Hitler and the Jewish People," Ibid., 29 March 1933, p. 11; "Catholics Face Nazi Campaign," Ibid., 18 July 1935, p. 1; "Dictators Partners: Mussolini and Hitler May Have Agreement on Locarno Issue," Ibid., 10 July 1936, p. 1; "Hitler Plans New Anti-Jewish Drive," Winnipeg Free Press, 7 April 1933, p. 1; "Nazis Strip, Chain and Torture Distinguished Jew, Reporter States," Ibid., 3 April 1933, p. 1; "Germany and the World," Ibid., 1 April 1933, p. 11.
27. "Huge Winnipeg Gathering Protests Alleged Attack upon Jews in Germany," Winnipeg Free Press, 3 April 1933, p. 2.
28. 1934 Mennonite Brethren Northern District Conference Yearbook (Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House), p. 85; 1939 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 74; John A Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1975), p. 165.
29. 1939 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 74-75.
30. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, vol. IV (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1935), p. 1184.
31. Joanna R. Buhr, "Pursuit of a Vision: Persistence and Accomodation Among Coaldale Mennonites from the Mid-Nineteen Twenties to World War II," (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1986), p. 3.
32. Ibid., p. 152.
33. Ibid., pp. 206-13.
34. Ibid., pp. 197-201.
35. Ibid., p. 218.
36. Ibid., p. 231.
37. Ibid., p. 241.

38. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 191.

39. Anna Wiebe, "The Mennonite Brethren in Ontario: a short history," Mennogespraech, 4 (March 1986):4. Wiebe counts 1340 individuals of Brethren affiliation; this would have worked out to around 250 families/households.

40. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

41. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, vol. IV (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1935), p. 1180.

42. Henry Paetkau, "A Struggle for Survival. The Russian Mennonite Immigrants in Ontario, 1924-39," (M.A. thesis, University of Waterloo, 1977), p. 146.

43. Ibid., p. 149.

44. Each province had such an assembly, where a wide range of issues and concerns relevant to the Russlaender were discussed. Economic and agricultural issues tended to dominate during the 1930's, although issues like the German identity were discussed as well. The Central Mennonite Immigrant Committee, located in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, tied the provincial assemblies together and, as mentioned, featured a cultural section. Through the German VDA (Society for Germanism Abroad) the Committee was able to procure books to start German lending-libraries in various communities. As Epp reports,

The CMIC was...active in the promotion of the German language. From time to time it was reported that not enough was being done for "das Deuschtum". To promote German language and German culture a representative was appointed to work with the German Canadian Central Committee in the promotion of a "German Day" in Regina on July 27, 1930. (Epp, Mennonite Exodus, pp. 209-210.)

45. Paetkau, "A Struggle for Survival," p. 177.

46. Ibid., p. 178.

47. Ibid., pp. 181-82.

48. Ibid., p. 184.

49. Henry Paetkau, "Russian Mennonite Immigrants of the 1920's: A Reappraisal," Journal of Mennonite Studies 2 (1984):83.

50. Frank Epp's work has tended to emphasize the desire for separation among Canadian Mennonites. See Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 503ff. While this may have been appropriate for some groups, the Russlaender brought with them a weaker separatist mentality. The Brethren stress on outreach and evangelism further detracted from the traditional isolationist stance.

51. Sociologists have observed that ethnic assimilation in rural contexts is retarded, especially where ethnic communities exist. See Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Historical Approaches to the Study of Rural Ethnic Communities," in Frederick C. Luebke, ed., Ethnicity on the Great Plains (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 4-5.
52. C.A. Dawson reports the figure at 1500 individuals, while E.K. Francis claims that 2000 families, or 5000-6000 individuals, settled on the Reserve. Frank Epp's figure of 2081 families for the whole province seems most accurate, and supports a figure closer to Dawson's for the West Reserve. Dawson, Group Settlement, p. 149; Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 205; Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 191.
53. 1921 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 84-85; 1934 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 79-82.
54. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931 (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1935), vol. III, p. 322; vol. IV, p. 1182.
55. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940, p. 191.
56. Dawson, Group Settlement, pp. 144-49.
57. Ibid., 151-71.
58. Francis, In Search of Utopia, pp. 208-42; 264.
59. Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners', p. 91; Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 7-9; Seventh Census, 1931, vol. III, pp. 320-28.
60. Interview with Gerhard Ens, editor of Der Bote, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 20, 1989; Interview with Herb Brandt, Mennonite Brethren pastor and Conference leader, Kelowna, British Columbia, June 3 and December 19, 1989; Dawson, Group Settlement, p. 159.
61. Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 249; Gerhard Lohrenz, "The Mennonites in Winnipeg," Mennonite Life, January 1951, pp. 16-20.
62. Interview with Herb Brandt; Interview with Peter Neudorf, Mennonite Businessman, Vancouver, B.C., December 10, 1989; Interview with Jack and Eleanor Dueck, Kitchener, Ontario, July 6, 1989.
63. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 46-48; 95.
64. Francis, In Search of Utopia, pp. 233-34.
65. P.H. Penner, Mennonitische Rundschau, 7 February 1934, pp. 5-6.
66. Canadian Nationalist Party leaders wore swastika pins and openly identified themselves with the Nazi movement. Betcherman, The Swastika and the Maple Leaf, p. 66.

67. H. Klassen, Mennonitische Rundschau, 7 March 1934, p. 5.
68. H. Toews, Mennonitische Rundschau, 31 January 1934, p. 3.
69. "Um hohen Preis," Der Bote, 27 June 1934, pp. 2-3.
70. 1934 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 77.
71. Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 324.
72. Paetkau, "A Struggle for Survival," p. 169.
73. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, p. 85.
74. Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 324. Interviews have confirmed the fairly common use of shortwave radios. Interview with Herb Brandt; Interview with Peter Neudorf. Mr. Brandt remembers walking into a room filled with Mennonites reverently listening to Hitler. Peter Neudorf felt that most of the Russlaender Mennonites in the area of Manitoba where he grew up were "for" Hitler, both before and during the Second World War.
75. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, p. 37ff.
76. Eighth Census of Canada, 1941 vol. II (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1944), p. 520; Ninth Census of Canada, 1951 vol. I (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), table 38-1.
77. 1939 Mennonite Brethren Northern District Conference Yearbook (Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House), pp. 75-76.
78. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931 vol. IV (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1935), p. 1184.
79. 1934 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 20-21; 1939 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 34-35.
80. Mennonitische Rundschau, 26 December 1934, p. 14.
81. W. Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), pp. 3-22; 118-19.
82. See Ward, White Canada Forever, pp. 118-19; 168.
83. John Norris, Strangers Entertained, pp. 53; 98-105; 187-89.
84. John J. Krahn, "A History of the Mennonites in British Columbia," (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1955), p. 35, 41.
85. Norris, Strangers Entertained, p. 187.

86. B.B. Wiens, "Pioneering in British Columbia," Mennonite Life, July 1946, pp. 9-13.
87. Norris, Strangers Entertained, pp. 185-87; P.W. Luce, "Unwelcome Mennonites Making Model Farms by the Fraser," Saturday Night, 12 February 1944, p. 32.
88. Krahn, A History of the Mennonites, pp. 46-47.
89. Ibid., p. 114.
90. Ibid., p. 48.
91. Robert K. Burkinshaw, "Strangers and Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia, 1917-1981," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1988), p. 218.
92. Krahn, "A History of the Mennonites," p. 45.
93. 1939 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 34-35.
94. Norris, Strangers Entertained, p. 105.
95. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, pp. 29-30; 102; 146-47.

CHAPTER TWO

Germanism in the Mennonitische Rundschau, 1930-39

One of the best sources of information for a broad picture of Mennonite concerns and identity during the 1930's is the Mennonite press. It functioned as an important medium of communication and connection for the relatively educated and literate Russlaender.¹ The papers featured a high proportion of contributions by readers, functioning as open forums for the dissemination of all types of information, and the discussion of any and every topic of concern to Mennonites. The Mennonitische Rundschau (henceforth Rundschau) has been selected as a central source on account of these attributes, and for other reasons as well. The primary one is that after 1923 the paper was edited in Winnipeg by a Mennonite Brethren, and was essentially identified as serving the Canadian Brethren (most of whom had immigrated in the 1920's), in 1946 becoming a semi-official Canadian Conference organ. As well, it had a more cosmopolitan character than its counterpart, Der Bote, which appealed more strictly to General Conference Mennonites who immigrated to Canada in the 1920's. The Rundschau did appeal to Canadian Mennonite immigrants, but it reflected the fact that these people were connected to other Mennonites living in Canada, the United States, Europe and South America.

The Rundschau had been published in Elkhart, Indiana from 1880 to 1908, and in Scottdale, Pennsylvania from 1908 to 1923, when it was moved to Winnipeg. A "European Edition" of the paper had circulated widely in Russia prior to the first world war, and when H.H. Neufeld took over as editor in 1923 he helped to preserve its international, Russian Mennonite character.²

The paper was twice as large as Der Bote, generally containing 16 pages of material, was published weekly, and its circulation of 4000-5000 was at least double that of Der Bote.³

Thus the Rundschau would seem to present a broader and more representative picture of Canadian Mennonite and specifically Brethren attitudes. My reading of the paper indicates that its broader readership and longer history gave it a stability and range lacking in the newer paper, whose editor exercised complete control over it.⁴ That the Rundschau was read and contributed to by American Mennonites is appropriate, as well, since the Canadian Brethren related quite closely to the American Brethren, adopting the American Brethren's Zionsbote as their official organ, and joining the American Brethren's General Conference as a "Northern District". The Zionsbote will not figure in this study because it had a distinctly American flavour and was primarily devotional, treating a much narrower range of issues than the Rundschau.

In my analysis, I have indicated those individuals whom I have positively identified as being Brethren; many others were undoubtedly Brethren as well. It is also to be assumed that in the majority of discussions of Germanism, the individuals involved were Russlaender.⁵ Many of the articles cited were submitted anonymously, or had no title, in which case reference has been made to issue and page number. The study consists of a relatively comprehensive reading of the Rundschau for the years 1930-36, and 1939; I have divided it into periods occurring before and after Hitler's assumption of power in Germany. The following is an attempt to summarize and interpret the Germanist content and its context.

1930-1932

The issue which dominated the pages of the Rundschau in the early 1930's was the continuing tragedy in Soviet Russia. The final act of the drama saw over 13,000 Russian-Germans, mostly Mennonites, gathering at the gates of Moscow during the winter of 1929-1930, hoping to be granted exit visas. About half eventually made it out, thanks to Germany's temporary willingness to take them in, and its pledge of considerable financial support for their relocation.⁶ It was becoming clear that those Mennonites remaining in Russia had nowhere to go, and were doomed to virtual extinction as a religious people. Pathetic letters from Mennonites sent to Siberia appeared in the Rundschau,⁷ along with reports of horrors in the colonies themselves⁸ and general articles abhorring the atheism and communism of the new Soviet regime.⁹ Some of the editor's siblings wrote from Germany, glad to be out of Russia; one of Neufeld's sisters, however, didn't make it.¹⁰

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of these events in affecting the Russian Mennonite psyche. The sense of tragedy and loss was overwhelming.¹¹ Understandably, Germany emerged as the great saviour and protector of the Mennonites, and expressions of gratitude were unbounded:

In heaven it will be reckoned/the great things Germany has done.
By it the poor, the persecuted/were pulled from the clutches of the
evil one./O bless, God, the German land,/protect it with your
almighty hand.¹²

A refugee wrote from Hamburg that Germany had provided for all possible needs, and that Germans had even shown love to the refugees. "It is impossible to describe. There is no way we'll be able to pay them back."¹³

A letter of thanks to Hindenberg (who had personally donated 200,000 Reichsmarks for Russian-German relief) was drafted at the 1930 Mennonite World Conference in Danzig.¹⁴ The fact that Germany was actively involved in

furthering donations for Russian relief could only add to the general sense of gratitude towards Germany.¹⁵ Mennonites were admonished never to forget what the Germans had done for them.¹⁶

German efforts under Hindenberg to aid Russian Mennonites moved Rundschau editor Neufeld to trace his ancestry back to Prussia and apply for German citizenship.¹⁷ Although very few people went this far, it is clear that Germany's positive example helped to make it a strong reference point for Mennonite identity in the aftermath of the breakdown of the Russian commonwealth. Expressions of concern over the fragmentation of Mennonite society were present throughout the 1930's,¹⁸ and were coupled with laments over being a "people without a homeland".¹⁹ A poem illustrates well how Germanism was identified as a positive, unifying characteristic, and how the German nation was seen as a kindly father welcoming home his wayward children:

When in every land/the German Volk is scattered/so hold tight the
bonds/of loyalty and unity./Great among the nations--the German
homeland./It reaches gladly from afar/to its own the hand./To nurture
unity/in Joy or pain,/that is the German blessing.²⁰

The "German" ethnic background of Mennonites was cited as being responsible for the qualities which carried Mennonites through their wanderings, helping them to make improvements on the land wherever they settled.²¹ This kind of claim was frequently made;²² what is of interest here is that German qualities were seen to be a stabilizing factor in Mennonite identity.

The emerging German Volkish movement also had an impact on Mennonites. A prominent elder of the newly formed Schoenwiese congregation in Winnipeg submitted an article in 1931 by a German writer which argued that the German Volk could only be helped through a rebirth of specifically German culture and religion--all non-German elements were to be expunged.²³ The implication

for Mennonites was clear. The Rundschau followed events in Germany quite closely, indicating that the "Volkish rebirth" of the German nation was of prime interest. Even rather militaristic news concerning Germany was featured, like reports that the Stahlhelm Veterans Organization and the SA (a Nazi paramilitary organization) were being allowed to wear uniforms again, and that Hitler had proclaimed that Germans would have to be ready to sacrifice their lives if Germany were to regain its place in the sun.²⁴ There were many such pieces which ran as "news", without comment.²⁵

The fascination with Germany extended to all manner of news. There were articles on Hindenberg,²⁶ German shipping,²⁷ times of German shortwave transmissions,²⁸ and above all reports on German politics.²⁹ Hitler's progress was followed,³⁰ as were the results of the 1932 election between Hindenberg and Hitler.³¹ Part of the interest and identification with Germany was due to the perception that the success or failure of communism in the West would be decided in Germany. Mennonites' immediate experience with communism gave them a very strong bias against it, and fear was evident that Germany too might fall to the atheistic communists, with the rest of the world soon to follow.³² An individual writing in 1932 held that Hitler was the only bulwark against communism.³³ A speech given by former Canadian Prime Minister Arthur Meighen, in which he called for revisions of reparations payments demanded of Germany and cited Germany as being the linchpin in world resistance to Bolshevism, was covered in detail by the Rundschau.³⁴ Harsh actions taken by the Berlin government against communists were reported approvingly.³⁵ The unrest in Germany was seen as being "instigated and covered up by Moscow."³⁶

High feelings for Germany are further indicated in the number and range

of strongly militant or political articles relating to Germanism and Germany printed during this period. It was in response to such articles that voices were raised in caution, as well, but at this point they were few and isolated. An example of a militantly German article from a non-Mennonite source was the 1930 "German Day" announcement for Manitoba. These were festivals which had begun to be staged in the late 1920's on the prairies as primarily cultural events, eventually becoming controlled by National Socialists.³⁷ The 1930 notice was anti-slavic, -communist, and -pacifist. The "indestructible power and majesty of the German nature" was heralded as the only hope of mankind.³⁸ The apex of heterodoxy was reached in the Rundschau via the reprinting of articles from Nazi Julius Streicher's "obscene"³⁹ Der Stuermer. One of the articles had been sent in by two Mennonite men who stated that "It is high time that political issues be clarified to the people." The article maintained that Jesus was not a pacifist, and that the way to greatness lay in "aggressive struggle for the German Volk and fatherland."⁴⁰

Another contribution argued that Mennonites had been pacifists during the First World War only because they hadn't wanted to fight against fellow-Germans; at the end the editor asked, "Is it true?"⁴¹ In addition, Prussian militarism was heralded as being the backbone of "Deutschtum", and in direct opposition to the spirit of marxism.⁴² These sorts of views garnered little response. More people were exercised by the possibility that born-again Christians could lose their salvation.⁴³ Loyalty to Germany at this time seems to have overridden any concern about these challenges to the historic Mennonite adherence to the principle of nonresistance.

It was only in regard to the doctrines espoused by the German General

Ludendorff and his wife that some opposition was voiced to militant Germanism. The debate on Ludendorff, a top General during the First World War and subsequent collaborator with Hitler, was initiated by a review article on a book of "prophecies" by the General. Typical of editorial policy at the time, the review did not take a position on Ludendorff's strange and extreme ideas.⁴⁴ A reader, however, pointed out that Ludendorff was "attempting to build a new Germany in which the Christian faith, the Freemasons and the Jews are simply done away with." Ludendorff wanted to invoke the old pagan, German gods like "Wotan, Baldur and Frya".⁴⁵ This writer was harshly attacked by a German in Berlin for painting a false picture of Ludendorff, who was a "burning patriot".⁴⁶ An anonymous letter followed which attacked Ludendorff, especially for his anti-Semitism.⁴⁷ The original critic then clarified his point further: "Christ or Wotan?"⁴⁸ A "simple farmer" took Ludendorff's side, arguing that Ludendorff's heterodoxy should be excused, since intolerance in matters of faith was more a Jewish than a German trait.⁴⁹ Support for Ludendorff's critics followed.⁵⁰

There was full agreement, on the other hand, that the treaty of Versailles, in its treatment of Germany, was "the crime of the century".⁵¹ Opinions on Hitler and the National Socialists at this time were either positive or undecided. One of the first positive assessments of Hitler was written in early 1931 by a Mennonite living in Germany. The writer predicted an impending victory for the Nazis, who displayed a "healthy national and Christian spirit", and asserted that the question of communism and world domination by the Jews would be decided on German soil.⁵² Heinrich Schroeder, a teacher from the Russian colonies who had settled in Germany and who espoused National Socialist and Volkish ideas throughout the 1930's,

helped to "introduce" Hitler to Canadian Mennonites in 1932, claiming that Hitler was in favour of "positive Christianity" and the furtherance of "Deutschtum" throughout the world. When Hitler came to power, he would remember Germans everywhere, helping to right past wrongs against them so they could breathe easier.⁵³

The first statement of pro-Nazi views by a Canadian Mennonite occurred in 1932,⁵⁴ and non-Mennonite writers also supported the new movement.⁵⁵ In late 1932 a reader complained that the news on political events was too one-sided: a perspective broader than that of one race or Volk was called for.⁵⁶ Earlier, the editor stated that he had been asked about his position on Hitler, and had responded that he didn't have one, since Mennonites were called to higher things than meddling in politics. He merely wanted "to observe how things stand in world politics, without taking a position on them."⁵⁷ Yet the tone and content of the paper in the 1930's contradicted this assertion of neutrality. Just one example is an article on Hitler by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, one of the progenitors of the Nazi ideology, which appeared in the "News" section in 1932 without comment. Thus the opinions of a powerful advocate of Nazi ideas and the "Volksmensch Adolf Hitler" were featured as objective reportage.⁵⁸

It is important to remember, however, that the outcome of events was unknown at this time, and that the majority of contributions to the Rundschau made no comment on these issues. The foregoing illustrates the turmoil and uncertainty of the early 1930's: the effects of the 1929 Wall Street crash were beginning to be felt; the door was being closed to the remaining friends and loved ones in Russia, as Stalinization set in; and communism seemed to be not only threatening Germany, but also had its representatives in places like

Winnipeg.⁵⁹ In addition, Anglo-Canadians had for various reasons again become hostile to "foreigners" living in their midst.⁶⁰

Russian Mennonite identity was in flux. An example of the struggle with outside influences is seen in the prominent Brethren Abraham J. Kroeker, former editor of the Friedensstimme in Russia, the semi-official organ of the Brethren church there. Kroeker had settled in Minnesota, and was a frequent contributor to the Rundschau. Among his many submissions to the paper was a long article series written by a violently anti-semitic member of General Ludendorff's militaristic "Tannenberg Bund", who had recently visited the German colonies in Soviet Russia.⁶¹ On the other hand, Kroeker maintained that his policy on book reviews had been to avoid books with a "German-patriotic and militaristic tendency"; Mennonites should only read good, Christian material.⁶² Kroeker appeared most comfortable dealing with pietistic topics.⁶³

An issue which was closer to home for most Canadian Mennonites was the value of German Volkish ideas in unifying Mennonites and helping to perpetuate their socio-religious culture. What affected people the most was the idea that German qualities and language were important aspects of being Mennonite, and that preservation of the language was essential in maintaining the unity and integrity of the Mennonite Volk and its faith. A poem written by a "German father to his son" linked German virtues and the German language to good citizenship and the maintenance of the "old, true faith", and encouraged the son to "stay German" even if "a thousand fools mock you".⁶⁴ C.F. Klassen, a leading figure in the Mennonite world, and a Brethren, wrote in 1931: "It is good if we always remember that religion and Deutschtum were the sources out of which we have, until now, been able to accomplish much,

and remain the sources for future accomplishments."⁶⁵ Klassen was the chief collector for the Mennonite "travel-debt" incurred in the migration to Canada, and came into contact with many of the widely scattered immigrants.

The issue of language was the most pervasive and enduring aspect of Canadian Mennonite Germanism during the entire period under study. The discussion of "German and Religion" instruction in the schools was lively during the 1930's in the Rundschau, and will be dealt with in Chapter Four. General articles such as J. John Friesen's "Spotlight on the German Language" also appeared. Friesen maintained that "If a Volk trades its language for another, it loses its own life--its soul."⁶⁶ He also asserted that the loss of the German language would entail the loss of traditional Mennonite religious distinctives.⁶⁷ H.H. Ewert, a leading Mennonite educator of the Kanadier, who had earlier encouraged the use of English, was cited in 1930 as saying much the same thing.⁶⁸ Other individuals called for a "surer foundation" in German and religion instruction in the schools: "We don't have anything against the public schools, we only want to make our children into pious Mennonites and thereby good citizens of the land."⁶⁹ A "strong desire for good German literature" was beginning to be felt among Mennonites, another reported.⁷⁰ A minister of the German government informed Mennonites that loss of the German language would mean absorption into a non-German "Volkstum".⁷¹

Thus, most of the elements relevant to the German identity of Mennonites were already present in the early 1930's, before the the National Socialist revolution had fully taken place. The shattering experience under the Bolsheviks had prepared the way for German identification in two interrelated ways: on the one hand, Germany was seen as a rescuing and caring parent

which promised to stand up to the communists and make German-speakers everywhere proud. At the same time, the German language and culture was recognized as a force of unification, integration and perpetuation of Mennonite socio-religious culture.

1933-1939

From the time Hitler came to power in Germany in January 1933, until the outbreak of the Second World War, the related issues of Germanism, National Socialism and Mennonite unity were intensely discussed in the Rundschau, as a number of competing claims were made on Mennonite identity and purpose. A clamor of voices put forward a whole host of ideas and opinions on these topics, many of them remarkable for their extremism and deviation from the stereotypical view of Mennonites as being quiet, apolitical and nonresistant people. It began to appear to some that Russian Mennonites were at a fork in the road: one way seemed to lead to some kind of rapprochement with themselves, their past, and even the German fatherland, as a German Volk with German ways and a religion intimately tied to the German language. The other road seemed to lead to anglicization, assimilation, and loss of personal, communal and religious integrity. While it is obvious that the majority of Canadian Mennonites did not take part in the discussion in any real way, and that some in leading positions stayed on the sidelines because "silence is golden",⁷² it must be asserted that there was widespread and deeply-held interest in these issues.⁷³ The Rundschau continued to exhibit a strongly pro-German attitude, to the point of supporting German militarism, and an openness to all but the most heterodox points of view. At the same time, a significant opposition emerged to some of the more extremist ideas and

fanciful projects, and a moderated German identity was articulated.

Although the horrors of the situation in the Soviet Union continued to garner attention,⁷⁴ the rise of Nazi Germany became the focus of international events. In early 1933, a number of articles were printed which aimed at combatting the alleged "hate propaganda" in the English-language press directed against Hitler and the Nazis. The uproar was due to the Nazi boycott of Jewish goods, commencing April 1, and accompanying acts of violence against Jews.⁷⁵ Hitler's accession to power did not bring about great jubilation, but from October of 1933 through February of 1934, speeches given by Hitler, and edited by Goebbels, were featured on the back pages of the Rundschau.⁷⁶ The twenty-five point programme of the National Socialists appeared in September of 1933.⁷⁷ Throughout this period letters were sent in by Mennonites and others either travelling or living in Germany which extolled the great changes taking place there, including the suppression of communism.⁷⁸ News articles on the communists "getting their comeuppance" from the Nazis would have been read with approval.⁷⁹ One Mennonite, whose family had been exiled somewhere in the Soviet Union, shared the widespread illusion of many Germans that Hitler carried a Bible in his breast-pocket, was trusted by everyone, and had done a good job of cleaning up the "social-democratic, atheistic communist mess."⁸⁰

There continued to be much news on developments in Germany, and almost all of it had a positive slant. Press releases from the German consulate were printed,⁸¹ and statements by the German Consul in Winnipeg, Heinrich Seelheim, appeared frequently.⁸² Much of the "news" must have originated from pro-German and -Nazi sources.⁸³ The Rundschau reprinted a speech given at the 1933 "German Day" in Winnipeg by Consul Seelheim, who spoke of the

"voice of the blood" drawing Germans together, and of the need for Germans everywhere to be true to their "Volkstum". He spoke highly of the "national revolution" happening in Germany, of its moral and spiritual renewal, and of strengthening "true Volksgemeinschaft" (Volks-community).⁸⁴ One Mennonite reader was transported "a thousand years into the past" to his Gothic roots by the speech.⁸⁵

This response is paradigmatic, I believe, of the overall Mennonite feeling toward Germany and Germanism at this time. Hardly anyone disputed the importance of the German identity in perpetuating the Mennonite "Volkstum" as it had emerged in Russia; but differences existed as to the degree people were willing to make Germanism the defining feature of Mennonite identity. A few became ardent German nationalists, advocating renunciation of traditional Mennonite principles such as nonresistance, and even incorporation into the German Reich. More felt that some kind of reintegration along the lines of a German-Mennonite "Mennostaat" was in order, to prevent the complete dissolution of "Mennonitentum". The majority identified with events in Germany, and promoted non-political forms of Germanism at home as an important element in maintaining Mennonite identity and solidarity, but drew the line at threats to Mennonite doctrinal integrity and half-baked ideas of some kind of new Mennonite commonwealth.

The strong, almost rabid pro-Germanists and -Nazis were given much space in the Rundschau throughout this period.⁸⁶ Heinrich Schroeder was allowed to hold forth on his ideas of a synthesis between Nazism and Christianity, and of a Mennonite "traditions-colony" named "Friesenheil", to be located somewhere in Germany. Hindrances like the principle of nonresistance were to be cast off, and divisions within Mennonitism would be ignored to ground a

single "Volks-church" of "racially pure Knights of the Third Reich".⁸⁷ Schroeder was drawing on the Volkish tradition of a "Germanic utopia" for his ideas, which had some parallels with Mennonites' own utopian vision.⁸⁸ Although Schroeder's ideas were dismissed incredulously by some,⁸⁹ others felt compelled to remonstrate critics for being too "scornful" of Schroeder's proposals.⁹⁰ For some, excitement over events occurring in Germany combined with vicious, often biblically-grounded anti-semitism.⁹¹ It is significant for this study that most articles dealing with the topic in this period shared the basic Nazi position, arguing that Jews were at the root of most of the world's problems, and that German treatment of them was fair, in contradiction to reports from the "Jewish-controlled" press.⁹²

This sad aspect of Canadian Mennonite history is underscored by the fact that some went so far as to justify Jewish suffering,⁹³ and that a synopsis of the phony "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was printed in the paper.⁹⁴ In 1934 a libel suit was brought against the editor, Neufeld, for publishing fascist leader William Whittaker's violently anti-semitic paper The Canadian Nationalist.⁹⁵ The general Mennonite feeling towards Jews is indicated by the fact that the paramount Brethren leader B.B. Janz, after comparing German patriotism with that of the Jews, felt compelled to write another article in which he delineated the many perceived evils for which some Jews were responsible, the prime one being the Bolshevik terror.⁹⁶

Besides providing an identifiable scapegoat--the Jews--for Russian Mennonite suffering, the National Socialist ideology also seemed to offer much to a group which had traditionally been based on the separation of church and state, and which was in the process of trying to ensure its survival as a homogeneous people. One writer, intent on illuminating

National Socialism from a "Mennonite" perspective, misguidedly argued that the Nazi state had advanced two crucial policies--racial purity and the separation of church and state.⁹⁷ Another Mennonite complained bitterly about the sad effects of the American "melting-pot" ideology: mixing the blood of differing races led inevitably to a lowering of physical, spiritual and moral standards. The only answer was the nurture of Germanism, which represented the highest culture and language in the world.⁹⁸

A prominent and respected proponent of Volkish and Nazi ideas was Benjamin H. Unruh, who had been a Mennonite leader and teacher in Russia and came from a Brethren family. He had been a Russian patriot during the First World War;⁹⁹ thereafter his loyalties and love of fatherland were transferred to Germany, where he had settled. Once there, he established the organization "Brothers in Need" to assist Russian-Germans fleeing the Ukraine, and sedulously built up contacts with high Nazi officials, including Heinrich Himmler, so that he could procure special treatment for Mennonites in Germany and Russia.¹⁰⁰ Unruh, who cared deeply for his "Volk", considered himself to be a scholarly and objective authority on every issue he treated; his writings belie this assumption. He wrote diligently of the "German" ethnic background of the Mennonites, of the German church struggles, of Volkish ideas and National Socialism, among other things, doing his best to lead Mennonites down the garden path of racial intolerance, support for Nazism, and the general renunciation of those principles which had given Mennonites their good name in the first place. He supported the idea that racial purity was part of the order of creation as explicated in the Old Testament, and that Hitler was merely heeding the command to keep the peoples of the earth racially separate.¹⁰¹

Unruh likened the heterodox "German Christians" to the early Anabaptists,¹⁰² and the struggle within the German churches to the Reformation.¹⁰³ Besides emphasizing the relevance to Mennonites of the supposed Nazi tenets of separation of church and state, and racial purity, Unruh made direct connections between Mennonite communalism and the Nazi Volkish ideology; in this regard, as in the others, Mennonites had always been National Socialists.¹⁰⁴ The Nazi slogan "Gemeinnutz ueber Eigennutz" (the good of the group before that of the individual) was trumpeted as a special point of correspondence between Mennonite and Nazi ideals:

For Hitler "national" means boundless love for the Volk, and "social" means to act for the Volksgemeinschaft. Gemeinnutz ueber Eigennutz! A true patriot always thinks on the good of his Volk.¹⁰⁵

Put in this way, it would be very easy for Mennonites to think of themselves as National Socialists. Russian Mennonite immigrants to Paraguay (from the 1929-30 crisis) erected a banner with the "Gemeinnutz ueber Eigennutz" motto on it in the Fernheim Colony Hall.¹⁰⁶ A Brethren former student of Unruh who became a prominent Winnipeg doctor visited Unruh in Germany, and eagerly asked Unruh's opinion of the new Germany. Unruh said that he was "100% for Hitler", comparing him to the Russian-Mennonite "Oberschulzen" or mayors, who were men of action and not piety.¹⁰⁷ To his credit, Unruh argued against the ideas of Rosenberg and the "German Faith Movement".¹⁰⁸ Unruh's high standing among the Canadian Brethren is confirmed by the fact that they sent him an official greeting in 1936 through his brother A.H. Unruh, the respected Brethren Bible teacher, for his work in relief and resettlement.¹⁰⁹

It is evident, by the wide range of articles appearing which tied Germanism to militarism, that Mennonites were indeed open to the possibility of adjusting their traditional principles to accord with their new-found

German identity. An odd piece honored "Friedrich Friesen, the ideal German nation-builder and freedom fighter," a German who apparently had been killed resisting Napoleon.¹¹⁰ Other historical pieces dealt with "the ancient German tribes",¹¹¹ and "the role of the Friesens (i.e. proto-Mennonites) in the Crusades."¹¹² These articles differed in content but not in direction from articles which supported the German perspective on rearmament¹¹³ or gave glowing accounts of what a fine individual Hitler was.¹¹⁴ Particularly repugnant is the gloss given to the June 30, 1934 Nazi blood purge and the wave of indiscriminate assassinations which followed, in which the best possible light was thrown onto the brutal affair.¹¹⁵ Mennonites' cynicism toward the Bolshevik revolution was more than compensated by naivete toward the Nazi one.

During the 1930's there is considerable evidence of a growing pan-German consciousness among the Russlaender, in contradistinction to traditional Mennonite exclusivity and inability to work together with other German-speaking peoples.¹¹⁶ German-speaking pastors met on occasion at the Winnipeg Jewish Mission,¹¹⁷ and Mennonites took part in the inter-German memorial service for Hindenberg, who died in 1934. The United Mennonite Church choir sang at the event, and Schoenwiese Mennonite Church leader J.P. Klassen read a poem praising Hindenberg.¹¹⁸ Winnipeg Mennonites cabled twenty dollars to B.H. Unruh for a wreath for Hindenberg's gravesite.¹¹⁹

On May 1, 1935, a celebration of the German "National Labour Day" was held in Winnipeg, and again J.P. Klassen spoke, praising Hitler for having brought unity to the German Volk, and wishing the Third Reich "great success".¹²⁰ At this event consul Seelheim spoke, the German Baptist choir sang, and the German Cross was given out to First World War veterans.

Advertisements announcing the eligibility of veterans to receive the Cross appeared in the paper,¹²¹ as did announcements for meetings of the pro-Nazi "German League"¹²² and the fascist "Canadian National Party".¹²³

The editor appears to have been accused by a non-Mennonite of political leanings in the printing of such material, but he defended himself by stating that some were paid announcements, and that he was merely giving the reader a broad review of items crossing his desk.¹²⁴ His involvement with fascist and pro-Nazi leaders is indicated by the fact that in addition to publishing William Whittaker's The Canadian Nationalist, he printed Nazi party-member Bernard Bott's Deutsche Zeitung fuer Kanada, which was the official organ of the German League.¹²⁵ Various other German-oriented events were advertised in the Rundschau, like the showing of Nazi propaganda films in Winnipeg,¹²⁶ German "song clubs",¹²⁷ and contests sponsored by the German League for best German essays.¹²⁸ As well, conscription notices for "Reichs-Germans" began to appear in early 1936, as the German war machine came to life.¹²⁹

Mennonites themselves indicated their growing consciousness of a familial relationship to Germans in various ways, including the very common use of "German" in the place of "Mennonite" (as in "we Germans"), or in combination with it ("we German Mennonites"). One Mennonite argued that it was necessary for all German Canadians, regardless of confessional or cultural differences, to cooperate in preserving German language and culture: "We should...nurture what binds us, brings us closer, joins us together...We Germans of Canada are truly called to a higher task than to be cultural fodder of this land."¹³⁰

Pan-Germanism was espoused from Germany by B.H. Unruh and Heinrich Schroeder, who worked hard at "proving" the Germanic roots of the Russian Mennonites.¹³¹ This was done at least partly in response to the (for them)

embarrassing fact that Russian Mennonites had claimed to be of Dutch descent during the First World War and immediately thereafter. Walter Quiring, another Russian Mennonite teacher who had settled in Germany and who vigorously supported National Socialism, argued stridently in Der Bote that the Dutch identification had been a big mistake, and that the Mennonite exodus from the Soviet Union had been made possible by the German-engineered treaty of Brest-Litovsk of 1918.¹³² The debate over this untruth spilled over into the Rundschau,¹³³ and blended with an emerging if partial consensus among Canadian Mennonites, and Mennonite Brethren in particular, which rejected the ideas of the German triumvirate of Quiring, Unruh and Schroeder and attempted to steer a middle way between extremist Germanism and the renunciation of the German identity. What follows is an analysis of this trend, and some of the core elements of Russlaender Germanism during the 1930's: fears of assimilation and acculturation, the desire to reunify Mennonites, and the notion that the German identity was a key component in maintaining doctrinal and communal integrity. An affection for the mother-tongue and German culture is taken for granted, as being a basic motivation for Germanist sentiments.

One type of response to the highly politicized atmosphere of the 1930's which should not be overlooked, especially among the Mennonite Brethren, was pietistic or apocalyptic. In 1933 one Brethren saw Christian conversion as being the only answer to the foreboding future, as opposed to the entertainment of certain political or economic ideas.¹³⁴ Other Brethren echoed the belief that Christian conversion was the single most important issue of the day.¹³⁵ A classic example of the genre, by another Brethren, stated:

Our time is an extraordinary, difficult one. Much is said of the changing times, the revaluation of all values...Great unrest exists

today in the world. The storm of our time makes mankind restless in political, economic, intellectual and spiritual ways...the world despite its high culture is going bankrupt, because God has been shut out.¹³⁶

The issues of militant Germanism and related political involvement were rebutted on their own terms as well. The Anabaptist historian Cornelius Krahn attempted to quell excitement for the new Germany in mid-1933 by exposing the heterodoxy of the "German Christians" and pointing out that Judaism and Marxism could not be blamed for all of the world's ills. Anabaptist principles were not harmonizable with either Bolshevism or fascism.¹³⁷ Later in 1933 a "schoolmaster" chided Mennonites to stop looking to the past and participating in German "beer-patriotism"; instead, they should look to the future, and make Canada their home.¹³⁸ Heinrich Toews, a Brethren congregational leader from Manitoba, warned Mennonites against getting involved in politics and nationalism, both being based on the use of force.¹³⁹ Winnipeg resident J.J. Hildebrand, who felt strongly about the German identity of Mennonites and was the foremost promoter of the "Mennostaat" idea then floating around (autonomous Mennonite state, discussed below), also warned Mennonites away from politics, with its "evil undercurrents".¹⁴⁰ Hildebrand's position is significant because it illustrates that in the Canadian context, Germanism was largely directed inward, toward other Mennonites and the perpetuation of their socio-religious culture.

The most important individual to take issue with the rising Germanist sentiment, and plot a course for Canadian Mennonites through the various political and Volkish thickets of the time, was the eminent Brethren leader B.B. Janz. Janz was widely respected by all Russian immigrants for his unparalleled efforts in bringing about the exodus from Russia in the 1920's,

for which he was called "the Mennonite Moses". He was leader of the large and influential Brethren congregation in Coaldale, Alberta, and was extremely active in Brethren and inter-Mennonite organizations.¹⁴¹ His writings are the single most important documents for understanding the dilemmas of the period, as they provided a reference point for many Mennonites, especially the Brethren.

Janz's first contributions to the discussion appeared in late 1934, with two articles printed in the same edition of the Rundschau. One quoted from Brethren historian P.M. Friesen on the Dutch origins of the Mennonites.¹⁴² The other article, "Was Menno Simons a National Socialist?", took issue with Heinrich Schroeder's intimation that Menno Simons would have approved of Nazi steps to rearm Germany.¹⁴³ Janz drove home the point that Simons was no Nazi, and that the doctrine of nonresistance was not to be wrested from Simons' mantle, where it rightly belonged. Janz mentioned that Schroeder's father had been an officer in the controversial Mennonite "Selbstschutz" (self-defence) units in the Ukraine, which were organized in the time of chaos following the Bolshevik revolution. The senior Schroeder had demanded that Janz and another preacher be expelled from the colonies because of their opposition to these self-defence units.¹⁴⁴ Thus the roots of Schroeder's militant Germanism went back to the "Selbstschutz" debacle in the Ukraine.

John Horsch, the eastern U.S. Old Mennonite leader, was also drawn to the defense of Menno's principles.¹⁴⁵ Isaak Toews, a Brethren preacher from Saskatchewan, wrote in praise of Janz's article on Menno Simons and National Socialism,¹⁴⁶ and articles supporting the principle of nonresistance followed, one having been read at a Brethren conference, and one by another Brethren leader.¹⁴⁷ B.B. Janz followed his short opening volleys with a

15,000 word article series entitled "Wherefrom and Whereto: Spotlights on the Mennonite Past, Present and Future", which ran in the Rundschau during April and May of 1935. This article-series was a watershed in the Germanism debates of the 1930's, as Janz posed the historic "faith of the fathers" directly against the National Socialist ideology and Germanism as normative for Mennonite identity, clarifying in the process the issues at stake. However, although Janz made a strong distinction between the universality of the Christian faith and the particularity of cultures, he was in the end subtly ambivalent about the superiority of the German language and culture as a special carrier of Mennonite identity. As well, the defensive tone of the piece indicates that he felt he was treading on rather thin ice.

The article begins with a polemic against the more extremist statements made in the Canadian Mennonite press (this would include Der Bote, discussed in Chapter Three) in support of the Nazi ideology of blood, race, and nation. These aspects had been emphasized too strongly by the "hurrah-patriots" from overseas, according to Janz, when they are peripheral to Mennonite identity. The first argument Janz uses to disengage Mennonites from the Nazi ideology is that one has to "rape" history in order to endow Mennonites with truly German blood. In what must have been a cold slap in the face to his opponents, Janz asserts that there is only one relatively pure blood on the earth, and that is Jewish.¹⁴⁸

Salvation does not come from the German nation, but from Jesus. God's kingdom reaches over all nations. Much of the article is devoted to recounting the experiences Janz had while travelling among American Mennonite communities in 1927. These people are now more English than German, yet they exhibit a strong piety and have done many good works, including relief work

for the Russian immigrants themselves. It is wrong for the more recent immigrants to look down upon earlier ones who have changed their language as having "degenerated".¹⁴⁹ Janz points out that attempts to cooperate with the non-Mennonite Germans in Russia had failed, despite honest attempts to work together--why was this so, if "Deutschtum" was the key to Mennonite identity?¹⁵⁰

Janz also critiques the "Mennostaat" idea via a critique of the Mennonite "state" which had emerged in Russia. He argues that in the Russian "Mennostaat" the civil realm often interfered with the spiritual realm, to the latter's detriment. Mennonite self-governance only led to persecution and division.¹⁵¹ Also, those who had found their salvation in the Mennostaat were now finding it in the Third Reich.¹⁵² Janz's affiliation with the Brethren, a dissenting minority in the Russian colonies which emphasized personal religious experience and conversion, is evident here. Another aspect of Janz's distinctive Brethren identity present in the article is an emphasis on faith of the "heart" as an indicator of true spirituality, and as being something which is discernible without knowing the same language or having the same blood.¹⁵³ In this case Brethren pietism contributed to a universalist rather than a nationalist point of view.

In his discussion of nonresistance Janz is most forthright, as it was the threat to that tenet of the faith which had finally compelled him to respond:

Again and again came articles from over there (Germany), trying to mix our Volk...into the political batter, where nonresistance no longer has a place. For that reason I could no longer be silent...Our inner being has been attacked.¹⁵⁴

Janz concedes that he is not attacking Germany itself, just those who were "overeager" to convert Mennonites to the "new Gospel" emerging out of it. In fact, Janz lauds Hitler as having been sent from God to save the world from

Bolshevism, and warmly remembers the help Germany extended to Russian Mennonites. This was the essential dilemma in which Russian Mennonites found themselves--what kind of a person would turn against the nation which had done much for him, and which had presented itself as bulwark against the forces which had destroyed his idyll?

The problem of personal integrity again comes to the fore in Janz's discussion of the German language. On the one hand he makes it clear that no language is holy, and distinguishes quite strongly between the form or expression of faith, and its content.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, his love of the German language and culture, as his own point of reference, is evident: he writes of the importance of "German manners and morals" in the schools, and of the Low German dialect for "trust and unity" amidst the unsettling mix of nationalities in North America. The mother who doesn't teach her child German starves its spirit and contributes to the ruination of the family. Those who bow to the inevitable and give up the German language are traitors to their home, church, and their precious German Bibles, if they do so needlessly. In the end, Janz argues for a cultural Germanism separate from the politics of Berlin:

Like a farmer I need markers to plow a straight course. Thus I point myself in the direction of my mother, the home, the German school, the German sermon, my German Bible...(etc.) but not towards the German Reich with its political centre Berlin.¹⁵⁶

In the context of this distinction Janz posits a "conscious" and an "unconscious" Germanism: the conscious form is political, while the unconscious variety includes all the other forms of Germanism, which he supports.¹⁵⁷ Whereas earlier in the article Janz had emphasized the faith of the fathers as being linguistically translatable, and that Mennonites should change their language instead of losing their youth,¹⁵⁸ now he encourages all

efforts to maintain the German language and culture.¹⁵⁹ Although he asserts at various points that salvation is not dependent on a specific cultural medium, at others he denigrates both the Slavic and English cultures, the two options he had been faced with in his lifetime.¹⁶⁰

In general, the article exhibits most of the elements which made the Mennonite encounter with Nazi Germany an ambivalent one. On the one hand, it contains a vision of the Mennonites as a people of faith which had largely remained obedient to God in the face of the conflicting demands of nation-states. On the other hand, there are indications that the German way was felt to be in fact superior, functioning as a bulwark against such degenerate influences as communism, and English and Slavic culture, and acting as a medium of discourse which had a special meaning and function for Mennonites. At the beginning Janz essentially equalizes all cultural forms of religious life, but in the course of the article some ground is granted to the Germanists. But he remains quite firm in his distinction between political and cultural Germanism, and in his insistence that his primary loyalties are with God and the traditional Mennonite doctrines of nonresistance and the separation of church and state.

At least two correspondents hailed the series as a "milestone" in the history of the Russian Mennonites. One stated that Janz's lines had an "enduring effect" upon him, "and certainly also many others." He thanked Janz for sharpening his conscience and clarifying the issues, noting that:

A battle has raged among us in the last few years over certain essential goods. On the one side is the national, Volkish idea, more specifically the German National Socialism (what do...wandering Mennonites have to do with that?), and on the other side is the congregational principle--the idea of the kingdom of God. The Volkish orientation has its justification...regrettable, however, is the threat it poses to the kingdom of God idea.¹⁶¹

The other writer, besides supporting Janz's general contribution, praised him for not rejecting cultural aspects of the Mennonite identity--Janz's love for the German mother-tongue was evident and gratifying and to him.¹⁶²

Correspondence between Janz and Rundschau editor H.H. Neufeld reveals that they were on good terms, and that they stood together against "opponents" to the article series. D.H. Epp, editor of Der Bote, had refused to print it, for reasons directly related to Janz's anti-Volkish and -Germanist comments (discussed below in Chapter Three). Janz's comments to Neufeld are indicative of the depth of pro-German feeling present among Mennonites:

You have shown real courage this time (in printing the series), as it is seldom done. But for that reason we should hold fast to each other. As to whether our opponents will grab us by the collar? However, you know it is to me extremely important for the health of our Volk...I'm glad we're standing on the same side of the barricades.¹⁶³

Neufeld allowed Janz to preview responses to the series by Walter Quiring, and never did print them, raising a cry from Quiring of censorship.¹⁶⁴

Neufeld told Janz to write what he believed he should, even if it was hard for some to take: "The boil must be lanced for the health of our Volk."¹⁶⁵ This exchange helps to clarify Neufeld's position somewhat. There were limits to his support of militant Germanism, especially given the leadership of his co-religionist Janz.

Another prominent Brethren who espoused a qualified Germanism was Abraham Kroeker. Kroeker felt that although Hitler had been sent by God to repel the threat of Bolshevism in Germany, Mennonites did not need to say "yes and amen" to all of the events taking place there. Nonresistance, especially, couldn't be compromised. In general, though, he felt quite strongly that the German culture was higher than the English, that Mennonites were German, and

that they should stay that way. "However, we are not Reichs-Germans and not Nazis."166

A.A. Toews, a Brethren congregational leader from Alberta, combined the same elements of warmth for the German cultural and linguistic identity with staunch rejection of its political aspects, in this case the Hitler Youth.¹⁶⁷ In early 1936 a contributor maintained that Mennonites, who had exhibited an "exceptional allegiance" to the Russian Czar, should now turn their patriotic loyalties to Canada, and not get all worked up over English opposition to the German dictatorship.¹⁶⁸ A letter written in 1933 had given the other side of the picture: this individual wanted to make Canada his home, but had a hard time with Canadian "defamation" of the new Germany, which he felt had broken the back of communism in central Europe. The high cultural and moral values which Mennonites had inherited from Germany were important, but it was now necessary to become full citizens of Canada.¹⁶⁹ Given the fact that the majority of Mennonites became Canadian citizens in relatively short order,¹⁷⁰ this would seem to be a representative point of view. In fact, as Chapter One has made clear, the Russian Mennonite emigrants of the 1920's were generally more eager to assume a place in Canadian society than those who left Russia in the 1870's, and this must be seen as one of the primary reasons for the strong Germanist reaction by some Russlaender.¹⁷¹

The fear of assimilation and acculturation, of "Verenglischung", was a prevalent feature of Canadian Mennonite life throughout the period covered by this thesis,¹⁷² and was very evident in the Rundschau. In 1933 a Mennonite wrote bitterly of the effects of Canadianization and the "melting pot" on Mennonites: together with the loss of a closed community, these forces were responsible for a growing Mennonite crime-rate and the imminent demise of

Mennonite organization and discipline. A "worldly" (English) literature flooded the land while theaters, dance halls and bars seemed to spring up out of the earth like mushrooms. Mennonites no longer had effective ways of controlling their proximity to such things, and this was leading to a general moral and spiritual decline.¹⁷³ A mother complained that although she had spoken in German to her children from the cradle onward, they still ended up speaking English among themselves. Not only that, but the older ones were being tempted away to English Bible schools. How would youth be able to join the Mennonite church if they lost the German?¹⁷⁴

Others picked up the theme of the "wild" and "unhealthy" aspects of the "modern" English evangelicalism, like nighttime meetings and a generally superficial approach.¹⁷⁵ A Winnipeg Brethren leader warned of modernism and the teaching of the theory of evolution in English schools, which had turned four "German youth" (most likely Mennonites) at the University of Manitoba against the faith of their fathers to atheism. The neglect of "our magnificent mother-tongue" was a further danger for Mennonite youth, who consequently found English "fun spots" more attractive than German Mennonite church services.¹⁷⁶ This was but an opening volley in what was to become a long battle against the encroachment of the English language. Another concerned individual pointed out that in addition to the fact that the loss of the German language would be a great loss for Mennonites, German books published in the U.S. had an "English spirit", and were to be avoided.¹⁷⁷ By 1936 both the German-English Academy at Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna, Manitoba, were reporting problems with student knowledge of, or willingness to learn, German.¹⁷⁸ It is safe to say that within ten years of their arrival in Canada, the threat of

anglicization had become very real for the Russlaender.¹⁷⁹

At the 1939 British Columbia Provincial Immigrant Assembly, the "assimilation process" was a topic of discussion; a speaker stated that it had proceeded to the point where parents were beginning to speak with their children in English, as resolve to keep the language waned. This was very regrettable, since so much of the Mennonite uniqueness was bound up with the German language.¹⁸⁰ British Columbia seems to have been a particularly difficult place to maintain the German language, due to a strong sense of English nationalism among the host population.¹⁸¹

Less than a month before the outbreak of the Second World War, a rather strident Germanist from Winnipeg, who had been involved in youth work, asserted to Rundschau readers that a decision would have to be made--either Mennonites give up their "Deutschtum" and assimilate into Canadian society, or return home to the great German motherland.¹⁸² After the outbreak of war, it became easier for individuals like Gerhard Lohrenz, future principal of the Brethren High School in Winnipeg (1947-52), to argue that the solution to the problem of retention of the youth consisted in the ability of Mennonite churches to offer English church services to them.¹⁸³

During the 1930's this solution was still generally unthinkable for Mennonites, even if they suspected that anglicization was inevitable. The result of B.B. Janz's article series, for example, was to cause people to think in terms of bilingualism, not the total adoption of English.¹⁸⁴ At this point in time, the German language and culture was one of the remaining common attributes of Mennonites from the lost Russian commonwealth. Laments for this lost unity, coupled with fears of the imminent demise of the Mennonites as a distinct "people", were uttered throughout the thirties.

J.J. Hildebrand wrote:

Scattered must we perish,/as happens to us in all the world/ when in brother-love our unity/does not hold us together.../Systematically they take/our mother-tongue away/which our Creator gave to us/to harmonize what we say.¹⁸⁵

A Mennonite who had settled in Holland reflected sadly on the loss of a world: "O, this feeling of being cut off--externally but not internally--with such uncertainty as to whether we'll not eventually drift away or become foreign to each other..."¹⁸⁶ Others echoed this basic desire for reunification.¹⁸⁷ Some turned an envious eye to the emerging sense of community in the new Paraguayan Mennonite colony,¹⁸⁸ while others praised Hitler for bringing unity to the German Volk.¹⁸⁹

A particularly concerned individual asserted that through "hundreds" of private conversations he had sensed the longing for Mennonite reunification. He noted that all Mennonites had watched Hitler's success with expectation and joy. Hitler had taught Germans to be true to themselves, and strengthened their self-assurance and feeling of common identity. Germans everywhere were holding fast to the motherland like never before--perhaps when Germany regained some of her lost colonies, Mennonites should start an "independent colony under German protection?"¹⁹⁰ In this case important aspects of the complex relationship between Mennonites and the new Germany are very clearly expressed: Germany provided a positive example of Volk-renewal and -unification, it gave a sense of rootedness and pride, and was seen as a nurturing/protective parent. In general, there is a feeling of both common identity and of separateness from "Reichs-Germans": Germanism had both a wider, externalized dimension, and a narrower, inner-directed, meaning for Mennonites.

J.J. Hildebrand and the above individual, B. Warkentin, advanced a full-

blown proposal for a new "Mennostaat" in 1933, making the retention of the German language and culture a prime component of the projected autonomous Mennonite state.¹⁹¹ Hildebrand continued to try to generate excitement over this idea during 1933 and 1934,¹⁹² until his writings were suppressed in June 1934 at the request of a group of Manitoba Mennonite preachers, on account of the fact that he was on record attacking the Canadian government, that he was "distorting" Mennonite history (in other articles), and because of his repeated harping on the Mennostaat idea.¹⁹³

Hildebrand's plan evinced a fair amount of support in some quarters,¹⁹⁴ while others liked the idea but felt it to be impracticable.¹⁹⁵ At least one other individual put forth an all-encompassing vision for a Mennonite society, this one not necessarily geographically separate, but economically and culturally independent. Here, too, the German language and culture figured as "a completely indispensable factor in our 'Mennonitentum'."¹⁹⁶ The general response to such schemes, however, was negative. One person argued that such ideas were the beginning of nationalistic thought and went against basic Mennonite principles.¹⁹⁷ Another said that Mennonites' calling was to be sojourners in the world, not nation-builders,¹⁹⁸ while others accused Hildebrand of having leadership ambitions and an inflamed sense of personal mission.¹⁹⁹ One person dismissed his ideas as so much "blather" and "twaddle",²⁰⁰ while still others felt that Mennonites were called to confront the "world" in some way, rather than flee from it.²⁰¹ B.B. Janz also rejected the idea, as stated earlier.

Although there was a general rejection of some of these more fanciful ideas, most individuals would not have taken issue with the basic notion of Germanism being an important ingredient in Mennonite identity. Even

individuals like the highly regarded Brethren Bible teacher A.H. Unruh, who did not seem to have much to say on the topic during the 1930's, had kind words for the German heritage twenty years later, when it was being completely lost.²⁰² C.F. Klassen, another highly-regarded Brethren figure, applauded the National Socialist "housecleaning" in 1933,²⁰³ and in 1939 went on record in the Rundschau as being proud of Winkler Bible School graduates, who "weren't ashamed of either the Gospel or their Deutschtum."²⁰⁴

David Toews, a General Conference Mennonite leader equal in stature with B.B. Janz, felt the instruction of German and religion to be "enduring goods",²⁰⁵ and also gave his qualified support to the National Socialist transformation of Germany, after a visit there in 1936.²⁰⁶ Jacob H. Janzen was a leading General Conference figure who strongly supported cultural Germanism, writing extensively and passionately on the topic.²⁰⁷ F.C. Thiessen, a prominent Winnipeg Brethren preacher, teacher and chorister, clearly felt that German language and culture contributed to high moral and spiritual character, and was an important agent in the retention of youth within the Mennonite tradition.²⁰⁸ There were others who felt that Germanism bore a positive relationship to Mennonite religion,²⁰⁹ and that loss of the German language led to loss of character.²¹⁰

The relationship between Mennonite faith and Germanism was double-edged, however, as should already be clear. The more militant variety of Germanism threatened basic Mennonite principles such as nonresistance. Yet it was widely perceived that with the loss of the traditional language and culture of the Russian Mennonites, the Mennonite "uniqueness", which included such principles, would also be lost. The former aspect posed a real "problem" by 1935,²¹¹ while the latter was an underlying current of most statements

concerning the close relationship between Mennonite faith and the German language and culture made throughout the period covered by this study.²¹²

By 1939 the Rundschau still featured most of the currents of opinion and debate presented earlier in the decade. If B.B. Janz was still writing anti-Nazi broadsides,²¹³ it was because others continued to argue that National Socialism deserved Mennonite support,²¹⁴ and that Nazi principles were harmonizable with Mennonitism.²¹⁵ Mennonite individuals continued to try to counteract the "lies" circulating about Nazi actions and the German church struggle,²¹⁶ and speeches given by Hitler were again printed on a back page of the Rundschau.²¹⁷ It was argued publicly as late as July 1939 that Germanism was the essence of the Mennonite "uniqueness", which if lost would spell the end of Mennonites' historic identity, including doctrinal and ethical aspects.²¹⁸

However, articles encouraging nonresistance and loyalty to Canada also appeared.²¹⁹ The English Royal Family, touring Canada during May and June of 1939, was warmly welcomed and reported on in English, as were Mennonite pledges of loyalty to the Crown.²²⁰ When war broke out in September, English and Canadian declarations of war were printed in English,²²¹ and the editor, in one of his first substantial editorial comments on citizenship, stated that all of the Rundschau workers were Canadian citizens, that it was a privilege to be living in freedom in Canada, and that Mennonites should be true to their heritage as the "quiet in the land".²²² After the outbreak of war the Germanist debate departed from the pages of the Rundschau.

In conclusion, the Mennonitische Rundschau displayed a remarkable degree of openness to foreign ideas and a broad spectrum of positions on the Germanism question during the 1930's. The communal consciousness of the

Mennonites, as well as the important function of the newspaper as a "Bindemittel" or medium of binding Mennonites together, is illustrated in the energetic and widespread participation in debates on issues of common import, like the Germanism question. It must be remembered, however, that the majority of Russlaender immigrants were simply struggling along with everyone else in trying to provide for themselves in the midst of economic depression and poor crop conditions.

Reports of the great things happening in Nazi Germany may have stimulated wistful thoughts in many, but relatively few individuals actively promoted the Nazi cause, and they made much noise. One gets the sense of a receptive majority looking on in interest and affirmation, but eventually rejecting the more militant expressions of Germanism and Nazism. Commenting in 1939 on the continued insistence by one individual that a person could be both a Nazi and a Mennonite, a Kanadier Mennonite wrote that this combination was "impossible and unthinkable" for Kanadier as well as Russlaender Mennonites, "with very few exceptions".²²³ However, the communal, cultural, and religious associations of Germanism with Mennonitism would continue to be made into the 1950's.

NOTES, CHAPTER TWO

1. E.K. Francis, In Search of Utopia (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 269; Abram Berg, Dietrich Heinrich Epp 1875-1955 (Saskatoon: Heese House of Printing, 1973), p. 39; Henry Paetkau, "A Struggle for Survival: The Russian Mennonite Immigrants in Ontario, 1924-39," (M.A. thesis, University of Waterloo, 1977), p. 157; John A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1975), p. 283.
2. John A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, pp. 290-91. Frank H. Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930's," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1965), pp. 310-11.
3. During the late 1920's and 1930's, Der Bote is reported to have had a circulation of around 1500 to 1600, while the Rundschau had a circulation of about 4000 to 5000. These figures are from Berg, Dietrich Heinrich Epp, p. 52; Jonathan F. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1981), p. 104; C.A. Dawson, Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1936; reprinted 1974, Kraus Reprint Co.), p. 167. A survey of periodicals read by the exclusively Russlaender Mennonites of Coaldale, Alberta, in 1935 revealed that the Rundschau was almost exactly twice as prevalent as Der Bote. Frank H. Epp, Mennonite Exodus (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1966), p. 316. Some homes subscribed to both periodicals. Interview with John B. Toews, Mennonite Historian, Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, January 31, 1990.
4. For a discussion of editor D.H. Epp's persistent efforts to keep the paper fully under his control see Berg, D.H. Epp, p. 35ff. See also the discussion below of Epp's editorship of Der Bote, Chapter Three.
5. If the contributors were not identifiable as recent immigrants by name, they usually indicated as much through the content of their articles. If "Kanadier" joined the discussion, they would often indicate that fact as well. As mentioned in Chapter One, E.K. Francis found the "ideological dividing line" on the Germanism question to follow "rather closely the natural division between the Kanadier and Russlaender groups." Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 234.
6. Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 233ff.
7. e.g. Mennonitische Rundschau, 16 April 1930, p. 9. Henceforth in this chapter the title of the newspaper will not be cited when it is the obvious reference.
8. e.g. 14 May 1930, p. 8; 21 May 1930, pp. 8-9.
9. e.g. 26 March 1930, p. 11; 18 February 1931, p. 12.

10. 1 January 1930, p. 6.

11. Articles with titles like "In the Land of Tears" were common. 4 March 1931, p. 11. For more see John B. Toews, Lost Fatherland: The Story of the Mennonite Emigration From Soviet Russia, 1921-27 (Kitchener: Herald Press, 1967). Also helpful is Harry Loewen, "Canadian Mennonite Literature: Longing for a Lost Homeland", in Walter E. Riedel, ed., The Old World and the New: Literary Perspectives of German-Speaking Canadians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

12. J.P. Klassen, "Dem deutschen Volk," 26 March 1930, pp. 2-3. Similar sorts of poems appeared in *Ibid.*, p. 6; Abram Jac. Loewen, "Unser Dank," 25 June 1930, pp. 8-9; P.P. Isaak, "Dem deutschen Volk!," 23 July 1930, p. 5.

13. 15 January 1930, p. 13. Other examples include 1 January 1930, p. 6; 22 January 1930, p. 12; 18 November 1931, p. 4.

14. 1 October 1930, p. 6.

15. This included both the German Consulate in Winnipeg and the German government. 22 January 1930, p. 12; 12 February 1930, p. 6; 5 October 1932, p. 11.

16. B.H. Unruh, "Unsere Pakethilfe nach Russland," 5 October 1932, p. 11

17. H.H. Neufeld, "Euer Editor," 10 June 1931, p. 4.

18. Examples for the 1930-32 period include: 5 March 1930, pp. 1-3; Peter Dirks, "Unser Volk," 16 April 1930, pp. 1-2; P.P. Isaak, "Dem deutschen Volk!," 23 July 1930, p. 5; B.D., "Ein Mennonitisches Problem," 19 October 1932, pp. 1-2.

19. P.P. Kornelsen, "Volk ohne Heimat," 19 February 1930, p. 8; "Mennoniten," 16 April 1930, p. 4; 6 May 1931, pp. 6-7.

20. P.P. Isaak, "Dem deutschen Volk!," 23 July 1930, p. 5.

21. P.P. Kornelsen, "Volk ohne Heimat," 19 February 1930, p. 1.

22. Examples for the 1930-32 period include: "Chilenischer General ermahnt zum Festhalten am Deutschtum," 30 July 1930, p. 5; "Bleib Deutsch," 1 October 1930, p. 4; D.A.J., "Das vierte Gebot," 6 July 1932, p. 4.

23. E. Sengler, "Die voelkische Bewegung," 8 July 1931, pp. 2-3.

24. 29 June 1932, p. 8; 17 December 1930, p. 15.

25. e.g. 16 April 1930, p. 14; 30 April 1930, p. 14; 25 June 1930, p. 14; 28 January 1931, p. 14; 7 September 1932, p. 12; 21 September 1932, p. 16; 19 November 1932, p. 11. There were many more.

26. 17 December 1930, p. 12.
27. 1 July 1931, p. 8.
28. 8 June 1932, pp. 4-5.
29. A few examples include: 29 July 1931, p. 11; 4 May 1932, p. 12; 8 June 1932, p. 14.
30. 24 February 1932, p. 12; 9 March 1932, p. 12.
31. 16 March 1932, p. 14.
32. "Wie steht's in Deutschland?", 26 February 1930, p. 3; 16 July 1930, p. 5; 7 January 1931, p. 6; 22 July 1931, p. 12; J.P. Klassen, "Die groesste Schande des 20. Jahrhunderts," 20 January 1932, pp. 1-2.
33. Heinrich Schroeder, "Judenangst", 10 August 1932, pp. 4-5.
34. 25 November 1931, p. 12.
35. 22 January 1930, p. 7.
36. 12 February 1930, p. 7.
37. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, p. 94ff.
38. "Deutscher Tag", 16 July 1930, p. 11. The soteriological power of the German essence was also cited in another article in the same issue, p. 5.
39. William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 26.
40. Dr. Theo Haeuser, "Ein Apostel der Wahrheit," 4 February 1931, pp. 11-13. Another Stuermer article was reprinted two weeks later, covering Christmas festivities of the Hitler youth in Nuremberg. 18 February 1931, p. 5.
41. "Die Mennoniten und der Kriegsdienst," 11 March 1931, p. 12.
42. "Preussen!" 13 May 1931, p. 10.
43. Discussions of these issues were present in 27 May 1931; 3 June 1931.
44. 26 November 1930, p. 12.
45. G.G. Wiens, "Ein neues Deuschtum?", 30 September 1931, p. 4.
46. 16 March 1932, p. 4.
47. "Zum `neuen Deutschland'", 30 March 1932, p. 11.

48. G.G. Wiens, "Christus oder Wotan?", 6 April 1932, p. 4.
49. "Das neue Deutschland", 18 May 1932, p. 3.
50. 19 October 1932, p. 4.
51. J.P. Klassen, "Die groesste Schande des 20. Jahrhunderts," 20 January 1932, pp. 1-2; 16 March 1932, p. 2; T.G., "Das neue Deutschland", 18 May 1932, p. 3.
52. "Deutschland und unsere Brueder in Russland," 14 January 1931, p. 8.
53. Heinrich Schroeder, "Die Juden", 3 August 1932, pp. 3-4.
54. C. M., 27 July 1932, p. 5.
55. Hans Schmidt, "Das neue Deutschland", 26 October 1932, pp. 2-3.
56. 19 October 1932, p. 5.
57. "Hitler", 4 February 1931, p. 11.
58. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, "Volksmensch Adolf Hitler", 28 September 1932, p. 12.
59. For a discussion of Canadian communism during the 1920's and 1930's see Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada 1896-1932 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), Chapter 4. During the 1920's, the North End in Winnipeg had provided a base for CPC activities, and the systematic suppression of the movement by government authorities during 1929-34 was indicative of its feared influence. In 1934 a Mennonite dourly reported that a communist had won a seat on the North End City Council, and urged Mennonites to get organized so this wouldn't happen again. J.K., "Am Morgen nach dem Wahlen," 12 December 1934, p. 8. In 1936 another warning was made about growing communist influence, and support was urged for mayoral candidate R.H. Webb, a staunch anti-communist. "Deutsche treten fuer R.H. Webb ein," 18 November 1936, p. 7.
60. The dire economic situation was at the root of the problem, as immigrants were linked to unemployment and labour agitation. General Anglo-Saxon nativism, exemplified most vividly by the growth of the Ku Klux Klan on the prairies in the later 1920's, was also present. Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), pp. 100-110, 126ff; Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 247, 404-05; Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners', pp. 111-15; Joanna Buhr, "Pursuit of a Vision: Persistence and Accomodation Among Coaldale Mennonites from the mid-Nineteen Twenties to World War II," (M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1986), p. 82.
61. Beginning 1 June 1932, p. 10, by Herman Anders.
62. A. Kroeker, "Das Buch", 21 September 1932, p. 3.

63. e.g. A. Kroeker, 28 September 1932, pp. 2-3.
64. "Bleib Deutsch", 1 October 1930, p. 4.
65. C.F. Klassen, "Der Weg der praktischen Hilfe", 18 February 1931, p. 2.
66. J. John Friesen, "Streiflichter auf die deutsche Sprache," 30 April 1930, p. 2. Other examples for this period include: "Die deutsche Sprache in Amerika," 26 November 1930, p. 4; "An das deutsche Elternhaus," 24 February 1932, pp. 3-4; A.J. Fast, "Einige Bemerkungen ueber Wert und Bedeutung der deutschen Sprache," 8 June 1932, p. 4;
67. J. John Friesen, 18 June 1930, p. 1.
68. "Ein Aufruf an Lehrer", 18 June 1930, p. 5.
69. "Religion und deutsche Sprache in unseren Schulen," 29 June 1932, pp. 4-5. Other examples include: "Bericht des Schulkomitees", 9 September 1931, p. 3; 23 September 1931, p. 3.
70. 17 September 1930, p. 4.
71. Dr. Doelitz, "Muttersprache", 29 April 1931, pp. 8 9.
72. "Eine Ehrenschild", Mennonitische Rundschau, 10 June 1936, p. 6.
73. As one individual stated, the issues of nonresistance, mother-tongue, and Germanism were "extraordinarily important questions...questions of life and death (for Mennonites)." W.K.W., "Unsere Volkshochschule", Der Bote 14 November 1934, p. 3. The general intensity and range of discussion, as should become clear, indicate that many shared this feeling of urgency.
74. e.g. "Die Systematische Vernichtung der Russland-deutschen durch die Sowjetmachthaber," 1 February 1933, pp. 2-3; J.B. Wiens, "Warum? meinem lieben Bruder, der im Sowjetland umkam," 18 April 1934, p. 9; 2 September 1936, p. 15.
75. e.g. "Greuelmeldungen und ihre Entlarvung," 12 April 1933, p. 3; H. Seelheim, "Wie Hetzpropaganda gemacht wird," 19 April 1933; A.J. Fast, "Noch einmal, gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," 3 May 1933, pp. 3-4; 17 May 1933, p. 11.
76. The first Hitler text printed in the Rundschau occurred earlier and was entitled, appropriately enough, "Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus". 13 June 1933, p. 4. An article by Goebbels on Hitler appeared earlier yet, in March 1933. Joseph Goebbels, "Jeder, der ihn wirklich kennt," 22 March 1933, p. 12.
77. 13 September 1933, p. 12.

78. Heinrich Schroeder, "Der Bolschewismus bedroht Deutschland!", 15 February 1933, p. 11; Hans Weber, 12 July 1933, p. 5; J.W. Simoleit, "Wie es im neuen Deutschland aussieht," 10 January 1934, pp. 2-3; "Das neue Deutschland," 24 January 1934, p. 3; C. Martens, "Nicht enttaeuscht", 3 October 1934, p. 3; Frau K. Esau, 13 March 1935, p. 6; Frau Neufeld, 9 December 1936, pp. 2-3.
79. e.g. 15 March 1933, p. 13; "Wie Deutschland vor Buergerkrieg bewahrt wurde," 1 November 1933, pp. 3-4.
80. C. Martens, "Meine Beobachtungen und Eindruecke in Deutschland," 30 September 1933, pp. 6-7.
81. e.g. 4 January 1933, pp. 6-7.
82. 8 February 1933, pp. 1-2; 12 July 1933, pp. 11, 14; 14 November 1934, p. 8.
83. Wagner documents the relationship between Rundschau editor H.H. Neufeld and the Nazi Foreign Press Office in Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, p. 104. A few examples of the many pro-German news pieces include: 25 January 1933, pp. 12-13; 26 April 1933, p. 16; 17 September 1933, p. 13; 11 July 1934, p. 12; 6 February 1935, p. 5; 25 March 1936, p. 10; 23 February 1939, p. 15.
84. H. Seelheim, "Festreden des deutschen Konsuls auf dem deutschen Tag in Winnipeg," 12 July 1933, pp. 11, 14.
85. G.G. Wiens, 2 August 1933, p. 6.
86. The suppression of some writings by Walter Quiring, and all of J.J. Hildebrand's after June, 1934, will be discussed below.
87. Heinrich Schroeder, "Entwurf fuer die Begrueundung einer Erbhofsiedlung," 12 September 1934, p. 3. Other examples of Schroeder's many contributions include: "Hakenkreuz und Kreuz Christi," 15 February 1933, p. 11; 5 September 1934, p. 5; 3 June 1936, pp. 2-4.
88. For more on the Volkish "Germanic Utopias" see George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), chapter 6. The sense of community and ideological mission and purity were some of the parallels between these two very different movements.
89. Ein Beobachter, "Zu dem Schroederischen Projekt einer Erbhofsiedlung," 3 October 1934, p. 3; Isaak Warkentin, "Etliche Bemerkungen," 17 October 1934, pp. 5-6; J.A. Wiebe, "Was soll das bedeuten?," 12 August 1936, pp. 1-2;
90. Frau M. Klassen, 17 October 1934, p. 6; 31 October 1934, p. 12.

91. B. Schellenberg, "Zur Judenfrage", 25 October 1933, pp. 2-3; Walter Quiring, "Zur Judenfrage," 5 June 1935, pp. 4-5; C. Martens, "Die Ungerechtigkeit wird ueberhand nehmen," 23 October 1935, p. 10.
92. Examples in addition to the three given in note 91 above are: C. Martens, "Meine Beobachtungen," 20 September 1933, pp. 6-7; A. Kroeker, "Bolschewismus und Judentum," 4 October 1933, pp. 3-4; J.J. Janzen, "Russland auf dem Wege zum National-Sozialismus?", 18 October 1933, p. 13; P. Heinrichs, "Frei-mauertum und Abbruestung," 6 December 1933, p. 4. Dr. Dinter, "Deutsche Volks-kirche," 1 May 1935, p. 8. There were also some defenses of Jews printed, but most were rather apologetic, and framed largely in terms of biblical understandings: "Etwas zur Judenfrage," 5 July 1933, p. 7; "Die Stellung des Christen zur Judenfrage," 12 July 1933, pp. 2-3; 26 July 1933, p. 2.
93. B. Schellenberg, "Zur Judenfrage", 25 October 1933, pp. 2-3; A. Kroeker, "Zum Judenproblem", 14 March 1934, pp. 2-3.
94. "Daemonismus--eine Weltgefahr!", 19 September 1934, p. 4.
95. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea, p. 104. Lita Rose Betcherman, The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975), p. 74.
96. B.B. Janz, "Vorlaeufige Antwort zur 'Judenfrage'", 5 June 1935, p. 5.
97. B. Warkentin, "Der National-Sozialismus in mennonitischer Beleuchtung," 1 May 1935, p. 8.
98. J. John Friesen, "Randglossen Deutschtum," 26 August 1936, pp. 1-2.
99. John B. Toews, Czars, Soviets and Mennonites (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1982), p. 74.
100. Dieter Goetz Lichdi, Mennoniten im Dritten Reich: Dokumentation und Deutung (Heilbronn: Gustav Hoelbe GmbH & Co., 1977), pp. 61, 69, 140-41.
101. B.H. Unruh, "Grundsaeetzliche Fragen," 16 October 1935, pp. 2-3. Unruh was even caught by a discerning Der Bote reader changing the biblical text to suit his interpretation. "Bitte um Aufklaerung," Der Bote, 6 November 1935, p. 3.
102. B.H. Unruh, "Grundsaeetzliche Fragen," 29 April 1936, p. 9.
103. B.H. Unruh, "Grundsaeetzliche Fragen," 16 September 1936, pp. 1-2.
104. B.H. Unruh, "Grundsaeetzliche Fragen," 14 August 1935, p. 4; Ibid, 21 August 1935, p. 4.
105. B.H. Unruh, "Grundsaeetzliche Fragen," 21 August 1935, p. 4.

106. Gerhard Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study of the Mennonites in Paraguay" (M.A. thesis, California State University, Fresno, 1974), p. 151.
107. N.J. Neufeld, "Unsere Rueckreise von Europa nach Amerika," 18 November 1936, p. 13.
108. B.H. Unruh, "Grundsatzliche Fragen", 25 March 1936, pp. 2-3; Ibid., 16 September 1936, pp. 1-2.
109. 15 January 1936, p. 1; Herb Brandt confirms the respect and standing which Unruh commanded. Interview with Herb Brandt, Mennonite Brethren pastor and Conference leader, Kelowna, B.C., 3 June and 19 December, 1989.
110. A.G.C., "Friedrich Friesen," 24 June 1936, p. 3.
111. Prof. Heyck, "Geschichtsstudium: Die alten deutschen Staemme," 11 November 1936, p. 12.
112. G.W.C., "Die Teilnahme der Friesen and den Kreuzzuegen," 9 September 1936, p. 12.
113. e.g. 11 July 1934, p. 12; "Was will Deutschland," 1 May 1935, pp. 12-13;
114. "Hitler als Mensch," 2 May 1934, pp. 5-6; "Begegnung mit Hitler," 29 April 1936, p. 10.
115. 25 July 1934, p. 12.
116. B.B. Janz remarks on the inability of Mennonites in the Molotschna to work together with the Germans of the neighboring German volost of Prischib, in Russia, and that there was almost no intermarriage between the two communities. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin," 10 April 1935, pp. 2-3. See also H.A. Peters, "Das mennonitische Volkstum: Eine Skizze seiner Entstehung und des Verfalles," Der Bote, 8 December 1964, pp. 10-11.
117. 22 March 1933, p. 4.
118. 15 August 1934, pp. 2-6.
119. 8 August 1934, p. 3.
120. "Der Tag der nationalen Arbeit," 8 May 1935, p. 7.
121. e.g. 14 November 1934, p. 8; 13 March 1935, p. 6.
122. e.g. 3 January 1934, p. 11; 24 January 1934, p. 12.
123. 6 December 1933, p. 16.

124. 10 January 1934, p. 5.
125. Betcherman, The Swastika and the Maple Leaf, p. 73.
126. Titles included "Deutschland Erwacht" and "Tag der nationalen Arbeit". 19 September 1934, pp. 7, 15.
127. e.g. 24 June 1936, p. 13.
128. 4 December 1935, p. 6; 8 January 1936, p. 11.
129. 26 February 1936, p. 12; 18 March 1936, p. 10.
130. J. Kroeker, "Kulturbestrebungen", 15 May 1935, p. 3.
131. An example of Schroeder's work is "Zur Abstammung der Russland-Friesen," 22 July 1936, p. 5; For Unruh, see his article series beginning May 29, 1935, entitled "Vorfragen"; See also his book, Die niederlaendisch-niederdeutschen Hintergruende der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen, (Karlsruhe, 1955).
132. Walter Quiring, "Hollaenderei als Lebensretter?" Der Bote, 31 July 1935, pp. 2-3.
133. H. Kornelsen, "Es war doch anders," 8 April 1936, pp. 4-7; "Zum Artikel 'Es war doch anders'," 29 April 1936, p. 13.
134. H.H. Enns, "Die gegenwaertige Weltlage," 8 March 1933, p. 3.
135. Abraham Neufeld, 11 October 1933, p. 5; J.G. Thiessen, "Weltfriede?", 24 January 1934, pp. 2-3.
136. Isaak Ediger, "Die Aufgabe der Boten des Evangeliums in den Noeten der Gegenwart," 6 June 1934, p. 4.
137. Cornelius Krahn, "Des deutschen Volkes Eigenkraft, sich seinen Heiland selber schafft," 19 April 1933, p. 13.
138. "Sind wir dem Namen oder dem Herzen nach Buerger Canadas geworden?" 6 December 1933, pp. 2-3.
139. H Toews, 31 January 1934, p. 3.
140. J.J. Hildebrand, "Notwendige Warnung," 4 April 1934, p. 5.
141. For an excellent account of Janz's life see John B. Toews, With Courage to Spare: The Life of B.B. Janz, (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1978).
142. B.B. Janz, "Die Herkunft der Mennoniten Russlands," 26 December 1934, pp. 1-2.

143. For Schroeder's comments, see 5 December 1934, p. 6.
144. B.B. Janz, "Kommt Menno Simonis unter die National-sozialisten?", 26 December 1934, pp. 2-3.
145. John Horsch, "Menno Simonis ueber die Gottheit Christi," 9 January 1935, p. 4.
146. Isaak Toews, 23 January 1935, p. 6.
147. "Wehrlosigkeit," 30 January 1935, pp. 2-3; P.P. Epp, "Wehrlosigkeit noch einmal," 27 February 1935, pp. 3-4.
148. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin: Streiflichter auf die mennonitischen Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft," 3 April 1935, p. 2.
149. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 3 April 1935, p. 2; Ibid., 17 April 1935, p. 17.
150. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 10 April 1935, p. 3.
151. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 10 April 1935, p. 3.
152. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 24 April 1935, p. 3.
153. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 17 April 1935, p. 17; Ibid., 24 April 1935, p. 3; Ibid., 1 May 1935, p. 2.
154. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 15 May 1935, p. 3.
155. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 1 May 1935, p. 2; Ibid., 8 May 1935, p. 3.
156. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 8 May 1935, p. 3; Also Ibid., 1 May 1935, p. 2.
157. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 15 May 1935, p. 3.
158. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 24 April 1935, pp. 2-3.
159. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 8 May 1935, p. 3.
160. B.B. Janz, "Woher und Wohin", 8 May 1935, p. 3; Ibid., 22 May 1935, p. 3.
161. "Eine Ehrenschild," 10 June 1936, p. 6.
162. "Leiden des deutschen Schulmeisters," 12 June 1935, pp. 2-3.
163. Letter to D.H. Epp of April 7, 1935. B.B. Janz collection, CMBS Winnipeg, Box 7 Folder 97.

164. Walter Quiring, "Hollaenderei als Lebensretter?", Der Bote, 31 July 1935, pp. 2-3.
165. Letter of May 7, 1935. B.B. Janz Collection, CMBS Winnipeg, Box 6 Folder 95.
166. Abraham Kroeker, "Wie stehen wir zu der deutschen u. englischen Sprache?", 22 May 1935, p. 5; "Unser Vaeter Glaube oder National-Sozialismus," 13 May 1936, p. 6.
167. A.A. Toews, "Was koennen wir tun fuer die religioese resp. christliche Erziehung unserer Kinder, unserer Jugend?", 14 November 1934, p. 5.
168. "Die neue Heimat," 11 March 1936, pp. 6-7.
169. H. Thiessen, "Unser Kampf," 8 November 1933, p. 5.
170. See Epp, Mennonite Exodus, p. 319ff. Practically all Russlaender became citizens within five years of their arrival in Canada.
171. Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), p. 242ff. See Introduction; Chapter One note 4; and Chapter Three for more on this. J.B. Toews, a prominent Brethren pastor, leader, and educator who lived through most of the events dealt with in this paper, feels that it was the rapid transition from German to English which was at the root of the often strong Germanist sentiments in Canada. "There was a great difference" between language transition periods of the earlier and later immigrants. Interview with J.B. Toews, Brethren educator and leader, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 10 June 1989.
172. Interview with Herb Brandt; Interview with J.B. Toews.
173. B. Warkentin, "Mennoniten und Verbrechen," 22 February 1933, pp. 2-3.
174. "Zu, De goadi oli Tied," 4 July 1934, pp. 3-4.
175. "Ungesundes in der modernen Evangelisationspraxis," 1 May 1935, p. 4.
176. F.C. Thiessen, "Offener Brief," 12 September 1934, p. 5.
177. 1 March 1933, p. 3.
178. 22 July 1936, p. 3; 18 November 1936, p. 7.
179. Examples of consciousness of this crisis appearing in the Rundschau include: 30 May 1934, p. 7; J.J. Hildebrand, 29 March 1933, p. 4; H. Janzen, "Deutscher Abend in Neu-Hamburg, Ontario," 25 March 1936, p. 9.

180. Johann D. Jantzen, "Die deutsche Sprache, ihre Erhaltung und Pflege," 19 July 1939, p. 3.

181. J.W. Neufeld, "Schulen und Schulgesetze in B.C.," 9 May 1934, p. 5. In 1939 the B.C. contingent to the Canadian Brethren Conference reported a strong "English-nationalistic current" in the schools, and no way of counteracting it, since teachers of non-English nationality weren't allowed to teach. 1939 Mennonite Brethren Northern District Conference Yearbook (Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House) pp. 34-35.

182. J.P. Classen, "Wehrlos," 9 August 1939, pp. 4-5.

183. G. Lohrenz, "Die Wichtigkeit der Sonntag-Schularbeit," 8 November 1939, p. 4.

184. In response to the series, a schoolteacher concluded: "Alright then, learn two languages--that should and must remain our solution." "Leiden des deutschen Schulmeisters," 25 June 1935, pp. 2-3.

185. J.J. Hildebrand, 19 April 1933, p. 12.

186. Jak. Thiessen, "Sind wir Mennoniten einander entfremdet?," 17 July 1935, pp. 4-5.

187. J.B.W., 26 April 1933, p. 4; J.C., 10 May 1933, p. 1; "Nachtrag zum Plautdietsch," 25 July 1934, pp. 4-5.

188. "Deutscher Geist in Chaco," 29 April 1936, p. 7.

189. J.P. Klassen, "Tag der nationalen Arbeit," 8 May 1935, p. 7.

190. B.W., "Analyse zum mennonitischen Problem," 4 April 1934, p. 2.

191. B. Warkentin and J.J. Hildebrand, "Mennostaat", 29 March 1933, pp. 4-6; J.J. Hildebrand, 28 February 1934, pp. 4-5.

192. J.J. Hildebrand, "Unser Problem," 21 June 1933, pp. 2-3; Ibid., "Vereinigung des Mennonitentums," 30 May 1934, pp. 4-5.

193. "Die mennonitische Predigerversammlung," 20 June 1934, pp. 4-5.

194. J.B.W., 26 April 1933, p. 4; 23 May 1934, p. 6. This person thought others supported Hildebrand as well; 30 May 1934, p. 7; L.M., "Zu, De goadi oli Tied," 4 July 1934, pp. 3-4.

195. R.C. Sauer, 3 May 1933, p. 11; Jac. Thiessen, "Ueber die Einheit der Mennoniten," 10 October 1934, p. 3.

196. J.P. Dyck, 30 October 1935, pp. 5-7.

197. G. Lohrenz, 22 February 1933, p. 3.

198. 10 May 1933, pp. 3-5.
199. 10 May 1933, p. 11; C.F. Klassen, "Eine Bitte," 2 May 1934, p. 7.
200. 30 May 1934, p. 4.
201. Jac. Thiessen, "Wir Mennoniten," 26 April 1933, pp. 1-2; 10 May 1933, pp. 12-13; J.W. Neufeld, "Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Mennoniten," 6 June 1934, p. 3.
202. See Chapter Five.
203. C.F. Klassen, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," Der Bote, 19 April 1933, p. 2.
204. C.F. Klassen, "Das war gut," 5 April 1939, p. 7.
205. David Toews, "Unsere Probleme fuer 1935," 16 January 1935, p. 5.
206. David Toews, "Einige Reiseeindruecke," 30 September 1936, pp. 5-6.
207. e.g. J.H. Janzen, 23 August 1933; Ibid., "Deutsches," 23 February 1939, p. 7.
208. F.C. Thiessen, "Offener Brief," 12 September 1934, pp. 5-6; "Deutsches Konzert," 12 April 1936, pp. 6-7.
209. e.g. 1 March 1933, p. 3; G.G.K., 4 December 1935, pp. 10-11.
210. C.H. Friesen, "Haltet fest an der Muttersprache!," 1 August 1934, p. 2; "Auf dem Wege der Pflicht," 6 November 1935, pp. 6-7; H. Janzen, "Deutscher Abend," 25 March 1936, p. 9.
211. J.J. Klassen, 28 August 1935, p. 4.
212. An example of an explicit connection made between the retention of Mennonite distinctives like nonresistance, and Germanism, is a speech given by D.J. Duerksen at the B.C. Provincial Immigrant Assembly in 1935. D.J. Duerksen, "Protokoll," 9 January 1935, p. 9; Ibid., 16 January 1935, p. 9.
213. B.B. Janz, "Bin ich National-sozialist? Bewahre!," 11 January 1939, p.4.
214. J.P. Classen, "Gedanken ueber Gemeindebau," 24 May 1939, p. 9.
215. J.P. Dyck, "Was ich bin," 1 March 1939, p. 12.
216. C. Martens, 28 June 1939, p. 12; J.J. Kroeker, "Nackte Wirklichkeit," 26 April 1939, p. 3.
217. 10 May 1939, pp. 12-13; 17 May 1939, pp. 12-13; 24 May 1939, pp. 10-13.

218. Johann D. Jantzen, "Die deutsche Sprache, ihre Erhaltung und Pflege," 19 July 1939, p. 3. Speech given at the B.C. Provincial Immigrant Assembly.
219. "Stecke dein Schwert in die Scheide," 15 February 1939, p. 4; C.H. Friesen, "Die Wehrlosigkeitsprinzip," 12 July 1939, p. 2; J.J. Koop, "Zu dem Artikel 'Wehrlos'," 30 August 1939, pp. 9-10.
220. These items filled the Rundschau from 17 May 1939 through 14 June 1939.
221. 6 September 1939, p. 7.
222. "Eine Aufforderung," 20 September 1939, p. 1.
223. P.P.H. "Es interessiert mich," 15 March 1939, p. 7.

CHAPTER THREE

Some Comparisons: Germanism in Der Bote and in
Other Settings during the 1930's

In this chapter a brief look at the other major immigrant newspaper, Der Bote, will be followed by an analysis of the response of Mennonites in other countries to National Socialism. The German Catholics residing in St. Peter's Colony in Saskatchewan will also be examined as a further point of comparison.

Der Immigranten-Bote began publication in 1924, its name being shortened to Der Bote in 1925. This was primarily a Russian Mennonite immigrant newspaper, sponsored initially by the Central Mennonite Immigrant Committee in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, where a number of Russlaender had settled.¹ The editor, D.H. Epp, was a former "Zentralschule" (Russian Mennonite secondary school) teacher and a General Conference Mennonite. The paper, while aimed at all the Russian immigrants, appealed more to General Conference Mennonites, eventually becoming the official GC organ in 1947.² The intention of the paper was to serve specific immigrant interests and bind the scattered remnants of the Russian colonies closer together.³

Frank H. Epp undertook a quantitative analysis of Germanism content in Der Bote for the 1930's, and found that over five percent of all published space was devoted to Germanism, with 83% favourable and 17% unfavourable. He classified Germanist contributions in terms of political, cultural and ethnic subject matter, finding that 54% of Germanist writings dealt with political subjects, 29% was culturally oriented, and 17% dealt with ethnicity.⁴ Of the political Germanism, Epp found that 71% was favourable in some way toward German political events, while the balance was unfavourable.⁵ The cultural

content was almost completely pro-German, while the ethnic segments were 92% pro, and 8% con. The majority of space devoted to cultural Germanism was concerned with preservation of the language, a "missionary zeal" often being evident.⁶ The importance of the German language for Mennonite religious identity is indicated by the fact that 38% of all references to the language used the phrase "German and religion".⁷ In a word, the German-language question was seen by many as a basic existential dilemma for Mennonites.⁸

Of the 29% unfavourable political content, 26% was contained in two article series, according to Epp. That the opposition was so narrowly-based seems questionable, and in either case was at least partly due to D.H. Epp's editorial policy (discussed below). Frank Epp notes that critics of political Germanism seemed to feel "uneasy" about what they were doing, often making concessions of one type or another to their opponents. On the other hand there were, like in the Rundschau, defenses of nonresistance, and injunctions for Mennonites to stay out of politics and be loyal Canadian citizens.⁹

Epp counted reprints from 15 German-language periodicals in Der Bote, and contributions from 21 non-Mennonite, ethnic Germans, including Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. Many of the press releases for German-oriented events in Canada came from the German League, while Bernard Bott, chairman of the German-Canadian Central Committee and editor of Deutsche Zeitung fuer Kanada, contributed much on cultural Germanism. The German Consul Seelheim also contributed articles.¹⁰

Interestingly, 26% of all Mennonite contributions espousing Germanism came from two individuals living in Germany, B.H. Unruh and Walter Quiring.¹¹ Although my study of the Rundschau was not quantitative, the combination of

Unruh and Heinrich Schroeder assumed a similar proportion of pro-Germanist content in that periodical. Schroeder also printed a number of articles in Der Bote, if not as many as in the Rundschau.¹² Epp concludes that

The immigrant newspaper was a fairly representative reflection of the Mennonite immigrant mind, which in the 1930's was very strong on nurturing and preserving cultural Germanism as essential to the Mennonite way of life, strong...in its identification with (ethnic) Germanism, and though ambivalent on the question by and large also sympathetic to the political Germanism of the Third Reich.¹³

While Epp's analysis is informative and his conclusion seems generally correct, his quantitative method yields partial understanding at best, and skews the picture at worst.¹⁴ A brief interpretive look at the Germanist discussions taking place during 1934-35 will help to put Epp's results into better perspective.

A central feature distinguishing Der Bote from the Rundschau during the 1930's is that Walter Quiring tended to dominate its pages, openly challenging Mennonite principles like nonresistance,¹⁵ espousing Volkish and National Socialist ideals,¹⁶ and viciously attacking anyone who disagreed with him.¹⁷ Quiring argued that Mennonites were not a separate Volk, rather they were a segment of the German Volk with a particular religious perspective. Mennonites, he felt, were missing the chance of their lives by not actively taking part in the great rebirth of the German nation; they were surely going to lose their "Deutschtum", their religion, and their identity as Mennonites because of this neglect.¹⁸

Of Russian Mennonite origin, Quiring had migrated to Germany, receiving his doctorate in Munich in 1927. Besides teaching German history and geography, he wrote books on Mennonite settlements in South America and worked with the DAI (German Foreign Insititute--an organization which came under Nazi control and which distributed primarily cultural propaganda to

Germans in foreign countries). He eventually served as a soldier in the German army, becoming highly decorated and rising to the rank of Lieutenant in the Nazi Propaganda Corps.¹⁹ Epp counts 45 separate entries by Quiring in Der Bote during the 1930's, which works out to about one article for every ten issues published throughout the decade.²⁰

While at least one other individual besides Heinrich Schroeder challenged nonresistance,²¹ there was a significant negative response to Quiring and his ideas, in contradiction to the impression given by Epp's analysis. For one thing, at least two individuals protested, during the heated debates of 1934-35, that Quiring's views were not the least bit representative for North American Mennonites.²² Two others implored Canadian Mennonite leaders to join the debate: important issues were being discussed primarily by "outsiders".²³ Another contributor stated that "I and many others would appreciate it if Dr. Quiring would keep his ideas to himself."²⁴ One person took issue with Quiring's Germanism, arguing that it was "worldly" and thus different than true Mennonitism,²⁵ and B.B. Janz openly challenged Quiring's "fanatical, one-sided and scornful attitude."²⁶ Privately, Quiring made contact with Janz and acknowledged Janz's leading position among Mennonites. He argued that Mennonites, now scattered all over the world, were safer from unhealthy influences if they rooted themselves in their German "Volkstum". Janz replied that Mennonites needed to be rooted in the Gospel.²⁷

Jacob H. Janzen, prominent GC leader and Germanist himself, first gently upbraided Quiring for his National Socialist views,²⁸ but eventually became frustrated and answered Schroeder and Quiring's diatribes with one of his own. He made a strong distinction between cultural and political Germanism, asserting that Mennonites were cultural Germans only. As well, "We all

firmly believe that Hitler is the right man for Germany, but we are becoming troubled by the way people are divinizing him." Further, Nazism was a violent movement which appealed to mass instincts; and behind Quiring's writings stood the "Nazi-fist" challenging the reader to disagree with him.²⁹ Other contributors made the same distinction between political and cultural Germanism, and between wishing Germany well and bowing down to the altar of National Socialism.³⁰

Finally, it should be noted that other prominent Mennonites like the historian Cornelius Krahn and eastern Old Mennonite leader John Horsch joined the many voices rejecting militant Germanism and the renunciation of nonresistance.³¹ Most of the individuals writing in favour of nonresistance in 1934-35 did it in the context of the fierce Germanism debates then taking place, which were instigated primarily by Quiring, and thus were responding negatively to the militant Germanism advanced by Quiring, whether it was mentioned or not. This is not to say that defenses of the principle had no relevance to the Canadian context, i.e. to young Mennonite men joining the Canadian army in the event of war. Nor should the depth of pro-Germanist feeling be underestimated. It must be asserted, however, that there was a significant negative reaction to some of the more militant views coming out of Nazi Germany.

Der Bote editor D.H. Epp was partly responsible for the ambivalent tenor of the paper on these questions. He printed two of B.B. Janz's early rebuttals of the militant Germanists,³² but balked at running the "Wherefrom and Whereto" series. He was uncomfortable with the early sections, which were critical of the Third Reich, militant Germanism, and attempts to make Mennonites into racial Germans. His main argument was that such utterances

would impair the chances of German financial aid for the Paraguayan colonies, in the same way that the Mennonite renunciation of German roots in the First World War period had hindered B.H. Unruh's attempts to canvas support among Germans for the refugees who had gathered in Moscow in 1929. Epp also expressed unease at the prospect of the series appearing in the Rundschau.³³ When Janz angrily demanded the article back, Epp gave further indication of the source of his hesitancy: "If I defend Germanism, it's because I am utterly convinced that we are Germans, not Dutch, and I myself am a German." He himself supported the principle of nonresistance, but had allowed it to be debated along with Germanism in Der Bote to see where the congregations stood. "You would be amazed, if you were to read all the private letters I receive on these two themes. You don't get off easy." The "Wherefrom and Whereto" series, then running in the Rundschau, had also brought a number of letters: "Up to now I haven't received one positive response."³⁴

While this may have been the immediate case, in general the evidence suggests that Epp's personal inclinations and the friction with Janz may have clouded his view of the larger Canadian Mennonite picture. Janz was not the only Brethren denied a reply to Quiring and Schroeder. In a lengthy article appearing in the Rundschau in April of 1936, a Brethren from Coaldale, Alberta complained bitterly that Der Bote "had made it clear from the beginning" that it wouldn't publish replies to certain articles by Quiring and Schroeder, and thus he had been forced to reply in the Rundschau to articles printed in Der Bote. Amidst various critiques and historical corrections, the writer blasted "those gentlemen from afar" for recommending Mennonites give up their principles and Dutch heritage: "No, gentlemen, our foundation is Christ and only Christ--and not Deutschtum, not Myths (let's

say paganism)."35

D.H. Epp's personal story, which is also the story of many others, helps to put his ambivalence into perspective. He had learned to love German literature as a student in Russia, and had participated in the cultural and intellectual "Aufschwung" (upswing) which took place in the Mennonite colonies after 1895, as a well-respected teacher in the Chortitza Zentralschule. He taught, among other things, German and Russian, and experienced the excesses wrought in the name of "freedom, equality and brotherliness" by the "uneducated" Russian peasantry during the Bolshevik Revolution.³⁶ Although he found it very hard to leave the remnants of the Russian Mennonite idyll, he simply could no longer accept the Russian nation and people. Once in Rosthern, Epp started the newspaper not only as a way to make a living, but also to bind Mennonites together and retain the German language "at all costs", since "so many of the cultural goods brought along from Russia were intimately linked" to it.³⁷ His faith was the "holiest" of goods he brought with him, and thus was also linked to his German past.³⁸ Epp was active in the Central Mennonite Immigrant Committee's "Cultural Section", and remained widely respected and loved as the teacher of many of the leading Russian Mennonite men.³⁹ Epp's love for German culture, his positive experience in the Russian colonies and his affection for his people combined to shape his attitude of intolerance toward those who challenged Germanism.

Epp's strong position on the Germanism question was born out of a strong sense of loss, which was shared by other Mennonite intellectuals. Students of Russian-Mennonite literature have shown that the experience of loss and homelessness connected with the Bolshevik Revolution was the impetus for the

emergence of the genre after the First World War, and gave it its character and unity. Some of the writers expressed pro-German views of one sort or another (e.g. Arnold Dyck, Jacob H. Janzen, Fritz Senn), and this has been seen as part of the longing for a homeland.⁴⁰ Some writers even travelled to Germany, either before or after the Second World War, but none found their homeland there, further confirming the notion that German nationalism was never really an "option" for Canadian Mennonites.⁴¹

In a study of the American Mennonite encounter with National Socialism, John Thiesen concluded that there is "little evidence" that American Mennonites were attracted to the movement in any substantial way.⁴² There was, however, debate on the issue in both General Conference periodicals, the Christlicher Bundesbote and The Mennonite. The Bundesbote, which served Russian Mennonite immigrants from the 1870's migration, expressed pro-Nazi leanings until 1937 when the editor became critical of Nazi treatment of Jews and the Confessing Church. At about this time the English-language The Mennonite turned from a critical to an approving stance toward the Nazi regime, due to a new editor who was the "foremost Nazi sympathizer among Kansas Mennonites."⁴³ The Christian fundamentalist Gerald Winrod, known as an anti-semite and Nazi sympathizer through his virulent publication The Defender, was widely supported by mid-western Russian Mennonites (1870's migration). In general, American-born Mennonites were critical of Nazism, while foreign-born individuals were more positive, especially if they had some connection to the Russian settlement and its tribulations in the First World War period and after.

The Mennonites who migrated to Paraguay in 1929-31 expressed the strongest pro-Nazism and -Germanism of all Russian Mennonite emigrants. The

majority of these individuals, who settled primarily in the Fernheim and Friesland colonies, embraced National Socialism in one way or another before 1939.⁴⁴ A total of 188 of Fernheim's approximately 2000 inhabitants⁴⁵ signed petitions for German citizenship and patriation; given the fact that most of these individuals were heads of the typically large Mennonite households, it seems clear that a significant proportion of the colonists, perhaps a majority, seriously considered migration to Germany.⁴⁶ Hitler's picture was posted in the colony's main hall, and the high-school came under the influence of ardent Nazi sympathizers. A number of "the most able personalities of the colony" were behind the Volkish movement, as the spirit of National Socialism inspired the colony economically, socially, and culturally.⁴⁷

The movement appears to have been limited to Mennonites from Russia, and did not significantly penetrate the Menno colony, which was begun by conservative Mennonites fleeing Canadianization of the schools in the early 1920's. The Volkish movement in Fernheim was part and parcel of the flight from communism, the German nation's "rescue" and resettlement aid, and thus the grounding of the colony itself. Hard pioneer conditions and the longing for national and cultural security in the empty Paraguayan Chaco contributed to the identification with Nazi Germany.⁴⁸ The great success of the Nazi movement in Germany, its appeal to Mennonites' Christian and communal sensibilities, and the political naivete of the unsuspecting Mennonites further added to the wholesale acceptance of National Socialist ideals.⁴⁹ The young people, especially, seem to have been captured by the idealism of the movement, embodied in the person of Fritz Kliewer, a highly capable high-school teacher and leader of the colony's Volkish movement.⁵⁰

Kliewer, who was a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church until 1947, clearly felt that Mennonite "confessional barriers" hindered fellow-feeling for other "Volks-Germans".⁵¹ Evidence indicates that opposition to the Volkish movement in Fernheim came primarily from the Brethren, and that Kliewer's activities brought about sharp divisions among the Fernheim Brethren.⁵² Opposition to the movement began to emerge around 1935, and was centred on the desire to retain the principle of nonresistance.⁵³ It remained small until 1939; thereafter, although the war sparked great expectation and excitement, the opposition grew, and by 1944 there were open divisions in the colony, with the leaders of the Volkish movement being eventually forced out of the colony, in a rather ugly incident.⁵⁴

The foregoing is a striking example of the potential extent of Russian Mennonite immigrant involvement in the Nazi movement, given the right conditions. That they emigrated from Russia under conditions of extreme duress, and were aided by Germany in the migration and resettlement, were crucial elements in their fervor for Nazi Germany. Individuals from this migration who were allowed into Canada evidenced the same degree of support for Hitler and the "new Germany".⁵⁵ The total isolation and extremely difficult conditions in the early years coincided with Germany's meteoric recovery under Hitler, and were also key factors in the wholesale appropriation of the Volkish ideology by the settlers. Fritz Kliewer himself emphasized the hardships and impending disintegration of the colonies in a 1937 article;⁵⁶ the Nazi-Volkish movement, as it did to a lesser degree in Canada, became a glue which helped to bind Mennonites together and inspire them toward achieving their goals of survival and the perpetuation of their way of life as an ethno-religious Volk. When this movement threatened the

doctrinal integrity of the group, i.e. the principle of nonresistance, there was a negative reaction which eventuated the rejection of the imported ideology. Thus the Paraguayan experience paralleled the Canadian one in most respects, if in a much more extreme and thoroughgoing manner.

That Paraguayan Mennonites seriously considered migration to Germany does not mean that they wanted to give up their status as Mennonites. The desire to go to Germany must be seen as a direct response to the difficult conditions in Paraguay and the perceived affinities between the "new Germany" and Mennonitism. Heinrich Schroeder's idea of a Nazi-Mennonite colony in Germany ("Friesenheil"--see Chapter Two) indicates that even the most extreme proponents of Nazism felt that Mennonites belonged together. In outlining the hardships facing the Paraguayan colonists, Fritz Kliewer wrote: "At times it seemed as though the entire colony would break up, but ever and again the strong sense of solidarity saved the colony from the danger threatened by the centrifugal forces."⁵⁷ Thus even though Kliewer, who had drunk deeply at the well of National Socialism while studying in Germany, and who felt that Mennonites had much in common with other Volks-Germans, saw Mennonite "solidarity" as a positive good which helped to prevent the "danger" of the breakup of the colonies.

In a recent study of Mennonites living in Germany during the Third Reich, James Lichti found that although there was general support for Hitler and National Socialism, loyalty to the state was not unconditional, and prominent Mennonites distanced themselves from the "German-Christian" movement, with its extreme racism. The German Mennonites had previously given up the principle of nonresistance, and had essentially lost the more distinctive aspects of their identity. Support for the Third Reich was tempered by an

insistence upon Mennonite institutional independence, on the other hand, which was a carryover from their more sectarian past. Anti-Bolshevism was a strong source of support for National Socialism, as German Mennonites identified with their Russian cousins and feared a communist takeover of Germany.⁵⁸ Hitler's agrarian reforms were also well-received by the primarily land-based Mennonites: one individual remembers a special church service held to thank God for sending Hitler, in which a formation of SA (Nazi storm-troopers) paraded into the church in full uniform and carrying banners, along with a detachment of Hitler Youth.⁵⁹ There seems to have been significant Nazi-party membership among some Mennonites.⁶⁰

Lichti concludes that the German Mennonite response to Nazism was not so much due to the abandonment of principles such as nonresistance, as to the more general process of assimilation and the appropriation of mainstream German religious and social values.⁶¹ Clearly, the abandonment of the principle of nonresistance would have been a part of this dialectical process. Others have argued persuasively that acceptance by Mennonites of military service after the Franco-Prussian War "represented a basic reorientation of values" which left little basis for a critical stance toward National Socialism.⁶²

In a cursory comparison of the Mennonitische Rundschau to the German-Mennonite Gemeindeblatt, Lothar Fromm found that the German periodical exhibited a more cautious and "evangelical" attitude toward Nazism than did the Rundschau. This may have been due in part to the firmly cautious position of the German periodical's editor, in contrast to Rundschau editor H.H. Neufeld, who Fromm feels to have exhibited a much looser, open policy.⁶³ It is significant that German Mennonites, who had largely become acculturated

if not fully assimilated into German society, expressed reservations about Nazism; with some Mennonites wholeheartedly joining its ranks, and the movement posing a threat to Mennonite institutions, it is understandable that some unease would have been present. The Canadian Mennonites differed from their German counterparts in that they had personally suffered at the hands of the communists, and they were farther away from the actual apparatus of National Socialism, affording them a vicarious participation in the movement without any of the costs. Still, the fact remains that significant opposition to militant Germanism and National Socialism did emerge in the Canadian context.

The experience of German Catholics of St. Peter's Colony in Saskatchewan provides another point of reference for Canadian Mennonite Germanism. In the first decade of this century, German Catholics from the United States settled in an area east of Saskatoon which comprised 50 townships, under the guidance of Benedictine priests from Minnesota. St. Peter's Colony was "the most solidly closed German Catholic community" in Canada.⁶⁴ Many of these settlers had originated in Russia, and they joined other Russian-Germans who had been migrating to the Canadian prairies from the 1880's onward.⁶⁵ The German Catholics who had resided in the United States had been part of a larger midwestern German Catholic community that had developed a sense of the importance of the German identity in preserving Catholicism.⁶⁶ The original purpose of the migration, besides the quest for land, had been to form a homogeneous community which would protect against loss of the traditional language and religion.⁶⁷ In Russia, on the other hand, the German culture and identity had been in decline among Lutheran and Catholic colonists there.⁶⁸

By the early 1930's, the colony counted over 11,000 inhabitants, in a community structure which differed little from the prevailing prairie pattern of scattered homesteads.⁶⁹ During this decade the colony's periodical, the St. Peter's Bote, expressed anti-Nazi sentiments. This was largely due to concern over Hitler's treatment of Catholics in Germany, and of the religious challenge represented by the "new heathenism" of the Volkish movement.⁷⁰ The colony had been declared an "abbacy nullius" in 1921, receiving status as a Bishopric directly responsible to the pope. Thus any incipient German nationalism was tempered by a direct relationship with the Pope, and a long sojourn outside of Germany.⁷¹ Less than 10,000 Russian-Germans migrated to the prairies during the 1920's, and they tended to scatter and urbanize, having little effect on the overall shape of communities like St. Peter's.⁷²

Prior to the First World War, the colony had boasted the strongest concentration of private German schools among German Canadians. After the war, most such schools were eventually dissolved, and English-language public schools were "peacefully accepted".⁷³ C.A. Dawson concluded in the 1930's that these German Catholics were "far more tolerant" towards English culture than the Mennonites;⁷⁴ the general consensus among scholars is that they were fairly individualistic, and became acculturated and assimilated to Canadian society quite rapidly.⁷⁵ In a comparative study, Alan Anderson found that German Catholics were the least conservative, in terms of ethnic identity, of nine ethnic groups who had settled in Saskatchewan.⁷⁶ There was a resurgence of German cultural activities in the interwar period, but these were generally weak and ineffective. While the religious leaders were initially the main proponents of the German language, within one generation they had become the strongest supporters of the adoption of English.⁷⁷

The Russian Mennonites had always displayed superior organization, efficiency and sense of common purpose than their German-speaking neighbors, evident most clearly in the fact that they led the way out of Russia in both the 1870's and 1920's.⁷⁸ Their biblicist faith, and ongoing attempts to become a "true people of God", had given rise to a cohesive, particularistic community with both ethnic and religious sanctions for perpetuating its way of life. The sudden breakup of the highly successful and integrated Russian community, coupled with the lack of a genuinely universalistic church orientation, such as Catholics have, laid Mennonites wide open to expanding their concept of group identity beyond language and culture to include nationalistic and racialist-Volkish aspects.

It has been the essential argument of the foregoing chapters that all these forms of identification had more to do with the specific Russian Mennonite experience, and the perpetuation of Russian Mennonite identity, than with the aims and ideals of the Third Reich. There were clearly other factors at work, as well, including the "cognitive dissonance" created by the gap between Mennonite beliefs and the success of their persecutors, the "godless communists". The desire for a homeland to replace the one which Mennonites had just lost also contributed to pro-German feeling, since many Russlaender settling in Canada initially felt closer to Germany, for various reasons, than they did to Canada. But there was opposition to militant Germanism, and the principle of nonresistance was the most important factor in this; as such, it displays the central role of that tenet of the faith, and religious or ideological factors in general, in conditioning Mennonite identity.

The Canadian Brethren, with their pietistic and evangelistic emphases,

strong church discipline, conservative doctrinal stance, and close relationship with their American counterparts, constituted perhaps the most visible bloc of opposition to militant Germanism. The leadership of B.B. Janz was the single most important factor in this. Otherwise, they were sympathetic to many of the Volkish and Nazi currents of the 1930's. A linguistic and cultural Germanism would continue to play an important role in maintaining Brethren identity in the postwar period, as the battle to preserve the socio-religious integrity of the Brethren fellowship went on.

NOTES, CHAPTER THREE

1. Alan Anderson estimates that 3,000 of the recent immigrants settled in the Rosthern area. Alan B. Anderson, "Assimilation in the Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan: A Comparative Study of Identity Change Among Seven Ethno-Religious Groups in a Canadian Prairie Region," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 1972), p. 72.

2. Frank H. Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930's," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1965), p. 208, 310.

3. Abram Berg, Dietrich Heinrich Epp, 1875-1955, (Saskatoon: Heese House of Printing, 1973), p. 45.

4. Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism," pp. 60-62.

5. Ibid., p. 116.

6. Ibid., pp. 75, 103.

7. Ibid., p. 85.

8. Ibid., pp. 87-88.

9. Ibid., pp. 150-60.

10. Ibid., pp. 189-98.

11. Ibid., p. 224.

12. Schroeder was published at least 12 times in the Rundschau during the 1933-36 period alone; this was the total number of articles he published in Der Bote for all of the 1930's, according to Epp. Ibid., p. 220.

13. Ibid., p. 291.

14. For example, the fact that five percent of all column space was devoted to Germanism does not indicate the degree of interest with which these items were read. As well, the pro and contra statistics measure long-windedness, but not the stature of the person writing. The quantitative method is also insensitive to how certain terms in the context of a discourse may cross neat categorical boundaries, e.g. a Mennonite writing in favour of nonresistance may be rejecting political Germanism without ever mentioning it. My reading of the paper indicates a stronger rejection of political Germanism than Epp's study implies.

15. Walter Quiring, "Kampf oder Friedhofsruhe?", Der Bote, 21 November 1934, p. 2; "Bankrott der Wehrlosigkeit?", 5 December 1934, p. 2; "Wehrlosigkeit als Wuenschbild?", 20 February 1935, pp. 1-2. Hereafter, obvious references to Der Bote will not cite the newspaper's title.

16. Walter Quiring, "Der deutsche Gruss," 24 October 1934; 13 June 1934, p. 1.
17. Walter Quiring, "Im fremden Schlepptau," 5 September 1934, p. 3; "Warum Schlaegst du deinen Naechsten?", 31 October 1944, pp. 2-3.
18. Walter Quiring, "Mennonitisches 'Volk'?", 23 May 1934, p. 2.
19. Meir Buchweiler, Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine am Vorabend und Beginn des zweiten Weltkriegs--ein Fall Doppelter Loyalitaet?, (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1984), p. 93.
20. Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism," p. 220b.
21. "Wehrlosigkeit auf Kruecken," 22 August 1934, p. 2.
22. John Horsch, "Ist unsere Wehrlosigkeit preiszugeben?", 6 March 1935, p. 1; "Stumme Wacht," 26 June 1935, p. 1.
23. W.K.W., "Unsere Volkshochschule," 14 November 1934, p. 3; J. Friesen, "Widerspruch als Pflicht," 28 August 1935, pp. 2-3.
24. F., "Zur Volkshochschule," 9 January 1935, p. 4.
25. 4 July 1934, pp. 1-2.
26. B.B. Janz, "Warum schlaegst du Deinen Naechsten?", 19 September 1934, pp. 2-3.
27. Letters of January 28, 1935, and February 13, 1935. B.B. Janz Collection, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg, Box 7, Folder 97.
28. J.H. Janzen, "Ein Bekenntnis," 7 November 1934, p. 2.
29. J.H. Janzen, 30 November 1925, pp. 2-3.
30. "Zu 'Kampf oder Friedhofsruhe'", 5 December 1934, pp. 2-3; "Dem Fragesteller in Nr. 50," 2 January 1935, pp. 3-4.

31. Cornelius Krahn, "Menno Simons' Kampf fuer die Reinheit des Wortes Gottes," 20 February 1935, p. 1; Also "Noch einmal: mennonitisches Volkstum," 27 March 1935, p. 1; John Horsch, "Menno Simons ueber die Gottheit Christi," 9 January 1935, p. 1; Also, "Ist Unsere Wehrlosigkeit preiszugeben?," 6 March 1935, p. 1; Other articles defending nonresistance and either implicitly or explicitly rejecting militant Germanism include: "Um hohen Preis," 27 June 1934, pp. 2-3; "Wehrlosigkeit," 17 October 1934, p. 3; "Zu 'Kampf oder Friedhofsruhe?'," 5 December 1934, pp. 2-3; Johann Rempel, "Die Wehrlosigkeit aufgeben?," 20 March 1935, p. 1; J. Epp, "Ein mennonitisches Irrtum," 3 April 1935, p. 1; P.P. Dyck, "Wehrlosigkeit," 15 May 1935, p. 1; "Unser Deutschtum," 15 May 1935, p. 1; J.J. Klassen, "Die biblische Begrueundung der Wehrlosigkeit und ihre Durchfuehrung im Leben," 21 August 1935, p. 1.
32. B.B. Janz, "Die Herkunft der Mennoniten Russlands," 12 December 1934, pp. 1-2; Ibid., "Kommt Menno Simons unter die National-Sozialisten?," 26 December 1934, p. 1.
33. Letter of March 30, 1935. B.B. Janz Collection, CMBS Winnipeg, Box 7 Folder 97.
34. Letter of May 6, 1935. B.B. Janz Collection, CMBS Winnipeg, Box 7 Folder 97.
35. H. Kornelsen, "Es war doch anders," Mennonitische Rundschau, 8 April 1936, p. 5.
36. Berg, D.H. Epp, pp. 6-27.
37. Ibid., p. 39.
38. Ibid., p. 45.
39. Ibid., pp. 68-76.
40. Harry Loewen, "Canadian Mennonite Literature: Longing for a Lost Homeland," in Walter E. Riedel, ed., The Old World and the New: Literary Perspectives of German-speaking Canadians (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Victor Doerksen, "Post-War Developments In Canadian Mennonite Literature," unpublished paper on file at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg, Box 17, Folder F, no. 1.
41. Doerksen, "Post-War Developments," p. 10.
42. John D. Thiesen, "The American Mennonite Encounter with National Socialism," unpublished paper for History 615, Wichita State University, Fall 1987, in my personal possession, p. 57.
43. Thiesen, "The American Mennonite Encounter," p. 19.

44. Gerhard Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study of the Mennonites in Paraguay," (M.A. thesis, California State University, Fresno, 1974), p. 156.
45. Fernheim's population reached a high of 2147 in 1937 before dipping down to 1330 thereafter, due to the migration to east Paraguay and the Friesland colony. Winfield Fretz, Pilgrims in Paraguay (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1953), p. 28.
46. Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study," pp. 185-87.
47. Ibid., p. 172.
48. See Fritz Kliever, "The Mennonites of Paraguay," Mennonite Quarterly Review IX (January 1937):92-97, for a discussion by a leading Nazi sympathizer in the colony of the threat of disintegration because of the tough conditions.
49. Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study", pp. 152, 219-220.
50. Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study," p. 221.
51. Fritz Kliever, Die Deutsche Volksgruppe in Paraguay: Eine siedlungsgeschichtliche, volkskundliche und volkspolitische Untersuchung (Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1941), p. 163.
52. Heinrich Schroeder, "Was geht im Chaco vor?" Der Bote, 30 October 1935, pp. 2-3; Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study," pp. 179-82; John B. Toews, With Courage to Spare: The Life of B.B. Janz (1877-1964) (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1978), pp. 120-25; Letter from Fritz Kliever to the leader of the Fernheim Mennonite Brethren congregation, 1 November 1950, B.B. Janz collection, Box 7, 1950 folder, CMBS Winnipeg.
53. Toews, With Courage to Spare, p. 123; Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study," pp. 174-75.
54. Ratzlaff, "An Historical-Political Study," pp. 179-99; Toews, With Courage to Spare, pp. 120-21.
55. Interview with Anne Funk, social worker, Vancouver, B.C., May 6, 1990. Ms. Funk came to Canada with her family in this last, desperate migration, and recalls that her family, especially her father, was "very pro-Hitler" until the end of the Second World War. They were part of a program in which they were put into contact with a person living in Germany, who sent them all manner of reading materials, including Nazi propaganda.
56. Kliever, "The Mennonites of Paraguay," pp. 92-97.
57. Ibid., p. 94.

58. James I. Lichti, "Religious Identity vs. 'Aryan' Identity: German Mennonites and Hutterites Under the Third Reich," (M.A. thesis, San Francisco State University, 1989), pp. 107-26.

59. Interview with Erwin Cornelsen, retired pastor, Vancouver, B.C., November 14, 1989. Lichti cautions against sweeping generalizations about the effect of Nazi land policy on Mennonite support for the regime, pointing out that there were reasons for discontent among farmers as well. Lichti, "Religious Identity vs. 'Aryan' Identity," pp. 120-23. However, it seems clear that the perception that Hitler was going to save the farmers was fairly widespread among Mennonites, especially in the beginning of his tenure.

60. The largest North-German congregation reportedly had a membership rate over ten times the national average. Lichti, "Religious Identity vs. 'Aryan' Identity," pp. 125-26. Figures for the more rural, pietistically-inclined southern Mennonites were undoubtedly much lower.

61. Ibid., pp. 170-72.

62. John Friesen, "The Relationship of Prussian Mennonites to German Nationalism," in Harry Loewen, ed., Mennonite Images: Historical, Cultural and Literary Essays Dealing with Mennonite Issues (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press Limited, 1980), p. 61ff.

63. Lothar Fromm, "Nazistische Einflüsse in mennonitischen Zeitschriften," 1961, unpublished paper on file at the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana.

64. Edmund Heier, "A Study of the German Lutheran and Catholic Immigrants in Canada, Formerly Residing in Tzarist and Soviet Russia," (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1955), p. 144.

65. Ibid., pp. 103-11; C.A. Dawson, Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1936; reprinted 1974, Kraus Reprint Co.), pp. 275-76.

66. Robert Leckie, American and Catholic (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 218-26.

67. Bede Hubbard, "St. Peter's: A German-American marriage of monastery and colony," in Benjamin G. Smillie, ed., Visions of The New Jerusalem: Religious settlement on the Prairies (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1983), p. 156; Dawson, Group Settlement, p. 278; Heier, "German Lutheran and Catholic Immigrants," pp. 144-45.

68. Heier, "German Lutheran and Catholic Immigrants," p. 185.

69. Dawson, Group Settlement, p. 298; 279.

70. Jonathan F. Wagner, Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1981), p. 129; Watson Kirkconnell, Canada, Europe and Hitler (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 133-34.

71. Dawson notes that the universality of the Catholic Church also mitigated Germanism, through German Catholic interaction with other Catholics like the French. Dawson, Group Settlement, p. 320.

72. Heier, "German Lutheran and Catholic Immigrants," p. 120-22.

73. Ibid., p. 171ff.

74. Dawson, Group Settlement, p. 291.

75. Hubbard, "St. Peter's," pp. 156-57; Heier, "German Lutheran and Catholic Immigrants," p. 185 and passim; Dawson, Group Settlement, pp. 291-323; 136.

76. Anderson, "Assimilation in the Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan," p. 200.

77. Heier, "German Lutheran and Catholic Immigrants," pp. 164-70.

78. Ibid., pp. 100-103; 115. See also John B. Toews, Czars, Soviets and Mennonites (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1982), p. 6.

CHAPTER FOUR

Germanism and Brethren Congregational Life:
The Struggle for Socio-Religious Integrity

The congregation is the centre of Mennonite life.¹ The Mennonite Brethren identity found its most immediate expression and relevance in the context of the local congregation, and efforts to maintain the social and religious integrity of the group, including German "Saturday" schools and Bible schools, originated there. Congregations resisted the encroachment of secular "English" influences, with the moral and spiritual decline which was perceived to accompany them, as well as the loss of younger Brethren to the forces of the prevailing North American evangelicalism. The German language functioned as a kind of "church Latin"² which not only maintained "boundaries" between Mennonites and the outside world, but also served to perpetuate a sense of closeness and solidarity with each other and their God, acting as a special form of expression for traditional doctrines and a symbol of the Mennonite Brethren way of life.

But the Brethren faced the dilemma of entertaining an evangelical theology which tended to undermine Germanism and hence the ethno-religious identity which had developed in Russia, which was already under siege by the forces of urbanization, assimilation and acculturation. Despite strenuous efforts, much soul-searching, and not a little pain and frustration, the German identity was in irreversible decline by the 1950's, as churches gradually adopted English as the language of congregational life. By 1960 Germanism had ceased to function as an instrument of socio-religious integration for the Brethren, having become a source of division and an unwanted relic, at least in younger eyes, from a bygone era.

My purpose in this chapter is to present a brief picture of the above-mentioned constellation of factors in Mennonite Brethren German identity during the thirty years following their arrival in Canada, with the congregation functioning as the centre of gravity in the discussion. It is beyond the scope of this paper to treat any one element in a comprehensive fashion. Analyses of at least one sizeable congregation from each of the five western Canadian provinces provide a significant portion of the data for this chapter.³

In the period leading up to the Second World War the Brethren maintained a relatively strong German identity, amidst a growing awareness that it was endangered, and a growing perception that its loss would be accompanied by alienation from traditional moral and religious principles, and the disintegration of the Mennonite "Volk" itself. While congregations continued to function in German, children began to converse among themselves in English. Most congregations instituted some sort of "German school" or "Saturday school" in which the German language was instructed, using a few basic primers, soon after they were organized. The Winnipeg North End congregation started a Saturday school in 1927, and the Coaldale, Alberta Brethren had done the same by 1930. The Vineland, Ontario congregation was supporting German instruction in conjunction with other Mennonites by the mid-1930's, and the Yarrow, B.C. congregation was supporting a school by the later 1930's. The congregation at Hepburn, Saskatchewan began to hold a three-week "summer vacation school", which instructed children in German and religion, in 1937.⁴

D.P. Esau, a preacher in the Hepburn church, articulated in 1938 the rationale for teaching German and religion to Mennonite young people.

Congregational life, according to Esau, is dependent on the quality and type of training received in the schools. After outlining the important function of teachers in teaching religious principles and exhibiting a strong Christian character, Esau describes the role of the German language. It is an important "cultural good" (or possession) for the Mennonites, who are of "German stock", just as other languages are important to other peoples. As soon as the language is lost, Mennonites will be robbed of intellectual, national, and spiritual aspects of their character. Some Mennonite teachers and parents are beginning to deny the German language to the younger generation, which is a misfortune for the entire Mennonite "Gemeinschaft" (community).

We German Mennonites are a religious community. An extremely important stream of religious thinking flows through the congregations via the German language. This bears fruit for congregational and family life. With the demise of the German language the flow will stop and the congregational life will become dry. The youngsters cannot be properly introduced to the train of thought (Gedankengaenge). And he also isn't used to the English Bible-language.⁵

While most statements were not quite as sophisticated as this one, it is paradigmatic of the sentiments held by many of the advocates of Germanism, and helps to delineate the close connection between the congregations, Germanism, and the many educational efforts which were made in the 1930's and 1940's.

The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches (the Northern District Conference) recommended in 1926 that Mennonites assume district school-board posts in order to further the instruction of German and religion in the time allotted by the government to such subjects.⁶ Clearly, the need for some input into public school education was felt from the beginning of their residence in Canada by the Russlaender, who had previously maintained

their own schools in Russia. In 1933 and 1935 the Conference went on record that it was "deeply convinced that our congregations would be greatly served if in all District Schools there were (Mennonite) teachers who themselves had a good background in religion and German."⁷ At the Brethren Conference School Committee meetings the instruction of German and religion was a frequent topic of discussion; at a 1931 meeting a speech was given which emphasized the role of the German language in bringing up "churchly" Mennonite youth. The speaker asked, "Was Moses ashamed to speak Hebrew to his people?", before stating: "Therefore let us seek to nurture and maintain the mother-tongue among the children, so that we don't allow the best, deepest aspects of ourselves to be taken from them!"⁸

There was widespread interest in expanding the instruction of German and religion in public schools. A "German School-Superintendent Committee" met annually to deal with this question,⁹ and various individuals supported the idea in articles in the Mennonitische Rundschau, which featured a column entitled "Joys and Sorrows of the Schoolmaster" beginning in 1935.¹⁰ In 1932 it was reported that there had been increasing discussion in Mennonite circles concerning the instruction of German and religion in public schools; this particular individual advocated petitioning the government on the matter, and reminded the churches to do more to encourage the use of the German language in the home.¹¹ A Brethren indicated in 1935 that battles to teach German and religion in public schools in his area were yielding results,¹² while in the same year another person cited a general growth in interest among Mennonites for instruction in German and religion.¹³

Despite the apparent success of Mennonite teachers in introducing German and religion as subjects of instruction in some areas,¹⁴ there were also

problems. As previous chapters have illustrated, there were strong pressures of assimilation and acculturation on the Russlaender, and they were generally eager to find a niche for themselves in Canadian society. Pressure was exerted through the British-based school system, as well as by various other subtle and not so subtle means. In 1928 the Brethren in Coaldale, Alberta attempted to teach German to their children in the building in which they had been holding church services, which was owned by the United Church. The larger Coaldale community reacted to this evidence of the Mennonites' unwillingness to assimilate, and forbade the use of the building for such purposes, even posting a policeman at the door one Saturday morning.¹⁵ In the mid-1930's Coaldale school officials were reported to be wholly uninterested in allowing German instruction in the school, causing some Mennonites to feel that more emphasis should be placed on the Saturday school.¹⁶

Mennonites themselves did not always support efforts to promote German and religion in public schools. In a report on school matters to the 1935 Canadian Conference meeting, William Neufeld complained that some Mennonites simply did not feel bound to maintain the German language any more.¹⁷ In one school district, an attempt to introduce German language instruction, by electing a Mennonite to the school board, failed because some of the local Mennonites voted for the "English" candidate instead. In the face of being charged with impairing the "Deutschtum" of the local Mennonite community, one of those who had voted for the English candidate stated that Mennonite Germanism had led to the "hatred" of Germans by the English in their district, and that lines should be drawn between Christians and non-Christians, rather than between English and Germans.¹⁸ A similar scenario

seems to have been present in Coaldale in 1936.¹⁹ An English candidate was elected in another district with a large Mennonite population because, as one Mennonite commented, the atmosphere had become too partisan when they elected one of their own. This person was also not so worried about the language issue.²⁰

Although there was some ambivalence in dealings with host communities on the issue of German and religion in public schools, there was widespread support for privately-sponsored Mennonite Bible schools, which emerged in numerous communities in the fifteen years after the Russlaender arrived in Canada. These schools were normally begun and supported by one or more congregations, and were the single most important institutions in maintaining the kind of congregational life which Brethren had known in Russia. Here the Bible and distinctively Mennonite doctrines could be taught unhindered in the German language, thus perpetuating both the traditional faith distinctives and linguistic solidarity. While religious instruction from a Mennonite viewpoint was the leading *raison d'etre* for these schools, the role of the schools as perpetuators of the German language should not be overlooked.²¹

At least sixteen Bible schools were started by Mennonite Brethren between 1925 and 1940, with another five being added in the 1940's.²² The Bible school in Herbert, Saskatchewan had been in existence since 1913. Many of them were small, growing out of the needs of local congregations. The Bible school in Coaldale, for example, began in a member's home in 1929.²³ The opening of a Bible school by the Steinbach, Manitoba Brethren congregation was unceremoniously announced by a small notice in the Mennonitische Rundschau.²⁴ In the fall of 1933 F.C. Thiessen invited "eager German youth" to the "German Bible school in Winnipeg," which met evenings in the North End

Brethren church. A German language course would be added for those who did not have a good command of the language.²⁵

Some schools were larger, such as Bethany Bible School in Hepburn, Saskatchewan, and Winkler Bible School in Winkler, Manitoba. Both were begun in the mid-1920's, and provided lodgings for students. A list of goals for the Bethany school from 1937 would probably have been shared by most Bible schools:

1. To give our...youth foundational Bible instruction in the German and English languages...
2. To wrench our youth away from frivolous pursuits and the contemporary "Zeitgeist".
3. To nurture the German language as a special possession handed down from our fathers.
4. To raise believing youth for the battle of the faith...
5. To take into account the needs of the congregations in the methodical training of Sunday School teachers and sundry (church) workers.²⁶

The strong Bible school movement among the Brethren partially had its roots in the traditional informal "Bibelstunde" (Bible Study) in Brethren homes in Russia.²⁷ And as the above list of goals suggests, the Bible school was seen as a bulwark against negative influences and a way to perpetuate the traditional faith perspective and the German language. At Brethren Canadian Conference meetings during the 1930's the Bible schools were repeatedly affirmed on these counts.²⁸

Although the theory of evolution and other forms of "godless modernism" were aspects of the "Zeitgeist" which some Brethren felt should be avoided at all costs,²⁹ a more insidious and increasingly troublesome challenge to the socio-religious integrity of the Brethren was the strong upsurge of evangelical fundamentalism which took place in North America in the late 1920's and the 1930's, and the "Bible school movement" which went with it. The effects of these developments on Brethren congregational life began to be significantly felt in the 1940's and 1950's (dealt with further below), but

had their roots in the 1930's. Besides drawing Mennonite Brethren young people into a non-Mennonite, English environment, and in some cases into other denominations, this movement tended ultimately to discourage Germanism, which was perceived to hinder attempts at outreach and the incorporation of new converts into the Brethren church.³⁰ On the other hand, such Bible schools, with their strong missionary emphasis, reinforced the Brethren commitment to go forth and preach the good news of the Gospel.

The Brethren Bible schools thus emerged in the context of a larger phenomenon, and were partly a defensive reaction to it, and also part of it; the larger movement had both a positive and a negative role in starting Brethren schools and thus in furthering the primary goal of socio-religious integration already described. The Bethany Bible School, for example, was founded when a Brethren individual who had graduated from the American Bible Institute in Chicago arrived in Hepburn at a time when the desire to establish a local Mennonite Bible school was growing.³¹ Therefore the general contours of western Canadian evangelicalism merit closer scrutiny.

During the late 1920's and the 1930's, new religious movements grew rapidly in western Canada, especially in Alberta, which experienced something of "religious awakening" at that time. The growth of the Social Credit Party was a part of the general strengthening of sectarian religious forces in the Alberta community. The majority of sectarian growth was evangelical and fundamentalist in nature, and was rooted in a revivalist tradition in the prairie West, shifting social and economic circumstances, a reaction to religious "modernism" in the wake of the First World War, and the inability of the mainline Protestant churches to adjust to the needs of mostly lower-middle class, rural people. The fundamentalist sects shared a belief in the

literal truth of the Bible, a fiery hell, the necessity of a dramatic conversion experience, as well as an aversion to the theory of evolution, the "higher" biblical criticism, and the pleasure-oriented activities of the "world". There was much lay participation, informality, hearty singing and evangelical fervor at their meetings, which usually ended in a call for repentance and conversion.³² The parallels between this sort of religiosity and that of the Brethren are obvious, and would have contributed to the relative ease with which many Brethren identified with such groups.

The emergence of a number of evangelical Bible institutes and colleges in western Canada was a part of this "awakening". Between 1930 and 1949 thirty such institutions were founded, including eight of the more prominent Mennonite schools. The largest schools were "non-denominational"; Prairie Bible Institute (PBI) of Three Hills, Alberta, and Briercrest Bible Institute of Caronport, Saskatchewan were the trendsetters. PBI was founded in 1922, and became the model for many subsequent schools, with its missions emphasis, strict moral standards, and strong music program. As such it held a strong fascination for Brethren youth, drawing many of them to it by the 1950's.³³

This evangelical movement began to encroach upon the Mennonite Brethren already in the 1930's. References were made at Canadian Conference meetings to the fact that a number of Brethren youth were attending "English" Bible schools,³⁴ and in 1936 the Brethren in Coaldale found themselves dealing with the effects of local "English" evangelistic meetings on their young people. B.B. Janz felt that there were some good things about these meetings, but that things seemed strange;

a) When our Brethren proclaim the Word to our youth in a strange tongue, and a strange place. b) When they try to copy the English evangelists. c) ...Sometimes you see young couples go off (alone) into the night. d) You don't notice these itinerant English

evangelists dealing with seeking souls...rather they come, they speak and leave. e) There is the extortion of funds; the scolding of other denominations; the careless tone and questionable posture of some of these speakers--that is objectionable.³⁵

There were other effects of this movement. Because of the lack of leaders and teachers with formal theological training, and the lack of written material from their own theological frame of reference, Brethren Bible schools became dependent upon the literature of North American fundamentalism and evangelicalism.³⁶ Traditional Brethren pietism and biblicism was easily combined with it, which along with the example of such schools as PBI strengthened the traditional Brethren stress on outreach.³⁷ The prominent fundamentalist Canadian Sunday School Mission found its Brethren counterpart in the Western Children's Mission, which emerged out of the Bethany Bible School. The Winkler Bible School promoted missions, including Daily Vacation Bible Schools, but was known to also be oriented towards producing teachers. Thus a tension began to emerge between a stress on evangelism, which clearly undermined Germanism, and the formation of good, German-speaking church workers and members.³⁸

As the 1930's came to a close, the Brethren could look back on a decade in Canada in which much had been accomplished, despite drought, depression, and being strangers to Canada. Congregations had become organized, churches were built, and a wide array of institutions, including German Saturday schools and Bible schools, had been started. But there was a growing sense that religious integrity and social solidarity were becoming threatened, and increasing alienation from the German language was taken to be a major indication. Reports concerning the lack of interest in the German language in Mennonite schools began to be heard, along with double-edged statements that everything possible was being done to satisfy the wishes of the

congregations on this matter.³⁹

For example, a reassuring report made in 1939 by a teacher at the Bethany Bible School held that "great weight" was being laid on the German language at the school, and that "intense interest" in learning the language was present among the students; it was belied by faculty discussions which took place in early 1940. In the context of discussing disciplinary problems, two teachers pointed out that the Brethren constituency felt more emphasis should be placed on German instruction, and that too much was being taught in English. The principal stated that students did not learn as easily when instruction was in German, and therefore the temptation existed to revert to English. One teacher faulted the "homes" for not instilling a facility with the language into Mennonite children, while another had perceived a "hidden aversion" to the language among the students, and that was the source of the problem.⁴⁰

This "hidden aversion" was at least partly due to the fact that Canada had once again gone to war with Germany, causing increased pressures on German-speaking Mennonites and other "enemy aliens". The Bible school operated by the Vineland, Ontario Brethren congregation was forced to close in 1941 due to public pressure; besides being conducted in German, the school had offered a course in the German language itself.⁴¹ Although the Coaldale congregation had felt free to affirm the work of its Saturday school in late 1939, pressure began to be exerted on the church's schools in 1940 by Edmonton school officials, causing the congregation to close the Saturday school in order to keep the Bible school open.⁴² In September of 1940 the Bethany Bible School quietly locked away any books it had from Germany, and in 1942 the principal voiced fears that the school, like some in other

provinces, would be closed; consequently instruction in German was temporarily dropped.⁴³ The Hepburn congregation discontinued its summer-vacation German school,⁴⁴ while Saturday schools operated by the Yarrow, B.C. and Winnipeg North End congregations appear to have remained open during the war years.⁴⁵ No official attempt was made by the Canadian government during the war to stop German instruction in private schools, although it was halted in state-controlled elementary and secondary schools.⁴⁶

Wartime anti-German pressures obviously differed in degree by locale, but were clearly present in most Canadian communities. The Kitchener, Ontario Brethren congregation went so far as to debate, in early October 1939, the possibility of switching over to the use of English during church services; the "impassioned" discussion concluded however that "The congregation does not wish to have anything other than the mother-tongue used in church services."⁴⁷ In addition to the cases of harassment of Mennonite churches cited in Chapter One, three Mennonite churches in Alberta and Manitoba were set on fire in the early war years (two of them belonging to the Mennonite Brethren), causing the Coaldale congregation to post a watchman at the door of their new church building for a time. As B.B. Janz put it, "Although the war was thousands of miles away, we felt the ungrounded mistrust towards us as new immigrants with a strange tongue."⁴⁸

The events of the Second World War had a profound impact upon Canadian Mennonites. The existing trends of accommodation and assimilation to the norms of Canadian society were accelerated by the war, which revived anti-German and -Mennonite sentiments among the Canadian public. The principle of nonresistance was severely challenged, as at least one-third or 4500 of the eligible Mennonite men joined the armed services, while 7500 or one-half

chose alternative service, as arranged by Mennonite leaders and government officials. The Russlaender were generally eager to prove their loyalty to Canada, initially advocating noncombatant service in the army medical corps, an option rejected by the Kanadier. Thus the war marked a "turning point" for the Russlaender; the doctrinal and cultural identity of the group was severely shaken, as a broad movement of alignment with the ideological and cultural norms of Anglo-Canadian society suddenly became unmistakable.⁴⁹

The greatest anti-German and -Nazi pressures were exerted by the Canadian public in September 1939 and mid-1940. Many thousands of German-Canadians were forced to register as "enemy aliens" under the Defense of Canada Regulations (DOCR), and 1200 German-Canadians were interned. These internments generally occurred during the early high-points of anti-Germanism, when a fearful public demanded that the RCMP take action against alleged domestic "subversives". The police themselves remained unconvinced as to the actual danger posed to Canada by the individuals they felt compelled to intern.⁵⁰ There is no indication that any Mennonites were interned. After the scares of 1939-40 the government relaxed pressure on all "enemy aliens" except the Japanese,⁵¹ but suspicion towards the (partially) pacifist, German-speaking Mennonites persisted among the general public.⁵²

There were various indications during the war years that changes were under way. While B.B. Janz spoke out strongly in support of nonresistance, even threatening excommunication for those who joined the military,⁵³ Russlaender young men enlisted in the army in unprecedented numbers.⁵⁴ Increasing use of English in the Sunday schools and Bible schools became apparent, and in 1943 it was admitted on the floor of the Canadian Conference meeting that "We are in a (language) transition period, and have to reckon

with that."⁵⁵ The 1944 meeting noted that "many of our young people are turning away from our Bible schools and entering English schools." The pressure on Mennonites had obviously relaxed enough to allow the Conference to recommend that congregations begin anew with their "religion schools";⁵⁶ the Kitchener Brethren responded by opening a "religion school" on Saturday mornings "so that the children could better understand the Bible in the mother tongue."⁵⁷

If the younger generation moved in the direction of anglicism and Canadianism, the older generation exhibited more ambivalence. On the one hand, Mennonite leaders like B.B. Janz and David Toews did their best to disengage Mennonites from any association with Nazi Germany, and declarations of loyalty to Canada were widely made.⁵⁸ Also, 1941 Canadian Census records show a sharp drop in German ethnic identification at that time. In 1931, 42% of Canadian Mennonites had claimed to be of Dutch ethnic origin, and 39% German.⁵⁹ In 1941, only 28% claimed Germanic origin, while Dutch identification had gone up to 58%.⁶⁰

On the other hand, the support for Nazi Germany outlined in Chapters Two and Three did not evaporate overnight. Interviews indicate that there was some support for the German cause during the early war years, and E.K. Francis found divided national loyalties during wartime among the Manitoba Russlaender.⁶¹ A report made to the 1941 Canadian Conference meeting by the American editor of various Brethren periodicals stated that it was difficult to walk the line between publishing material which would be allowed into Canada, yet acceptable to its readers:

We're trying our best to be as neutral as possible in the reports on foreign events, which is not easy, considering the fact that many readers are not so neutral. We want however to do the best we can to follow the laws of the land.⁶²

As the war came to an end, and the extent of the inhumanity of the Nazi regime began to be discovered, any illusions which Mennonites still had about Nazi Germany were shattered.⁶³ Even Walter Quiring, the ardent Nazi-supporter who served in the Nazi Propaganda Corps during the war, admitted to being misled. In a letter to his former adversary, B.B. Janz, whom he now addressed as "Uncle Janz", Quiring wrote:

What I want to underline is the following: to be German and to be National Socialist is not the same thing. Anybody can be German, but doesn't thereby need to be Nazi. The German Volk let itself be deceived by Hitler. Myself included. The German Volk today sees its mistake. I do too. Hitler was the misfortune of the German people.⁶⁴

Thus shorn of its political and nationalistic ramifications, Germanism would continue to play a part in Brethren socio-religious identity during the postwar period, although it was never again as strong as it was in the 1930's. As Mennonite Brethren became more urbanized, educated, pluralistic, and acculturated and assimilated to Anglo-Canadian society, the important socio-religious function of the German language would be more explicitly recognized and emphasized by some, and more decisively rejected by others. Attrition and indifference towards maintaining the Russian Mennonite way of life undoubtedly contributed to the steady movement away from Germanism.

The decade and a half following the end of the Second World War was a period of mobility and change for many if not most Canadians. The two major trends were economic expansion and, especially on the prairies, rapid urbanization. Between 1941 and 1961 the percentage of prairie residents living in urban areas almost doubled, to 58%, while urbanization in Ontario and British Columbia occurred at a rate of 10 to 15%.⁶⁵ The western provinces experienced a decline in Anglo-Canadian nativism, for various

reasons,⁶⁶ and prairie communities seemed "more open and harmonious," as they (and the rest of Canada) "moved increasingly toward a homogeneous international culture."⁶⁷ If the western provinces were still "far closer to a British-Canadian cultural model than any other" in the postwar period, "each province saw greater tolerance generated by new social, economic, and intellectual conditions."⁶⁸

While traditional sociological stress on the postwar assimilation of ethnic minorities is largely valid, there is also evidence of the survival of certain basic features of ethnic identity in the prairie West. In particular, ethnic languages, and ethnic institutions which paralleled "Canadian" ones, retained a position of importance for many people.⁶⁹ In general, if Canadian Mennonite trends of urbanization and assimilation followed the larger pattern, there was also renewed resistance to the total loss of the Russian Mennonite ethno-religious identity.

Canadian Mennonites urbanized rapidly in the postwar period, going from a predominantly rural existence to a situation where one-third of Mennonites lived in urban areas by 1961. At the same time, the other two-thirds remained in rural areas, with close to half (46%) of Canadian Mennonites living on farms, which was still five times the national average. Mennonites in B.C. were the most urban, with 50% living in cities in 1961, while those in Alberta were the most rural, with 60% of Mennonites still engaged in farming.⁷⁰ The Mennonite Brethren were the most urbanized of Canadian Mennonite groups.⁷¹ Concomitant with these trends was a significant movement into professions and business, by all Mennonites.⁷² An important addition to the Canadian Mennonite community was the arrival of 8,000 Russian Mennonite refugees in the postwar period; they settled primarily in the Lower Fraser

Valley in B.C., in the Winnipeg area in Manitoba, and on the Niagara Peninsula in Ontario.⁷³ Although this influx is often cited as having slowed the process of acculturation in Mennonite congregations,⁷⁴ it should not obscure the fact that the 1920's Russlaender were the key players in most of the major postwar attempts at preserving the traditional social, cultural and religious identity of the Brethren.

The Mennonite Brethren continued to expand numerically as a religious body in the postwar period, growing from 7200 members in 1945 to a total of 14,000 in 1960. One-third of these lived in B.C., one-quarter in Manitoba, and the rest were spread fairly evenly among the other three western provinces.⁷⁵ Although the majority of new members came from within the Brethren and other Mennonite groups, the fact that this growth occurred during the period of transition from German to English indicates quite clearly that the viability of the Mennonite Brethren as a religious body was not dependent upon Germanism. But this growth was a part of the enormous changes which were taking place at the time, and contributed to fears for the traditional socio-religious integrity of the group. The addition of a whole new generation of English-speaking members which felt at home in Canadian society exacerbated the fears of the elders for their distinctive faith and way of life.

There is evidence that a significant "diaspora" of individuals from the typically large Mennonite families was also taking place at this time. In analyzing surveys of Alberta Mennonites conducted in 1960, Aron Sawatzky found that anywhere from 50% to 75% of individuals surveyed had in one way or another broken ties with the Mennonite church.⁷⁶ The unwillingness of Mennonite churches to change from German to English usage in worship services

contributed to this trend, being a factor in as many as 50% of the departures from Mennonite churches.⁷⁷ By 1960 most families conversed at least partially in English,⁷⁸ and the circulation of English-language periodicals had eclipsed that of German ones in such traditional Brethren strongholds as Coaldale, Alberta.⁷⁹

When taken together, these various trends present a fairly complex picture of the postwar period. In general, it can be said that the Brethren were simultaneously experiencing numerical growth, assimilation, professionalization, urbanization, and linguistic, cultural and religious/ethical change. The Germanist reaction of those concerned to preserve the traditional socio-religious integrity of the group resulted in the further alienation from the tradition of some.

It bears repeating that much of the growing alienation from Russian Mennonite Germanism can be traced to the experience of the Second World War. The war with Germany forced a decision not only between adherence to Mennonite religious principles and the Canadian state, but also between English and German cultural identities. If over half of younger Canadian Mennonites chose to honor the religious principle of pacifism, the same cannot be said of the Germanic identity. The widespread support by Mennonites of the Nazi regime in the 1930's and early 1940's, the wartime anti-Germanism of the larger Canadian public, and the reprehensible actions of the Nazi regime which came to light towards the end of the war contributed significantly to the alienation of Canadian Mennonites from the German language and culture, and in particular the Mennonite version of it, in the postwar period.⁸⁰

Anglicization was also induced by the war in that young Mennonites,

whether they joined the military or worked in alternative service occupations, were drawn in unprecedented numbers into an English-speaking environment. Many attended English-language worship services for the first time, where they discovered that English could also be a religious language.⁸¹ Allied to the general movement out of the Germanic/Mennonite world into the Anglo-Canadian environment in the postwar years was what Frank Epp has termed a "struggle for recognition" from Canadian society at large, by Mennonites, to be accepted as equals with something to offer to it.⁸²

Quite understandably, Brethren youth became the main focus of concern in the struggle to maintain the traditional socio-religious integrity of the Mennonite Brethren. The alarm was sounded by leading individuals in various contexts in the postwar period,⁸³ and is exemplified in a statement by H.F. Klassen, editor of the Mennonitische Rundschau and Konferenz Jugendblatt, made in 1944:

We, the first generation (Russlaender)...were too carried away with becoming economically established, and now we are faced with an acute, life or death crisis among our faith community. Living scattered about in non-Mennonite surroundings, with the influences of irreligion in the schools, radios and popular press, and literature--all these show the consequences all too clearly. Elders, preachers and Sunday school teachers are looking on in apprehension as time-honored authorities are ignored, and as many are ashamed to belong to the Mennonites; other manners, attitudes and languages are admired and copied, and our own values and traditions, our simplicity and even our faith is despised.⁸⁴

The experience of the war, especially, had jolted Brethren leaders, as many of the young men who had appeared before mobilization boards "were ignorant of scriptural teaching as well as of historical distinctives to which their church was committed."⁸⁵ In the aftermath of the war, as Klassen's statement indicates, changing behaviour patterns reinforced the general notion that a serious decline in the Brethren way of life was in

progress. Many of the first generation Russlaender perceived a correlation between these changes and the loss of the German identity, specifically the German language. One individual lamented:

The letting-go of the German language is an outer sign that the individual has also let go of the true Mennonite principles. People want to accomodate themselves to the world...wearing (worldly) clothing and giving up the German language thus go together.⁸⁶

Evidence of the breakdown of traditional Brethren life seemed to be everywhere; young people were dressing, speaking and acting differently. Brethren leader H.H. Janzen felt that Mennonites were losing their reputation for honesty.⁸⁷ The growing use of television in the 1950's was one more example to the older generation of a decline in standards and the acceptance of "worldly" influences, and the issue of television thus became a "burning issue" at Canadian Conference meetings in the later 1950's.⁸⁸ Reports from Bible schools to the Conference indicated that the German language was being progressively eroded,⁸⁹ as it was also in the newly-grounded high schools and the Bible College (see Chapter Five). An increasing number of Mennonite youth were attending non-Mennonite Bible schools; between 1950 and 1959, 543 Mennonite youth attended Briercrest Bible Institute, while 317 went to Prairie Bible Institute. A survey of an extended Brethren family in 1960 revealed that 8 members had attended Mennonite Bible schools, and 21 had gone elsewhere, mostly to PBI and Briercrest.⁹⁰ To B.B. Janz, anglicization seemed to have no positive effect on congregational life, and led to the rejection of Brethren institutions.

If we look into the Canadian Mennonite Brethren congregations which have changed over to English, there we do not find a stronger congregational life in terms of home visitation, evangelism, church discipline, and in love of the church and the Conference...Last year at PBI there were 110 Mennonites in attendance (1949)--it is clear that...(most come from English-speaking Brethren churches, like the one in Abbotsford). This happens, even though Brother J. Redekop

runs a perfectly acceptable Mennonite school right on their doorstep.⁹¹

The continued growth of western Canadian evangelicalism was also increasingly seen as a threat, and warnings about the "unbiblical" nature of movements like Youth For Christ were made on the Canadian Conference floor,⁹² and by the leading figure in Brethren youth work, H.F. Klassen, in the pages of the Konferenz Jugendblatt.⁹³ Klassen felt that this was sensationalized Christianity without any of the proper sense of repentance and rebirth. Radio programs like Charles Fuller's "Old-Fashioned Revival Hour" were widely received by the Mennonite Brethren, and represent another source of influence in the direction of mainline North American evangelicalism.⁹⁴

There was obviously support present among the Brethren for inter-denominationalism, and it derived largely from the traditional Brethren stress on outreach and evangelism, and openness to outside Christian influences. These traits added to the other trends of assimilation and acculturation to bring about a rapid change in linguistic and socio-religious identity in the postwar period. Brethren evangelistic impulses had originally come mainly from Baptist sources, and Mennonite Brethren continued to attend Baptist schools in the postwar period, along with the missions-oriented schools already mentioned.⁹⁵

According to a student of Mennonite Brethren missions, this aspect of Brethren congregational life was lay-oriented, spontaneous, and always threatening to go beyond the control of the larger Conference structures. Mennonite Brethren became involved in radio ministries, Daily Vacation Bible Schools, tract missions and evangelistic meetings, beginning in the late 1930's and early 1940's. An elemental tension emerged between evangelism, which was generally conducted in English and forged links with the English-

Canadian community, and the distinctive ethno-religious culture of the Brethren. "Arm's length evangelism", whereby missionary efforts were conducted in outlying areas, and converts were directed to other denominations, was a temporary and unsatisfying solution to the problem. In general, young people were attracted to missions work while the older generation became preoccupied with defending the "inner stronghold" of the faith.⁹⁶

An emphasis on the German language was a part of the general Brethren response to the growing threat that all the various changes taking place were perceived to pose to Brethren socio-religious integrity. The institution of a number of high schools and the Bible College after the war was a clear response to the new challenges, and instruction in the German language was part and parcel of this response (see Chapter Five). So too was the formation in 1950 of a Conference committee for the retention of the German language, which merged with the all-Mennonite Society for the Promotion of the German Language (also covered in Chapter Five). Another response was the formalizing of "Youth Work" at the Conference level, beginning in 1945, and the organization of various youth-oriented events and conferences.⁹⁷

A significant attempt to deal with changing circumstances among Brethren youth was the inauguration of the Konferenz Jugendblatt, which began in 1944 as a project of the Manitoba Brethren, and was taken over by the Canadian Conference Youth Committee in 1945 as an all-Canadian project. H.F. Klassen edited it in Winnipeg until 1954, when H.H. Voth took over. At that time it became almost exclusively English. In the beginning the paper was published mostly in German, and became increasingly bilingual after that. During its first ten years the paper reflected attempts by the Brethren to moderate the

transition to English and encourage adherence to the traditional Brethren faith distinctiveness and sense of peoplehood.

In the first issue, H.F. Klassen stated that the goal of the periodical was to "help a generation of youth grow up firm in the principles of the Mennonite Brethren Church and unashamed of their heritage, as they carry their message out into the world."⁹⁸ Thus the paper attempted to combine a forward-looking, evangelical perspective with a strong sense of Mennonite peoplehood and tradition. It featured reports from the whole spectrum of youth activities, including missions. In the early years, profiles of prominent Brethren leaders appeared as well.⁹⁹ B.B. Janz wrote a letter to the editor in 1945 stating: "On the whole I am very glad when this kind of beginning is made during a time when most good things can only be expected to be lost."¹⁰⁰

Articles encouraging the use and retention of the German language appeared in the paper,¹⁰¹ and the editor followed a policy of the "golden mean" in the ratio of German to English articles.¹⁰² This soon became a subject of some controversy. One reader insisted that

Our young people would prefer to have (the Jugendblatt) all in English...I think that we cannot hold our young people with the German language, but with the Gospel we can. Some do emphasize the language above the Gospel.¹⁰³

This brought forth sharp, negative responses; one individual felt that switching completely over to English would exclude the older generation from youth activities, bringing disunity to the Mennonites, which was unchristian.¹⁰⁴ Another person seemed baffled at the inability of the younger generation to become bilingual,¹⁰⁵ and the editor implied that this was due to laziness.¹⁰⁶

Citing in 1947 the "controversy" surrounding the increasing use of

English among Mennonite Brethren, and its position as the "universal language among our youth," a youth worker from the Winnipeg North End congregation allowed that the German was "equally important" to Mennonites, but that parents needed to learn to be more tolerant towards the adoption of English. Language was only a means, not an end; the writer acknowledged that some feared that the disappearance of the German language "will result in the decay of our Mennonite faith and principles," but he obviously did not feel that this would happen.¹⁰⁷ Others were not so sanguine. In 1950, Mennonite educator Gerhard Lohrenz argued in the Jugendblatt that Mennonites were a unique Volk with their own language, national character, and "uniquely Christian" way of life. The "foreign" cultural atmosphere of Canada was threatening the Mennonite Volk identity, which shouldn't be "thrown overboard".¹⁰⁸

In 1952 H.F. Klassen asked the rhetorical question, "Do we want to remain Mennonite?" This question seemed to be on the minds of many people from the various walks of Brethren life, according to Klassen; some were ready to let the Mennonite name fall, and with it the old confessional principles and teachings. Indicating the extent to which the German language had become identified with Mennonitism, Klassen then stated: "It is not a matter of German or English, rather of a fundamental abandonment of the position of the fathers and founders of our church." Klassen listed a number of reasons for this, including the fear of coming into conflict with the larger society, the (negative) effect of non-Mennonite, interdenominational Bible schools, high schools and colleges, and a special push against the tradition from missions supporters.¹⁰⁹

A.A. Toews, a Brethren from Alberta who had served on a number of

Conference committees, was even more pointed. In answering the question, "Is our separation justified?", Toews gave a hearty "yes", noting that the German language had always been involved in the struggle to be true to Mennonite religious principles in the face of the demands of nation-states. Toews advanced two basic imperatives: 1) Hold on to the old teachings, including nonresistance, non-swearing of the oath, etc.; 2) "But then also hold tight onto the mother-tongue." On the other hand, Toews was careful to point out that separation didn't mean isolation, for Mennonites had a message to share with the world. He, along with others, couldn't understand why Mennonites were not able to continue being a bilingual people.¹¹⁰

The other side of the debate was presented in the same issue of the Jugendblatt. A contributor stated that "Canadians ought to be converted and brought into the church," and that the Mennonite Brethren should end their "spiritual and social isolationism," which he felt was the reason why so many younger Brethren were leaving the church. Once the church succeeded in bringing "lost Canadians" into the fold, and gave up its isolationism, "we won't need to worry...about young people leaving the church nor will we need to worry about the church dying out."¹¹¹

It was very difficult for the older generation not to feel that the traditional faith was dying, as change accelerated in the postwar period. The wholehearted acceptance of "outsiders" and their "worldly" language would only quicken the transformation of Mennonitism already underway, into something which appeared to have little to do with the old, "tried and true" faith and way of life. The Russlaender Brethren had only been in Canada for 25 years by this time; it is understandable, if in the long run mistaken, that a change in language, especially in the context of the local

congregation, would be taken as a sign of the breakdown of social and religious integrity. The contours of the distinctive Mennonite Brethren way of life, as it had emerged in Russia, were becoming hazy in the eyes of the elder generation, and seemed to be fast disappearing.

Most Brethren congregations began changing over to the use of English in their worship services during the 1950's. It is not my intention to extensively analyse this often painful process here; a precise depiction of the changeover is beyond the scope of this study, which has aimed more at identifying the primary issues and general trends involved in Brethren German identity during their first thirty years in Canada.¹¹² However, a brief look at the experiences of a few Brethren congregations during the twilight years of the German congregational identity is in order.

The experience of the Coaldale, Alberta Brethren congregation is illustrative of some of the general concerns and patterns of linguistic transition in the postwar years. By May of 1945 the Saturday school appears to have been operating again.¹¹³ In the spring of 1946 \$3.00 was allocated for every student attending the Saturday school, and an appeal was made that "all those in that age-bracket be asked to attend."¹¹⁴ Some concern was voiced at this time about the "great danger" that Coaldale Mennonite Brethren children were in:

How can we protect our children? It is pointed to the various meetings in the Dance Hall, the worldly Christmas programs, and the various youth organizations--Sea and Air Cadets, etc. What they couldn't achieve with our adult C.O.'s, they want to do with our children. Parents are warned very earnestly, and urged to bring their children to church, where there is true life. Our children are also in great danger in the public schools.¹¹⁵

Besides the above-mentioned perils, other evangelical groups such as Pentecostals were posing a challenge to Brethren integrity; they were branded

a "false cult" by the church council in the spring of 1948, as an ordained member of the Coaldale congregation joined their ranks.¹¹⁶

The Saturday school reported an attendance of 156 students in 1953, but experienced increasing problems throughout the 1950's. Lack of discipline as well as opposition to learning the German language was reported among students.¹¹⁷ By the fall of 1955 attendance was dropping, and the project was "getting harder to administer every year."¹¹⁸ In 1956 it was difficult to find teachers, discipline was lacking, and interest in German was waning.¹¹⁹ A shortage of staff was again reported in 1958.¹²⁰ Clearly the battle was lost, even if the school continued to be operated as late as 1970, since in 1958 the church began the process of changing over to English in its worship services.

Already in 1954 some "younger members" of the congregation were accusing the congregational leader of refusing to order English Hymnals. The church chose to "take a stand" on the matter, and appointed the Youth Committee to order 100 English hymnals, cautioning members at the same time to "proceed very wisely in the language problem."¹²¹ In November of 1958 an English sermon was instituted every second Sunday,¹²² and the ratio of English to German in the Sunday morning service continued to be adjusted on into the late 1960's.¹²³

The move towards a changeover to English in the Kitchener, Ontario congregation began in late 1954, when an occasional English service for the "younger members" was proposed for discussion.¹²⁴ The issue next emerged in the context of an "evangelism week" which the congregation had decided to organize. Since the effort seemed to be aimed primarily at "our youth", the question arose as to whether the program should be in English. After a long

discussion and a secret ballot, the votes for English totalled 137, and 12 for German. One can surmise that among those 12 were individuals who contributed heavily to the discussion. The issue was closed thus: "It is once more asserted that this is not about a language change, rather only about the week of evangelization."¹²⁵

In April 1955 the congregation voted for an English service once a month.¹²⁶ Things appeared to have stayed this way until 1957, when another discussion about an evangelism program occurred. The decision this time was for it to be held half in German, half in English.¹²⁷ In 1957 the issue began to be characterized as a "problem". In September of that year a proposal was made for English and German sermons to be preached on alternating Sundays, with a short English one on the German days as well. This proposal produced a "lively exchange of opinions". The issue was deliberated upon but not resolved in any satisfying manner until May 1961, when it was decided to have a normal length German sermon every Sunday, with a shorter English one. Sunday-evening services would alternate between German and English.¹²⁸ In 1963 the issue was discussed again, but the only decision reached was to leave matters lie. Thus for at least six years the issue was a subject of debate. Sometimes the only result of a meeting was agreement to discuss the issue again before voting on it, and sometimes a vote could be quite close.¹²⁹

In the early 1950's the leader of the Winnipeg North End Brethren congregation, D.K. Duerksen, was also leader of the German school. B.B. Fast and "other brothers" felt that this school "is an organic part of our church work, as is the Sunday School, youth work etc., and therefore it is quite appropriate that the church leader be leader of this work."¹³⁰ A major

discussion on separation from the "world" took place among the congregation soon after the above statement was made, with injunctions being made against the use of makeup, and visiting theatres and sporting events, etc.¹³¹ It is also significant that during this time D.K. Duerksen began to lead discussions at every "youth evening" on the topic of nonresistance.¹³² The person of D.K. Duerksen illustrates once again that maintenance of the German language was an elemental part of a general attempt to keep the specifically Brethren configuration of beliefs and principles intact.

But the language transition had already occurred among the younger Brethren. The Sunday School committee reported in 1951 that foremost among the problems facing them was that of language:

The confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel has become quite severe...Our children now think in English instead of German. They would rather sing in English than German, hear stories in English,...(and) there doesn't seem to be much we can do about it. There are only a few children in the Sunday School who don't understand German, yet the instruction is already no longer 100% in German.¹³³

Even if most children understood German, their facility with the language was not very good. The only "radical solution" to the problem would be to change completely into English. It was suggested that mothers leave their 2 to 3-1/2 year-olds in the nursery, where they would learn German from the woman in charge, who was fluent in German.¹³⁴

Attendance of the German Saturday school in 1951 was at an all-time high, with 56 students attending; the numbers climbed during the 1950's, as they also did in other congregations. The need and interest in the school paralleled the period of German-language decline.¹³⁵ In 1952 the Sunday School continued to be instructed primarily in German, but thoughts were being uttered as to the exclusivity that this represented; these doubts were

assuaged by the fact that the church operated a "mission school", in English and likely some distance away from the home church.¹³⁶

In March of 1954 the youth began holding an English gathering on every second Sunday of the month, and in August of that year an English Sunday evening worship service was approved.¹³⁷ Thus began the changeover, culminating in the institution of bilingual services by the winter of 1958.¹³⁸ The congregation was by now involved with some of the local English-speaking churches in organizations such as the Lord's Day Alliance, Evangelical Pastor's Fellowship, and Greater Winnipeg Ministerial Association.¹³⁹ The transition to English was felt to be a loss by elder members of this congregation, as a statement made in 1959 attests:

For those of us who to a greater or lesser extent know the German language, it is a natural good (Gut) that we love and cherish, and want to retain. Should we give up this good, it would be a certain loss for our churches and for every one of us personally.¹⁴⁰

Stories abound concerning the misunderstandings and conflicts which occurred in Mennonite congregations during the transition period. One individual recalls being the first person to give a personal testimony to his congregation in English. When he was finished, an older member stood up and stated in German: "I haven't understood a thing! Is he even a Christian?"¹⁴¹ Calvin Redekop travelled with a Mennonite Central Committee (a major North American Mennonite service institution) "peace team" in western Canada during the late 1940's, visiting Mennonite churches and giving presentations on Mennonite peace principles. The other team members gave their presentations in German, and Redekop spoke in English, because his German wasn't too good and his message was directed primarily toward the youth. As he relates it,

In one situation I got up and started making my presentation; there

was some discussion in the back of the church, and one gentleman stood up and said: "Can't you speak German?" I responded that I could, but not very well, and he said, "There's no point in carrying this discussion any further!"¹⁴²

At this point a debate erupted between church members, and the pastor finally cancelled the remainder of the meeting. "In every congregation, we felt this tension, 'If you don't speak German, you really are giving us something which doesn't apply to us, is alien to us.'"¹⁴³

B.B. Janz, who was still active during the 1950's, was not pleased with the rapid changes that were taking place at this time, including the loss of the German language. In 1950 he still felt that "For the good of the Mennonite Brethren church in Canada, the retention of the German language for a number of years yet is absolutely necessary."¹⁴⁴ At the 1954 Canadian Conference meeting, Janz delivered a wide-ranging and critical address. In addition to decrying rampant "hypocrisy, superficiality, immodesty and rebelliousness" among the Mennonite Brethren, he attacked the "horrible materialism, pleasure-seeking and...overweening ambition (that) are undermining the Mennonite Brethren Church." Concerning the "language problem", Janz stated:

The language problem in our congregations is a very serious matter which can cause the older members much pain, and bring an air of frivolity to the churches. It wouldn't be a problem if all else was spiritually well among young and old. Both sides need to display sound spirituality and wisdom, proceeding impartially but never pushing things to the breaking point. How sad, when mother and child can no longer understand each other, on account of the Babylonian confusion!¹⁴⁵

The allusion to the tower of Babel story, in which a prelapsarian linguistic (and social) unity is destroyed, due to sinful collaboration on a monument to human pride, drives home the message contained in Janz's carefully chosen words. The rapid linguistic transition taking place was to him a reflection

of a general breakdown of the socio-religious integrity of his people.

In other contexts Janz was more direct. When the Konferenz Jugendblatt became wholly English, Janz wrote the new editor a letter, with the caption "Funeral", protesting the move.¹⁴⁶ In a study-paper entitled "Confusion", from about the same time, Janz expressed the feelings of a whole generation. While he admitted that a language transition must inevitably take place, he felt that it was happening much too quickly:

It is a direct, sharp break in about half a generation. All the roots of living and working (according to God's word), morality, custom, family life, conduct with modesty and humility, obedience and respect for parents and vice versa, and in part also our faith are ripped untested out of the earlier way of life (which is disrespected) and stuffed into the new way of life here. In this process much that is dear and precious is lost. The rapid break reminds one of a precious ship filled with priceless goods that are rapidly being thrown overboard and new cargo from here taken on board. The new goods are said to be so much better. In the past, persecuted in their home country, plagued, bitterly poor, but not yet degenerated in heart and conscience, the people brought with them a great inner wealth...By a decent, gradual change we would strive carefully to retain all that is ideal and worthy of retention in our tested faith and life and add the new and good to it. With such a break in its way of life in so short a time and often with violence to the 5th commandment, it is definite that this generation will in the next 10-20 years also degenerate in its way of life. It is going downhill! Many young people find our simple Mennonite religious services, and all our various arrangements much too pale. But there, in that English church, there at least is life! Yes, all kinds of bustle and antics, all those witticisms and gestures to awaken the people to echoing laughter; then at last also a short Word of God."¹⁴⁷

Janz's biographer attributes such statements to the effects of old age and of belonging to a generation which was no longer needed.¹⁴⁸ Given the broad sweep of Russlaender Brethren history, it also seems fitting to say that they were the death-cries of a way of life. As the next chapter shows, concern over the demise of the particular configuration of language, Volk, and religious sensibility which was the foundation of the Russian Brethren way of life led to substantial if doomed efforts to preserve it in the

postwar period.

Despite the fears and efforts of Janz's generation, however, all was not lost, and the Brethren continued to function as a viable religious body, if in a somewhat changed form. To conclude this chapter I will present the story of one individual who was anglicized and attended an "English" Bible school, yet remained in the Brethren community and eventually became a leader of considerable stature. The experience of Herbert Brandt exemplifies both the perspective and dilemmas of the younger generation during the transition period, as well as the fact that the elder generation's fears were exaggerated.

Brandt, who has worked as a Brethren pastor and leader for much of his life, was born in Saskatchewan of Russlaender parents, and grew up speaking Low German and English. His father was a schoolteacher who had a good command of the English language. Brandt never attended Saturday school, and never learned High German well enough to be comfortable with it, even though it was the language of church services, of some of his relatives, and was mandatory at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, a private high school which he attended (begun by Kanadier and supported primarily by General Conference Mennonites). Although the language gave Brandt problems, he respected and trusted important "traditionalists" whom he learned to know through the school, including G.H. Peters, D.P. Esau, and A.H. Unruh.

However, a problem emerged for him when he made a Christian commitment around this time: English was essentially his mother tongue, but the theological language he had learned was in German: "The problem for me was that everything I experienced or learned in religious faith was in German, but I couldn't express everyday things in that language." It was a

dichotomous situation: On the soccer field he spoke English, and in church German. "I had learned a religious language abstracted or compartmentalized from my everyday life. I learned German as the language through which I communicate my faith, and thus my whole thinking process had to shift gears." It didn't feel right to compartmentalize things that way.

Brandt got his military call in August, 1943; by September he was working in a mental hospital in Brandon, Manitoba, as a Conscientious Objector (C.O). He was there until 1946. He and other Mennonite C.O.'s sometimes communicated among themselves in Low-German, but they were "basically into English". They were fully in the English world, German was "non-existent". Although he did not ever think of himself as being fundamentally "different" than the English community, as a C.O. Brandt experienced some ridicule for being of German-speaking background, and for being a pacifist. "You begin to think, 'why continue to identify with the German element?'"

When his term was up, and as he was deciding where to pursue further studies, he felt he had to make a decision whether to return to the German-Mennonite community or continue to make his way in the English-Canadian world. He didn't feel it was necessary or important to study German in order to study the Bible, and there would not have been as many options for him if he followed this path. And he states that "In some ways I was rebelling, I guess." He was critical of the traditional community, "but not in the sense of wanting to cut myself off from it."

Because of his interest in missionary work, Brandt decided to enroll at PBI, and there he "began to realize pretty quickly the difference in Christian life" between that of PBI and of his own experience. The atmosphere at PBI had militaristic overtones at this time, as returning

soldiers were swelling its ranks. "Now we C.O.'s were sitting beside Majors in the army, some of them highly convinced they were great liberators." He perceived that there were different types of Christian community, but he didn't feel he had to be German-speaking to experience the kind of community with which he had grown up and become comfortable.

Among the Brethren who attended PBI during Brandt's time were David Ewert, P.R. Toews, George Geddart, and H.R. Baerg. (Ewert has been a prominent MB leader and Geddart was a longtime librarian and teacher at Bethany Bible School.) "There was a very strong move in the 1940's to get Bible-training in an English environment." Some "pushed hard" for a changeover in Brethren churches to English. Brandt's roommate at PBI felt strongly that the Mennonite "German emphasis" was out of order. Brandt co-wrote a document with a number of PBI men calling for change in this matter. Evangelism and outreach were important elements in their desire to change to the language of the land.

During his tenure at PBI Brandt didn't have much contact with Mennonite groups. Mennonites at the school would get letters from leaders concerned about them losing their Mennonite identity through becoming "Verenglischt" (anglicized). "In retrospect, I can understand their concern." Herb's choice of PBI over the Mennonite Brethren Bible College or other schools like the Winkler Bible School was not solely a question of the Mennonite German identity, although it was an important factor, nor was he intent on rejecting the Brethren tradition as a whole. PBI simply had a number of things to offer, while the unattractiveness of the Mennonite schools was only compounded by their emphasis on the German language.149

After leaving PBI Brandt worked as an elementary school teacher, before

assuming pastoral duties in a number of English-speaking Brethren churches, and serving as a Brethren Conference leader. Although he has never felt that Germanism was crucial to Brethren identity, and he has been involved with the church during a time of growth and vitality, Brandt currently has reservations about the ongoing Brethren rejection of certain aspects of their own heritage and faith, and the near complete transition from an egalitarian to hierarchical form of church polity.

In conclusion, Russlaender Brethren identity and socio-religious integrity were closely linked to Germanism, and the German language in particular, during the first three decades after their arrival in Canada from Soviet Russia. For many people the rapid transition from German to English was symptomatic of a number of mostly negative changes which took place, especially in the postwar period. As a potent symbol of the "inner wealth" which Mennonites had brought with them from Russia, the German language was very difficult to let go, especially in the context of the local congregation, where Mennonite Brethren social and religious life were merged into one. This resulted in some alienation from the group, yet the Brethren continued to grow numerically, and were able to remain a viable and vital religious body, if in fact some critical changes were indeed taking place.

NOTES, CHAPTER FOUR

1. Calvin Redekop, Mennonite Society (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 62ff.
2. Delbert Wiens, "The Old Wine; Will it Sour?" The Canadian Mennonite, 18 April 1967, pp. 6-7; J.A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1975), pp. 323-24; Interview with Herb Brandt, Mennonite Brethren Pastor, June 3 and December 19, 1989, Kelowna, B.C. This idea will be discussed further in Chapter Six.
3. An analysis of the Vineland, Ontario Brethren congregation done by Gerry Ediger is also used, and I thank him for making it available to me.
4. Minutes of the North End Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, September 18, 1927, microfilm roll no. 91, p. 2116, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Fresno; Minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, November 16, 1930, Folder BA 501, p. 20, CMBS Fresno; Gerry Ediger, "Language Transition in the Vineland Mennonite Brethren Church," unpublished paper, May 1987, in my possession; Minutes of the Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, December 19, 1938, microfilm roll no. 65, p. 273, CMBS Fresno; Minutes of the Hepburn Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, March 1, 1937, microfilm roll no. 10, p. 405, CMBS Fresno.
5. D.P. Esau, "Was erwarten unsere Gemeinden von den Elementar und Hochschulen in Religion und Deutsch," Der Bote, 15 June 1938, pp. 1-2.
6. 1926 Mennonite Brethren Northern District Conference Yearbook (Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House), p. 32.
7. 1933 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 76; 1935 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 47-48.
8. "Bericht des Schulkomitees auf der Konferenz zu Langham am 7 Juli, 1931," Mennonitische Rundschau, 9 September 1931, p. 3; *Ibid.*, Mennonitische Rundschau, 23 September 1931, p. 3.
9. "Die jaehrliche Schulvorsteherkonvention," Mennonitische Rundschau, 25 May 1932, p. 6.
10. e.g. 23 December 1931, p. 5; H.H. Ewert, 17 February 1932, p. 2; 1 March 1933, p. 3; A.A. Toews, 14 November 1934, p. 5; "Leiden des deutschen Schulmeisters," 12 June 1935, pp. 2-3; F.C. Thiessen, "Offener Brief an die deutschen Eltern und Schulfreunde der Stadt Winnipeg," 12 September 1934, p. 5.
11. "Religion und deutsche Sprache in unseren Schulen," Mennonitische Rundschau, 29 June 1932, pp. 4-5.

12. Alexander Dirks, "Freuden und Leiden des Schulmeisters," Mennonitische Rundschau, 17 July 1935, p. 4.
13. "Deutsche Religionsschule," Mennonitische Rundschau, 30 October 1935, p. 1.
14. There seems to be little hard data on the degree to which the provisions for instruction in language and religion in public schools were made use of in predominantly Mennonite areas. E.K. Francis found that "many" Mennonite districts did not avail themselves of the opportunities available to them in this regard, but does not present any data. E.K. Francis, In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites of Manitoba (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), pp. 265-66.
15. 1928 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 50.
16. "Schulfragen und unsere Schule," Der Bote, 20 March 1935, p. 3.
17. 1935 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 47.
18. "Brueder, wo stuerst du hin?," Mennonitische Rundschau, 12 February 1936, pp. 6-7; Mennonitische Rundschau, 4 March 1936, pp. 2-3.
19. "Ein dunkles Blatt in der Geschichte von Heute," Mennonitische Rundschau, 29 April 1936, p. 5.
20. "Gouldtown, Saskatchewan," Mennonitische Rundschau, 25 March 1936, p. 13.
21. Mennonite Brethren church historian J.A. Toews was obviously aware of this, having taught in a number of Bible schools himself, but the issue receives peripheral treatment in his chapter on schools. See J.A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church (Fresno, Ca: Board of Christian Literature, 1975), p. 254ff. In other studies of Brethren schools very little understanding of the relationship between cultural and religious values is present, e.g. John George Doerksen, "Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of the Arts" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1968); Peter G. Klassen, "A History of Mennonite Education in Canada, 1786-1960" (D. Ed. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1970); John George Doerksen, "History of Education of the Mennonite Brethren of Canada" (M. Ed. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1963).
22. This figure was arrived at by cross-referencing lists found in Peter Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length: Mennonite Brethren Church Planting in Canada 1883-1983 (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1987), p. 25; and A.J. Klassen, ed., The Bible School Story 1913-1963 (Mennonite Brethren Board of Education, 1963).
23. Minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, January 19, 1930, Folder BA 501, pp. 15-16, CMBS Fresno.
24. Mennonitische Rundschau, 7 October 1931, p. 5.

25. F.C. Thiessen, Mennonitische Rundschau, 30 August 1933, p. 4.
26. From the 1937-38 School Calendar; BF, Saskatchewan Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Box 1, Folder 11, CMBS Fresno.
27. J.B. Toews, "Mennonite Brethren Identity and Theological Diversity," in Paul Toews, ed., Pilgrims and Strangers: Essays in Mennonite Brethren History (Fresno, CA: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1977), p. 144.
28. 1933 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 87; 1935 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 48; 1936 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 45; 1937 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 20; 1938 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 22-23; 1939 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 25.
29. 1937 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 20; F.C. Thiessen, "Offener Brief," Mennonitische Rundschau, 12 September 1934, p. 5; "Protokoll der Provinzial Vertreterversammlung," Mennonitische Rundschau, 2 August 1939, pp. 9-10.
30. J.B. Toews, "Mennonite Brethren Identity," p. 147.
31. John George Doerksen, "History of Education of the Mennonite Brethren of Canada," (M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1963), p. 56.
32. W.E. Mann, Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955); Ben Harder, "The Bible Institute-College Movement in Canada," Journal of Canadian Church Historical Society (April 1980):29-45; David R. Elliott, "Studies of Eight Canadian Fundamentalists," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1989).
33. Harder, "The Bible Institute-College Movement," p. 32; Mann, Sect, Cult, and Church, p. 82ff; Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length, p. 25; Interview with Herb Brandt, Mennonite Brethren Pastor, June 3 and December 19, 1989, Kelowna, B.C.; Letter from B.B. Janz to J. Quiring, July 10, 1950, B.B. Janz Collection, Box 4, Folder 49, CMBS Winnipeg; Aron Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta and Their Assimilation" (M.A. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1964), pp. 224-25. Mann lists many more reasons for the attractiveness of schools like PBI, including its radio programs and the chance to gain experience in radio broadcasting, the staging of missions conferences, low academic entrance requirements and fees, etc. Herb Brandt recalls the impressive travelling singing groups, and being attracted to PBI because of its reputation in the area of foreign missions.
34. 1935 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 48.
35. Minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, June 27, 1936, Folder BA 501, p. 83, CMBS Fresno.
36. Toews, "Mennonite Brethren Identity," pp. 148-50.
37. Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length, p. 14ff.

38. Ibid., pp. 22-26; Gerry Ediger, "Language Transition in the Vineland Mennonite Brethren Church," p. 13. This becomes more evident in the postwar period.

39. Mennonitische Rundschau, 31 July 1935, p. 2; G.H. Peters, "Wie begegnen wir der Gefahr der Entfremdung der deutsch-mennonitischen Jugend?", Mennonitische Rundschau, 28 August 1935, p. 5; Mennonitische Rundschau, 22 July 1936, p. 3; G.H. Peters, Mennonitische Rundschau, 18 November 1936, p. 7; G.H. Peters, "Und wieder: 'unsere deutsche Sprache'," Der Bote, 7 April 1937, pp. 3-4; Mennonitische Rundschau, 9 August 1939, p. 3.

40. Minutes of the Bethany Bible School Committee Meeting, 17 February 1940, BF Saskatchewan Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, Box 1, Folder 11, CMBS Fresno.

41. Ediger, "Language Transition in the Vineland Mennonite Brethren Church," pp. 7-8.

42. Minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, November 14, 1939, Folder BA 501, p. 114; Ibid., December 27, 1940, p. 129.

43. Minutes of the Bethany Bible School Committee Meeting, September 25, 1940, file 11; Ibid., January 24, 1942, p. 128, file 12.

44. Minutes of the Hepburn Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, June 16, 1941, microfilm roll 10, p. 896, CMBS Fresno.

45. Minutes of the Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, October 25, 1939, microfilm roll 65, p. 296; August 12, 1940, p. 317; October 24, 1942, p. 377, CMBS Fresno. Minutes of the North End Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, October 2, 1940, microfilm roll 92, p. 17; January 3, 1943, p. 79; January 14, 1945, pp. 131-32, CMBS Fresno.

46. George G. Thielman, "The Canadian Mennonites" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1955), p. 256.

47. Minutes of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, October 1, 1939, microfilm roll 33, p. 1741, CMBS Fresno.

48. Minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, December 27, 1940, Folder BA 501, p. 129, CMBS Fresno.

49. Hildegard M. Martens, "Accommodation and Withdrawal: The Response of Mennonites in Canada to World War II," Social History VII (November 1974):306-27; T.D. Regehr, "The Influence of World War II on Mennonites in Canada," Journal of Mennonite Studies 5 (1987):73-89; Howard Palmer, "Ethnic Relations in Wartime: Nationalism and European Minorities in Alberta during the Second World War," Canadian Ethnic Studies XIV (1982):1-23; Thielman, "The Canadian Mennonites," pp.254-56. Enlistment figures have traditionally been estimated at one-half, or 7500, of eligible Mennonite men. T.D. Regehr reports however that a list compiled from Canadian military personnel files contained 4,453 Mennonite names; the actual figure thus is somewhere between these two figures, being probably closer to the lower one. Regehr, "The Influence of World War II," p. 76.

50. Robert H. Keyserlingk, "Breaking the Nazi Plot: Canadian Government Attitudes Towards German Canadians, 1939-1945," in Hillman, Kordan, Luciuk, eds., On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945 (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1988), pp. 54-61.

51. Norman Hillmer, "The Second World War as an (Un) National Experience," in On Guard For Thee, p. xvii.

52. Palmer, "Ethnic Relations in Wartime," pp. 8-11.

53. 1941 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 17; 1942 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 26-29.

54. Frank Epp estimates that the rates of Russlaender enlistment to be around 50%. Frank Epp, Mennonite Exodus (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd, 1966), p. 331. The actual rate may be somewhat lower--see note 49.

55. 1943 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 17; See also 1942 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 9; 1944 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 16, 53.

56. 1944 Northern District Conference, p. 27.

57. Minutes of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church business meeting, November 19, 1944, microfilm roll 33, p. 1807, CMBS Fresno.

58. Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada 1920-1940 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), pp. 575-578; 1939 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 6-8; Mennonitische Rundschau, May-October 1939; Thielman, "The Canadian Mennonites," pp. 259-60.

59. Seventh Census of Canada, 1931, vol. III (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1935), pp. 772-73.

60. Eighth Census of Canada, 1941 vol. IV (Ottawa: King's Printers, 1944), p. 56.

61. Interview with Peter Neudorf, Mennonite Businessman, December 10, 1989, Vancouver, B.C; Interview with Anne Funk, Mennonite social worker, May 6, 1990, Vancouver, B.C; Francis, In Search of Utopia, pp. 233-34.

62. P.A. Berg, 1941 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 9.

63. For example, a member of a strongly pro-Hitler Russlaender family remembers the disillusion with the regime which the family experienced at the end of the war. Interview with Anne Funk.

64. Letter of February 19, 1953, B.B. Janz Collection, Box 7, Folder 97, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg.

65. Leo Driedger, "A Perspective on Canadian Mennonite Urbanization," Mennonite Life (October 1968):147.

66. Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), p. 176ff.

67. Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 422, 453.

68. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, p. 464; Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice, pp. 179-80.

69. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, pp. 456-57; Francis, In Search of Utopia, pp. 242-46, 275-77; Leo Driedger, "Urbanization of Mennonites in Canada," in Poettcker and Regehr, eds., Call to Faithfulness: Essays in Canadian Mennonite Studies (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1972), pp. 150-51; John Friesen, "Manitoba Mennonites in the Rural-Urban Shift," Mennonite Life XXIII (October 1968):158.

70. Driedger, "Urbanization of Mennonites in Canada," pp. 144-45.

71. In B.C., the province in which Mennonites were most highly urbanized, the Brethren counted three times as many members as other Mennonite groups. Robert K. Burkinshaw, "Strangers and Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia, 1917-1981" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1988), pp. 209-11. In Manitoba they also had the highest percentage of urbanized members, doubling their urban population in the decade and a half after the Second World War. Friesen, "Manitoba Mennonites," p. 154, and Driedger, "Urbanization of Mennonites in Canada," p. 147. In Ontario during the early 1960's the Brethren were found to be much more heavily concentrated in the professions than other Mennonite groups. Ibid., p. 149.

72. Driedger, "Urbanization of Mennonites in Canada," pp. 147-50; Regehr, "The Influence of World War II on Mennonites," pp. 79-83.

73. George K. Epp, "Mennonite Immigration to Canada After World War II," Journal of Mennonite Studies 5 (1987):108-19.

74. Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length, p. 40; J.A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 207, 327; Francis, In Search of Utopia, p. 242; Interview with J.B. Toews, Mennonite Brethren leader, June 10, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
75. 1945 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 92; 1959 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 256.
76. Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta," pp. 215-16.
77. Ibid., p. 229; J.A. Toews also notes this effect, without giving figures. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 329. J.B. Toews estimates that up to 40% of the membership of some Brethren churches was lost because of the tense atmosphere surrounding the language transition. Interview with J.B. Toews, Brethren educator and leader, June 10, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
78. Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta," p. 230; Adolf Ens, "Changes in Language and Cultural Symbols During the 1950's," unpublished paper, Box 17, Folder F, no. 2, CMBS Winnipeg.
79. Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta," p. 248.
80. Interview with J.B. Toews, Mennonite Brethren leader, June 10, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Interview with Gerhard Ens, editor of Der Bote, June 20, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba; H.A. Peters, "Das mennonitische Volkstum: Eine Skizze seiner Entstehung und des Verfalles," Der Bote, 8 December 1964, p. 10. Interview with Herb Brandt, Mennonite Brethren pastor, June 3 and December 19, 1989, Kelowna, B.C.; Frank Epp, "The Struggle for Recognition," in Poettcker and Regehr, eds., Call to Faithfulness, p. 169; Jacob Loewen, "The German Language, Culture and Faith," unpublished paper, Box 15, Folder E, no. 3, CMBS Winnipeg, p. 20.
81. Adolf Ens, "Changes in Language and Cultural Symbols," pp. 2-3; Interview with Herb Brandt; Regehr, "The Influence of World War II on Mennonites," p. 76.
82. Frank Epp, "The Struggle for Recognition," in Poettcker and Regehr, eds., Call To Faithfulness: Essays in Canadian Mennonite Studies (Winnipeg: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1972), pp. 167-73.
83. Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length, pp. 40-41.
84. H.F. Klassen, "Editorial", Konferenz Jugendblatt, 31 May 1944, pp. 2-3.
85. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 232, 328; H.H. Janzen, "Strengthening the Peace Witness," The Mennonite VII (January 1952), pp. 3-4; Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length, p. 28.
86. J.J.J., Konferenz Jugendblatt, May 1952, p. 2ff.

87. H.H. Janzen, "Strengthening the Peace Witness," p. 3.
88. Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length, p. 41; Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 339; 1954 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 85; 1958 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 154-55.
89. 1946 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 115; 1950 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 57; 1952 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 94.
90. Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta," pp. 224-25.
91. Letter to J. Quiring, July 10, 1950, B.B. Janz Collection, Box 4, Folder 49, CMBS Winnipeg.
92. 1946 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 162.
93. H.F. Klassen, "Editorial", Konferenz Jugendblatt, March 1946, p. 3.
94. Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length, p. 46; Mann, Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta, p. 103; Interview with Jack and Eleanor Dueck, July 6, 1989, Kitchener, Ontario.
95. J.B. Toews, "Mennonite Brethren Identity," pp. 142-43.
96. Penner, No Longer At Arm's Length.
97. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 233ff; 1946 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 138ff; 1947 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 12ff; 1950 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 6ff.
98. H.F. Klassen, editorial, Konferenz Jugendblatt, 31 May 1944, p. 3.
99. e.g. "Haltet solche Maenner in Ehren!", Konferenz Jugendblatt, March 1945, pp. 4-5; Ibid., March 1946, p. 4.
100. B.B. Janz, Konferenz Jugendblatt, March 1945, p. 13.
101. Anna Wiebe, "Wie erzielt man Liebe und Verstaendnis fuer die Muttersprache?", Konferenz Jugendblatt, June 1947, pp. 6-7; "Sprache", Ibid., p. 19; "Die Muttersprache," Ibid., April 1948; "The German Song, our Heritage," Ibid., June-August 1948, p. 15; H.F. Klassen, "Why Two Languages?", Ibid., November 1952, p. 2.
102. H.F. Klassen, Konferenz Jugendblatt, October 1946, p. 2.
103. "Brief an Editor u. Hilfseditoren," Konferenz Jugendblatt, February 1947, p. 2.
104. Konferenz Jugendblatt, April 1947, p. 2, 9.

105. Ibid., p. 2.
106. H.F. Klassen, "Why Two Languages?", Konferenz Jugendblatt, November 1952, p. 2.
107. Walfried Dirks, "Language Tolerance," Konferenz Jugendblatt, June 1947, p. 18.
108. Gerhard Lohrenz, "Volk oder Gemeinde?", Konferenz Jugendblatt, April 1950, p. 50.
109. H.F. Klassen, "Wollen wir Mennoniten bleiben?", Konferenz Jugendblatt, January 1952, p. 2.
110. A.A. Toews, "Ist unsere Absonderung berechtigt?", Konferenz Jugendblatt, September 1952, pp. 3-5.
111. R.C.L. Minnton, "Shall Canadians be Mennonites?", Konferenz Jugendblatt, September 1952, pp. 23-24.
112. Gerry Ediger, professor at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, is currently working on a doctoral dissertation which promises to treat of this topic in greater detail.
113. Minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, May 10, 1945, Folder BA 501, p. 164, CMBS Fresno. Hereafter referred to as "Coaldale minutes", with date and page number given.
114. Coaldale minutes, April 14, 1946, p. 168.
115. Coaldale minutes, January 15, 1946, pp. 165-66.
116. Coaldale minutes, April 19, 1948, p.180; May 30, 1948, p. 182.
117. Coaldale minutes, May 18, 1953, p. 216; February 22, 1954, p. 222.
118. Coaldale minutes, September 20, 1955, p. 234; October 31, 1955, p. 235.
119. Coaldale minutes, November 14, 1956, p. 240.
120. Coaldale minutes, July 26, 1958, p. 253.
121. Coaldale minutes, March 2, 1954, p. 222; March 8, 1954, p. 223.
122. Coaldale minutes, November 10, 1958, p. 261.
123. Coaldale minutes, January 29, 1962, p. 291; April 2, 1962, p. 293; April 28, 1963, p. 304; October 28, 1968, p. 345.

124. Minutes of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, December 21, 1954, microfilm roll no. 33, p. 2104, CMBS Fresno. Hereafter references will be made to "Kitchener minutes", date and page number.
125. Kitchener minutes, March 14, 1955, pp. 2104-05.
126. Kitchener minutes, April 9, 1955, p. 2108.
127. Kitchener minutes, April 10, 1957, p. 2222.
128. Kitchener minutes, May 16, 1961, p. 2356.
129. For the ongoing saga see Kitchener minutes, September 14, 1957, p. 2237; September 21, 1957, p. 2242; November 9, 1957, p. 2255; December 14, 1957, p. 2257; October 26, 1958, p. 2286; October 25, 1959, p. 2328; September 10, 1960, p. 2350; October 16, 1960; May 16, 1961, p. 2356; June 8, 1963, p. 2383.
130. Minutes of the North End Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, September 24, 1951, microfilm roll no. 92, p. 319, CMBS Fresno. Hereafter references will be made to "North End minutes", date, microfilm roll and page number.
131. North End minutes, October 23, 1951, roll 92, p. 320.
132. North End minutes, 1951 year-end report, roll 92, p. 330.
133. North End minutes, 1951 year-end report, roll 92, p. 334.
134. Ibid.
135. Attendance was up to 70 in 1952, and 87 in 1959. See North End minutes, year-end reports for 1952 and 1959, roll 92, p. 387, 643. In the Yarrow, B.C. congregation attendance at the Saturday school climbed during the early 1950's, reaching 195 in 1952, before dropping thereafter. Minutes of the Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, December 3, 1952, microfilm roll no. 65, p. 894, CMBS Fresno; Ibid., December 16, 1957, p. 1047. The growth of the Coaldale Saturday school during the early 1950's has already been mentioned.
136. North End minutes, year-end report for 1952, roll 92, p. 379.
137. North End minutes, March 4, 1954, roll 92, p. 450; August 23, 1954, roll 92, p. 467.
138. North End minutes, November 20, 1956, roll 92, p. 502; February 6, 1957, roll 92; September 25, 1957, roll 92, pp. 540-41; December 8, 1958, roll 92, p. 581.
139. North End minutes, 1959 year-end report, roll 92, p. 619.

140. North End minutes, 1959 year-end report, roll 92, p. 643.
141. Interview with Gilbert Brandt, Mennonite Brethren publisher, June 17, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
142. Interview with Calvin Redekop, Mennonite sociologist, June 27, 1990, Harrisonburg, Virginia.
143. Ibid.
144. Letter of July 10, 1950, to J. Quiring; B.B. Janz collection, Box 4, Folder 49, CMBS Winnipeg.
145. 1954 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 14.
146. Interview with J.B. Toews.
147. File BA 251, F 51, Alberta Mennonite High School, CMBS Fresno.
148. John B. Toews, With Courage to Spare: The Life of B.B. Janz (1877-1964) (Hillsboro, KS: The Board of Christian Literature, 1978), pp. 103-105.
149. Interview with Herb Brandt, Mennonite Brethren pastor and Conference Moderator, June 3 and December 19, 1989, Kelowna, B.C.

CHAPTER FIVE

Postwar Developments in Higher Education
and German Language Preservation

Between the mid-1940's and the early 1950's there was a significant institutional response to the rapid changes taking place among the Brethren in the postwar period. Increased material prosperity helped to facilitate the establishment of five Brethren high schools and one Bible college during this time. These institutions emerged in order to educate Brethren youth in an atmosphere congenial to the Brethren faith and way of life. Maintenance of the German language was an integral part of these endeavours, in their early years, and in this chapter I will briefly highlight this aspect of the new "higher" institutions, treating first the high schools and then the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. A brief look at the Conference Committee for the German Language and the inter-Mennonite Society for the Promotion of the German language will conclude this chapter.

Between 1944 and 1947, five high schools were started by the Canadian Mennonite Brethren. The schools generally grew out of, and were supported by, local Brethren congregations. They included the Mennonite Educational Institute of Clearbrook, B.C. (1944); Sharon Mennonite Collegiate Institute of Yarrow, B.C. (1945); Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute of Winnipeg, Manitoba (1945); Alberta Mennonite High School of Coaldale, Alberta (1946); and Eden Christian College of Virgil, Ontario (1947). Each of these schools offered, in addition to government-required curricula, courses in Bible, the German language, and Mennonite History. During the early years instruction was done on a bilingual basis, with some variation, but as time passed the

German language was relegated to courses on the Bible and the language itself.¹

A precedent had been set in Russia for Mennonite involvement in secondary education: at its height, the Russian Mennonite secondary school system comprised 23 schools, most with a three-year program that included instruction in German and Russian.² The founding of private high schools and a Bible college in Canada was therefore a natural response to the challenges posed by the Canadian environment to Brethren identity. Studies of these educational endeavours have tended to ignore the important role assigned in the schools to the German language in maintaining a sense of unity and continuity with the Brethren faith, way of life and community.³ As in so many other areas of Brethren life, the German language was intended to function in these institutions as an instrument of socio-religious integration; to ignore this dynamic is to miss a fundamental aspect of their operation.

Statements made at Brethren Canadian Conference meetings in the later 1940's and early 1950's support this contention. In 1948 H.B. Thiessen presented a paper on Brethren high schools which illustrated the dynamics present in such schools. He began by stating: "When we consider the 400-year history of our Volk, we find that our schools have played an essential role in the preservation and advancement of our teachings, special position and principles."⁴ As the Russlaender began to prosper in Canada, according to Thiessen, Mennonite youth started to attend public high schools; the lack of religious instruction, and the irreligious attitudes of some teachers, had necessitated something more "positive". Thus "The goal and motive for grounding these schools was to make a Christian education available to our

youth." Yet as his initial statement made clear, there was much more to it than that. The perpetuation of a common heritage and religious culture was an essential aspect of these schools:

The greatest value of our high schools however lies in the opportunity to devote one-fourth of the classtime to religion and the German language. What there can't be achieved through that! There are also excellent opportunities for our youth to become familiar with the history of our Volk.⁵

Religion (of the Mennonite variety), the German language, and Mennonite history were key components of a "Christian education". Following the report, the Conference adopted a resolution which recognized

the high significance of the Christian high schools which the Lord has given our religious community, where students may receive alongside the state education a more or less thorough training in religion and the German language.⁶

Five years later William Neufeld presented a similar point of view to the Conference. He noted that Mennonite youth were seeking higher education in growing numbers; the irreligious influence of the public schools caused many of them "to become alienated from our religious community, and to find it hard to return."⁷ The intention of the Mennonite forefathers had been to pass down the faith to their children, and Mennonite schools had emerged under this particular necessity: "So the first schools were actually such that only instructed religion and German; only later as needs grew were school programmes widened." Although Neufeld was referring to the emergence of schools in Russia, he clearly felt that the essential core of Mennonite education was religion and German. As he went on to state, "The existence of our high schools today are also born out of such (expanded) needs."⁸

The percentage of Brethren youth attending Brethren high schools is unclear, but presumably was lower than those attending public schools.⁹ By the later 1940's and early 1950's the German language seems to have been used

around 20-25% of the time, primarily during instruction of religion and German, and in morning chapel services.¹⁰ At the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg, for example, 17-1/2 to 25% of instructional time was conducted in German in 1951, although faculty reported that there were many difficulties involved in using the language to this extent.¹¹ By 1960 religious courses were being taught in English at the school, since the available books were in English and many students couldn't understand German anyway.¹² The School Board resisted this changeover to English,¹³ with the ironic result that "Teachers of religion teach the German religious terminology even though classes in religion are taught in English."¹⁴ This phenomenon of German becoming a genuine liturgical language, for a short while at least, illustrates the degree to which it had come to be identified with the Mennonite faith.

The story of the founding and early years of the Conference-supported Bible college provides perhaps the most vivid example of the role played by Germanism in Brethren higher education in the postwar period. The first indications that a "higher Bible school" would be started as a Conference project were given in 1939 at the Canadian Conference meeting held in Coaldale, Alberta. There J.A. Toews read a report on "school endeavours" in the Conference, in which he cited a growing awareness of the need for higher theological training from the Mennonite Brethren perspective. Maintenance of the German mother-tongue was clearly linked to the successful perpetuation of Brethren distinctives. Bible-school teachers were needed who would be able to articulate the faith in German as well as English.¹⁵

A Bible School Committee was formed at the 1939 conference, electing A.H. Unruh as chairman. At its first meeting, the committee expressed the

perceived relationship between the German language and Brethren faith distinctives in a statement of objectives:

1. Spiritual nurture of the youth. 2. Education of believing teachers for our day schools. These objectives give us the following goal: Support of all endeavours to start schools which give our children a general education, and also religion and German, as well as to stimulate participation in such schools as already exist in our circles; because experience shows that teachers who have received their education in such schools gladly instruct their students in religion and German, and guide their upbringing according to our sensibilities (ihre Erziehung in unserm Sinne leiten).¹⁶

Due to the circumstances brought about by the war, no great steps forward were taken on the issue until 1943. To have attempted to expand German-language education would obviously have been foolhardy in the early war years.¹⁷ The most pressing issue at that time was securing alternative service for Mennonite men conscripted by the Canadian army. By 1943, however, the committee was able to meet and further plan for the opening of a "higher Bible school".

The "language problem" was among the concerns of the committee. It was acknowledged that all of the "lower" Bible schools had their own versions of this problem, and that in order for the generations not to be separated by language during the current "changeover period", this problem would have to be solved. Language was not, however, the sole issue of this meeting: the concern was that young, educated, bilingual people were needed at all levels of Brethren life, as Bible school teachers, youth workers, missionaries and preachers. The maintenance of the German language would ensure that the Brethren faith perspective would be transmitted to these new leaders, but it was a means to an end; there is no indication that anyone involved in this committee hoped for anything more than a bilingual church which would gradually change to English.¹⁸

The Conference moved forward on the issue, and by October 1944 a building had been bought in Winnipeg and its doors opened for business. A.H. Unruh, who was not fluent in English, was elected its first president. J.B. Toews, the most educated person from within the Brethren constituency, took over the role in the summer of 1945, with the intent of building a solid academic program for the college. By the 1946-47 school year the curriculum included courses in theology, church history, missions, philosophy, Greek, modern languages (including German), and music, among others. Enrollment had reached 129 students, one-third of them female.¹⁹ The college at this time offered a graduating Diploma in Theology as well as a Master's of Theology. In the primary instructional areas of theology and Christian education, 72 semester hours were taught in English, and 58 in German.²⁰ The amount of German instruction thereafter diminished to on average of about one-half the amount of English instruction.²¹

The conflicts and problems surrounding the early years of the school illustrate the dilemmas confronting the Mennonite Brethren in the immediate postwar years. On the one hand, the school had been called into being to provide higher theological training in a bilingual context. The feeling was that if the Brethren faith was not to be left behind by the upcoming generation, an effort would have to be made to stem the tide of English language and culture, and the evangelical theology which went with it. Could the distinctive faith understandings survive such a rapid change in the form of their expression? Thus pressure continued to be brought to bear on the college to provide a strong German component and fluently bilingual graduates. On the other hand, the effort appears to have been doomed from the beginning, given the chronic unavailability of current academic materials

in German²² and the lack of proficiency and interest in German displayed by incoming students.

The intractability of the problem soon became evident. A meeting of the College Board early in 1946 indicated both how Brethren theology was associated with the German language, and that students were not up to the task presented them. Students showed a deficiency in Biblical knowledge, and further, a weakness in German language proficiency: "The students have religious ideas, but they often are unable to clothe the thoughts in words." "Words", in this case, meant German words.²³ As well, an "inner aversion" to the learning of German was felt to be exhibited by some students, hindering the whole process.²⁴ Indifference or aversion toward the German language was an ongoing problem, reported in various contexts.²⁵ By 1947 the graduation ceremonies were conducted completely in English, although other assemblies were still being held in German.²⁶ Enrollment in the German course was weak from the beginning,²⁷ and in 1949 only three students registered for German instruction.²⁸ During 1946, of 1017 books checked out of the library, only 19 were German--not an encouraging figure, considering that there were almost 900 German books in the library.²⁹ The majority of periodicals received by the college were written in English.³⁰

All of this did not go unnoticed by the Mennonite Brethren constituency. Already in 1945 the Canadian Conference Bible School Committee had been concerned to "especially emphasize" to the MBBC Board of Directors that the general wish of the Brethren constituency was for strong teaching of the German language, and that this was an area which needed to be improved upon by the College.³¹ At the 1946 Conference meeting the report from the college acknowledged this expectation,³² and the ratio of German to English being

taught was reported for the first time. Questions were raised by delegates as to whether knowledge of German was obligatory, and the B.C. delegation proposed that it be made mandatory, "so that future preachers would have full command of the language."³³ President J.B. Toews answered that every student who wished to graduate had to know both languages. During further discussion it was pointed out that the language needed to first be learned at home, in the church, and in religion and bible schools, if students were to be rightly prepared for the college.³⁴

At the same Conference meeting it was noted that English was being taught at about a fifty percent level in the congregational Bible schools.³⁵ After hearing the MBBC report, the Conference recommended that "In family and church everything be set to the task of teaching our children the German language," in order to prepare future MBBC students.³⁶ Here a dynamic was begun in which pressure on the school to turn out bilingual graduates was reflected back onto the constituency, instigating a broader effort to perpetuate the language at all levels of Brethren life, culminating in the formation of the Committee for the German Language in 1950, where the language issue was destined to die a slow if not quiet death.

The same sorts of issues were present at the 1947 conference, with the college reiterating its objective of expanded German instruction, in order to help the congregations to solve their language problems.³⁷ In 1948 A.A. Kroeker reported that he had visited almost all of the Brethren congregations in the Western provinces during 1947, as a representative of the college. The Mennonite Brethren, according to Kroeker, had many fine youth, many of whom were unfortunately ending up in non-Mennonite schools--the college was therefore of great importance in the retention and furtherance of the legacy

which God had entrusted to the Mennonites. The people in the churches were generally in favour of the work of the school, but what was sad was that "Such a large percentage of Mennonite Brethren youth who want to go into some sort of ministry are doing it in non-Mennonite schools."³⁸ At the end of all reports having to do with school endeavours, the Conference went on record as "stressing its stated wish...that our college continues to work in the spirit of the Conference, in which the needs of the congregations are taken into account and workers are brought forward who are equally proficient in both languages and thus can properly serve the congregations."³⁹

The faculty and administration of the College did what they could to respond to the pressure to turn out fully bilingual graduates,⁴⁰ but this period did not pass without its casualties. Far-sighted college president J.B. Toews resigned in 1948, after three years with the college, largely because he felt that the problem of German retention was of more importance to the Board of Directors than building a solid academic program at the college: Board meetings were often taken up with concern about how many chapels and courses were being conducted in English, how many in German, etc. The Board felt that too much of the curriculum was being taught in English, and were "always putting the brakes on" to any new initiatives. Toews' desire to set up a really "respectable" program was not given top priority, thus limiting his ambition. He saw the next ten years being filled with battles which he didn't want to fight. The anticipation of the school was to prepare future church leaders, and thus the concern with the German language. That the best academic materials were written in English was of secondary importance. Upon Toews' unfortunate departure H.H. Janzen took over, a German-speaking MBBC teacher who, according to Toews, "Provided an image that

was fitting at the time."⁴¹ A.H. Unruh summed up the dilemma faced by Toews thus:

He took pains to lead the institution in a way which corresponded to the Conference's needs. Certain circumstances in the Conference he could not change; but he did what he could to please both the students and the Conference.⁴²

The new President H.H. Janzen, more conservative than Toews, worked to improve relations between the congregations and the college, trying to walk the thin line between the changing times and the wishes of the older generation. In a statement made in 1949 to the Conference Bible School Committee, Janzen claimed that there seemed to be a trend toward anti-denominationalism which was being picked up by the congregations and the younger people. This "spirit" was threatening the Mennonite congregational life, as well as the youth, who through language and their contact with the outside world were most threatened.⁴³ In early 1947 the College Board had indicated that it felt the Conference as a whole did not have a clear idea of what it wanted in a Bible college.⁴⁴ These statements indicate that while a strong pressure for the maintenance of the German language was coming from many sides, there were countervailing trends from within the Brethren constituency which worked against the efforts made by the college to fulfill its mandate. By his statement Janzen seems to have been trying to encourage the congregations to take more responsibility for the preservation of the heritage. Thus Janzen focussed on the college-congregation relationship, and reiterated the fear that the loss of German was part of a general process of degeneration which the denomination was experiencing.⁴⁵

As stated above, it had been clear to the Conference by 1946 that incoming students were neither properly prepared nor inclined towards becoming fully bilingual, and as a result the instruction of German at all

levels of Brethren life had been encouraged. At the 1947 Conference meeting it was again emphasized that more support needed to be given at the level of the home and local congregations if the youth were to be won over to the German language.⁴⁶ The 1950 meeting of the Canadian Conference adopted a lengthy resolution on the German language, including a request that German be taught at all levels of Brethren life, and that a committee for the preservation of the German language be formed. The stage had been set for these developments at the 1949 Conference meeting, when F.C. Thiessen read an impassioned report from a committee which had been set up to try to unify and regularize the curriculum of the Conference Bible schools and high schools. A course of instruction had been formulated which was to help prepare students for the Bible college, but this was not enough. What was needed was a powerful "Bildungskomitee" (Educational/Developmental Committee) which would oversee all aspects of the Bible schools and high schools, and would have the power to alter the curriculum as it saw fit.

An elemental aspect of this committee would be to provide the coordination needed to perpetuate the German language among Mennonites. Thiessen, who had been a strong proponent of Germanism in the 1930's, and who was a "prime mover" behind the founding of the Brethren high school in Clearbrook,⁴⁷ complained bitterly that the German language had been allowed to fall into neglect at every level of Brethren life, lamenting:

That we in our Volk have been born into the world as German-speaking children was no accident, rather God's will. That the Lord wants to now take our mother tongue from us--I can not understand and find it biblically unsound.⁴⁸

For Thiessen, the issues of language, education and the Brethren faith identity were all tied together. And he saw quite clearly the need for a broadly based foundation for the language if the college was to be successful

in its mandate of providing young, bilingual teachers:

These teachers we now expect out of the College. Can they give us the strength, which will enable us as a Conference to preserve our unique character and outlook (Eigenart und Einstellung), as we have done until today? To that also belongs, that our teachers in the Bible and high schools have the command of both languages, as long as we yet have German worship services. The College finds this expectation to produce such teachers as unfair, since the students come to the College with neither the appropriate preparation in the German language nor the love for the mother tongue. It is certainly clear that the College cannot meet our expectations under such conditions and in four years turn out teachers who have a full command of both languages.⁴⁹

Thus the pressure on the Bible college was again reflected back upon the other levels of Conference life. The formation of the language committee in 1950 was a logical outcome of the mounting pressures on the school, as the proponents of Germanism made a last, comprehensive bid to save the mother tongue. The language committee was dealt a severe blow even before it started, however, with the death of Thiessen in the interim between the 1949 and 1950 meetings. With or without Thiessen's death, the committee and the issue it represented was to fade into an obscure corner of Mennonite Brethren life, since the language transition among the bulk of the constituency was well underway by this time.

The German language preservation organizations should not however be lightly dismissed; they represented the culmination of 25 years of struggle to maintain the socio-religious integrity of the Russlaender Brethren in Canada, and the important if misguided role Germanism had played in that struggle. Individual emotional attachment to the mother-tongue was also obviously a factor in language retention efforts, but it still had the larger Mennonite group as its reference point, and thus cannot be bracketed off from the general rubric of socio-religious solidarity and integrity.

Two language preservation organizations are of interest here. One is the

Mennonite Brethren Conference "Committee for the German Language", already alluded to, and the other is the inter-Mennonite "Society for the Promotion of the German Language". The Conference Committee eventually merged, for all practical purposes, with the Society, although it continued to report to the Conference under its own name. I will first examine the Committee, then the Society.

At the 1950 Brethren Canadian Conference meeting \$ 1000.00 was allocated to the new Committee, and five members were elected. They were D.K. Duerksen, H. Regehr, Johann Goertz, A.H. Unruh, and H.H. Kornelsen. The stated purposes of the Committee were:

To stimulate the learning of the German language through lectures or articles in the German (Mennonite) periodicals. It is also to help with the coordination of appropriate (German) materials for the Saturday-, Bible- and high-schools.⁵⁰

At the 1951 Conference meeting the Committee gave a long report containing a list of reasons for maintaining the German language. In addition to mentioning things such as the general benefits of being bilingual, and the need to be able to relate to recent Mennonite immigrants from Russia and Germany, the following reasons were given:

Because with the loss of a language individual persons and whole groups close the door to intellectual, cultural and spiritual goods. Because the German language binds together our little Volk, which is scattered across the entire globe...Because the German language in many circles helps to hold together young and old in worship services and in the home.

The Committee expressed the feeling that the German language could be maintained in "many circles" if parents would speak High German to their children, and if the Brethren schools were supported. Its main activity at this time was trying to organize German textbook distribution to the various Mennonite schools.⁵¹

During the next year the Committee sent questionnaires regarding German language usage to all of the Brethren congregations and schools, and tried to give practical advice on how to nurture the German language. Only 23% of the congregations responded to the poll, while the response from the schools was better. The Committee recommended that schools build up their German libraries and that congregations expand their Saturday schools. Parents were again implored to speak High German, not English, with their children.⁵² By 1953 the Committee reported that it was working closely with the Society for the Promotion of the German Language.⁵³

An organizational meeting for the Society took place in H.F. Klassen's house in May of 1952.⁵⁴ Over the next few years Mennonite Brethren who served on the Society's executive committee included H.F. Klassen, A.H. Unruh, D.K. Duerksen, N. Neufeld and H. Regehr. G.H. Peters was the founding Chairman of the Society, and Walter Quiring the Secretary. All of these individuals, with the exception of Quiring, were Russlaender immigrants from the 1920's. Quiring had settled in Germany and been an ardent Nazi supporter in the 1930's (see Chapter Three). Winnipeg was the locus of the Society, which by its sixth meeting in the fall of 1952 had elected provincial representatives.⁵⁵ The name of the organization was initially the "Society for the Promotion of the German Mother-Tongue," but the reference to "mother-tongue" was eventually dropped. The Society wanted to attract those of the younger generation for whom the German language was not the mother-tongue.⁵⁶

The Society met relatively often, in its early years, sometimes at two-week intervals. Lectures were given in Mennonite communities on the need to retain and nurture the German language, and the Society did much to make sure that German text- and songbooks were made available to interested schools and

individuals. The chairman, G.H. Peters, organized a correspondence course. Numerous articles supporting the language, and notices of gatherings to be held, were published in the Mennonite newspapers, and summer courses and youth programmes were staged. The Society also endowed prizes for excellence in the study of the language by students in Mennonite schools, and operated a German lending-library. All of these activities served the primary goal of the Society to raise consciousness among Mennonites as to the importance of the language for the Mennonite community.⁵⁷

Between 1952 and 1960, the Society recorded a total membership of approximately 1400 individuals. The number of active members who paid the \$1.00 yearly fee was generally much lower, the highpoint having been reached in 1954, with 700 active members.⁵⁸ Of the total number of individuals who had at one time or another belonged to the Society, at least 186 or about 15% were of Brethren affiliation. It is highly probable that the actual figure was higher.⁵⁹ The membership rolls indicate that the Society was more than a Winnipeg phenomenon, attracting Mennonites from every province, primarily the western provinces of B.C., Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba. The majority of Brethren members were from Manitoba, but one-fifth were from Alberta, and one-tenth from B.C.⁶⁰

It is beyond the scope of this study to present a detailed history of the Society, which was active into the 1970's and beyond. In the remainder of this chapter I will present a few glimpses into the ideas and feelings expressed by the Society and its members in regard to the German language and its significance for Mennonites. Although the Society was not able to stem the tide of anglicization to any significant degree, it did provide a forum for an older generation of Canadian Mennonites to express their feelings

towards the language, religious life, and sense of peoplehood which had been shared in Russia.

A wide range of motives for retaining the language was expressed by Society members, including an emotional and spiritual attachment. In 1955 Isaac Redekopp presented a short sermon to a meeting of the Society which was summarized by the Secretary thus:

Brother Redekopp drew a parallel between the language of human beings and of Jesus, as God's word become flesh. The Lord Jesus was magnificent, full of grace and truth. So also should the language be magnificent and carry with it the imprint of truth. It should allow us to express our deepest feelings and our most elevated thoughts...Even Jesus expressed his deepest feelings in his mother-tongue. His call on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" was uttered in the Aramaic language, which was his mother-tongue.⁶¹

Although it was clear that Redekopp felt the German language to be "magnificent", he also indicated that language shouldn't be elevated to an all-important position. The Society was careful to emphasize that it didn't feel that any one language was better than another, rather it wanted to nurture and maintain the particular "good" which had been inherited from the Mennonite forefathers.⁶²

The equality of languages may have been affirmed in principle by the Society, but in practice there were strong feelings that for Mennonites, at least, the German language (and culture) was special, and that the surrounding "English" culture was inferior and to be avoided. G.H. Peters, who had been a high school teacher in Mennonite schools for most of his life, was especially concerned with losing Mennonite youth to the "American melting-pot";

Now only goal-directed countermeasures can save us from complete "Verenglischung" (anglicization). We must win back our youth, if we as a Volk do not want to lose ourselves in the American melting-pot of nations. Those in our Volk who have recognized the danger dare

not stand by and say "what's the use". We must continue to try to sharpen the sense of personal responsibility of our youth.⁶³

In speeches to youth groups Peters emphasized the "German" background of the Mennonites, and the need to be proud of that aspect of their heritage. The German language carried with it high cultural values, and bound Mennonites together.⁶⁴ Peters had clearly been influenced by "Volkish" thought, and saw the Mennonites as a cultural, ethnic and religious unity which would be destroyed if one element was removed. At the initial membership meeting of the Society in September 1952, Peters summed up his feelings about Germanism:

Why German?...Because it is our mother-tongue--"Acquire what you have inherited from your fathers, in order to possess it." I think that every human being belongs to a Volk, and we belong to no other Volk than the German. The German language is the root which connects us to the cultural ground of the German Volk. Closely bound with our language are our customs and morals, our traditions, and our most noble character traits. Indeed, the language is also the carrier of our religion...The language is not just a form which can be changed without altering the content. O no, the language forms, together with the content of our personality, an indivisible unity. With the loss of the mother-tongue must our personality, our culture, our traditions and our religion be altered, and certainly not in a positive way.⁶⁵

Many of these themes were present in an early Society statement of the reasons for retaining the German language, but the Volkish rhetoric was toned down and some more general grounds were added. Summarized, the statement read:

1. Keeping the language will prevent a rift between generations.
2. With the loss of the language the religion will also be influenced, because the mother-tongue is indivisibly tied to our religion.
3. The German language is the root of our culture, traditions and intellectual/spiritual development. With the loss of this language we lose our intellectual stability and are then more open to corruptive and demoralising influences.
4. The German language is the connecting-link of Mennonites throughout the world.
5. Studying the German language gives a better understanding of the English.
6. Canada is a rich nation because it contains so many different nationalities. We will be good citizens if we retain ours.
7. The German language is our mother-tongue and the language of our ancestors, literature and religion.
8. The German language is one of

the most important languages in the world.

The foregoing statements represent the most self-conscious and wide-ranging reflections made, in the period under study, on the meaning of the German identity for the Russlaender Mennonites in Canada. That they were made during the dying days of this particular constellation of language, peoplehood and religious faith is not surprising since the ability to analyze is enhanced by greater distance from the object of analysis. Also, with anglicization and many other social, cultural and religious changes well underway, it had become necessary to rationalize what had previously been more generally taken for granted. But if Society members were engaging in some rather subtle and sophisticated thinking on the relationship between culture, religion and communal identity, they were also nostalgic and out of touch with the major trends of the religious mainstream of Mennonite life.

A.H. Unruh (not to be confused with his pro-Nazi brother B.H. Unruh--see Chapter Two) was a highly-respected Brethren educator who was involved with the society in its early days, and his statements on language preservation illustrate the particular Brethren perspective, which with its missionary emphasis tended towards a more moderate formulation of the problem. In early 1953 Unruh gave a short lecture entitled "Why is it necessary to retain the German mother-tongue?" to the first full membership meeting of the Society, and the address was later published in the Mennonitische Rundschau.

In the lecture, Unruh argued for the maintenance of the German language from various "grounds", including educational, historical, business/occupational, missions, and "Volks-grounds" (Volksgruenden). In discussing educational reasons to keep the German language, Unruh implied that the German language goes "deeper" than the English, citing a highly-educated

English-speaking man who praised a German Bible commentary for revealing depths which remained covered in English. The German-speaking world is a source of learning which is well worth studying. Translations are worthwhile, but some things get lost.⁶⁶

It is also necessary to retain the language for historical reasons-- knowledge of it will bind the old world to the new, and provide better understanding between generations: "I've said it once already, he who throws away the German language, throws out also his own history." As an "old world" language, German should be studied for an understanding of this past world, its prayers, and its Bible. Unruh also argued that for business and professional reasons it is good to retain the language--it's useful to be able to communicate with people in their own language. And then there were grounds to retain the language from a missions perspective. "Our" people are in South America, and they don't speak English. People may want to missionize there or in Germany.⁶⁷

The most interesting part of this lecture is his discussion of "Volks-grounds". He had already alluded to bridging the gap between the old and new worlds, and keeping the generations together, and now he explicitly speaks of keeping the Volk together. He argues against Low German being the "Volks-language" because it is impure (containing Russian and Polish elements) and open to variation (English is easily added); the implication is that compared to High German, Low German does not have the same unifying power. The Low German language is dear to him, but just doesn't quite pass muster as a Volks-language. If it were to be cleaned up and all the foreign words expunged, there wouldn't be much left.⁶⁸

In this context Unruh cited the example of Martin Luther, who, finding

the state of German to be "confused", determined a single German language for all German people;

And...we're still today enjoying the blessings from that. We have the High German language right in the Bible. When you publicly pray, when the preacher says a prayer, then he says it in the High German, not the Low German language. The High German language unites us...And therefore is this language Society agreed, that it is precisely the language which it wants to raise up (heben); it is doing a major work...The children are to be influenced as well as the elders. And in this manner can we perhaps come to a unified German mother-tongue. Thus on volkish grounds, for the sake of the unity of our Volk, it would be good if we came together and supported this matter.⁶⁹

This lecture indicates that Unruh was deeply convinced of the importance of the German language for Mennonites, and gives some of the reasons why Low German was neglected at the expense of High German. But this was not an enduring theme for Unruh, as it was for G.H. Peters, Walter Quiring, D.K. Duerksen and other members of the Society. Unruh seems to have been silent on the Germanism issue during the 1930's and 1940's, and youth-oriented speeches given by Unruh during the early 1950's made little or no mention of the language issue, concentrating instead on spiritual and moral themes.⁷⁰ In a speech entitled "The Service of Language", given at meeting of the German language Society in the fall of 1953, the ambivalence of Unruh's perspective comes into sharper focus.

After repeating some of the themes present in the earlier address, including the purity and unifying power of the German "Bible language", Unruh compared the contemporary Mennonite situation with that of the Jews, whose Hebrew "Bible language" influenced the later Aramaic. Mennonites have an evangelical mission, thus they require a "Biblical mindset"; for that reason they should treasure, honor and teach the German "Bible language." The Tower of Babel confused everybody, and therefore the more pure and unified a

language is, the easier it is to find understanding. However, he points out that the building of the Tower was aimed at making a name for the builders, and was thus based on pride. "The language is a servant for the good of mankind, not for self-aggrandizement." Just like on Pentecost every listener heard the Gospel in their own language, so God gave Mennonites the Bible in their own language.

But the language as such is neutral in relation to the Gospel. It is proclaimed in every language. For that reason we value the study of all foreign languages and treasure that much more the study of our own mother-tongue as a legacy from Father and Mother.⁷¹

A basic ambivalence was present. On the one hand a strong impression is given that German is a superior, "pure" language; on the other hand, Unruh essentially says that Mennonites have a right to their language as much as anyone else does to theirs, but it should not be regarded as qualitatively better or idolized. The ambiguity was overcome in Unruh's discourse, ultimately, by the evangelistic imperative. The greatest goal of language is in preaching the Gospel to all peoples. The contemporary Mennonite situation, according to Unruh, was similar to that of the early church, which existed in a world where Greek and Hebrew were both in use.

The English and German language run side by side. Our task is to hold onto these languages as a gift from God, as an inheritance. We must however purify them through the Bible, in order that we fulfill our final mission: the spreading of the Gospel. We should be thankful for every man we have, who can in two or more languages proclaim the Gospel. We want to bring this assembly before God's throne. We're not only "Kulturmenschen" (cultural beings), also God's carrier--to spread the Gospel. And we don't want ourselves to have a falling-out for the sake of a language.⁷²

Unruh's message at this point is clear. Language is not a good in itself, and should not, as an aspect of culture, divide Mennonites. The overriding goal is to preach the Gospel, in whatever language. Clearly, though, German is the Mennonite language for Unruh. Taken in the context of a gathering of

the Society when it was peaking in popularity, this is a strong message against overemphasizing the language as a good in itself. The Brethren concern with preaching the Gospel was for Unruh the final standard of judgement, and thus moderated his Germanism. Unruh's position is another example of the ambivalence felt by the Brethren toward their cultural heritage. If on the one hand it was felt to be an important instrument of socio-religious integration for them, it was also balanced by the evangelistic aspect of Brethren religious identity.

In reports to the Canadian Brethren Conference during the later 1950's, the German language Committee/Society began emphasizing the connection between German language preservation and missions, and the inherent value of knowing a second language, while the issues of Mennonite Volk unity and the importance of German as the Mennonite religious language began to fade.⁷³ Clearly, the tolerance for that kind of talk had begun to wear thin. As D.K. Duerksen reported in 1958, "It is difficult to talk about the promotion of the German language in our circles, because misunderstandings and opposition so easily appear."⁷⁴ Although the Committee for the German Language reported to the Conference for a number of years after this, and the Society for the Promotion of the German Language continued to operate into the 1970's and beyond, they became increasingly peripheral to the life of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren.⁷⁵

Thus significant efforts were made, in the decade following the end of the Second World War, to provide an institutional base for German language preservation. This was a function both of the important role the language was perceived to play in the maintenance of Mennonite unity and identity, and the rapid transition to English which was taking place, especially among the

younger generation. This chapter has only begun to sketch an outline of the efforts in higher education and by the language preservation groups to preserve German as a special "Mennonite language". The history of the Society for the Promotion of the German language, in particular, remains to be written. Nevertheless, the broad outlines of the Germanism prevalent in this period have been mapped, and it has been demonstrated that renewed efforts were made, in the postwar period, to preserve the German language as an instrument of socio-religious integration for the Brethren, and that these efforts were in fact closely linked to the new educational endeavours.

NOTES, CHAPTER FIVE

1. Peter G. Klassen, "A History of Mennonite Education in Canada, 1786-1960" (D.Ed. thesis, University of Toronto, 1970d), p. 285ff; John George Doerksen, "History of Education of the Mennonite Brethren of Canada" (M.Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1963), p. 106, 136ff.
2. Klassen, "A History of Mennonite Education in Canada," p. 283.
3. See Klassen, "A History of Mennonite Education in Canada"; Doerksen, "History of Education of the Mennonite Brethren of Canada"; John George Doerksen, "Mennonite Brethren Bible College and College of the Arts" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1968). J.A. Toews alludes to the issue in his history of the Mennonite Brethren, but doesn't give any detail. See J.A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, 1975), p. 254 and p. 458, note 1.
4. 1948 Mennonite Brethren Northern District Conference Yearbook (Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House), p. 73.
5. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
6. Ibid., p. 77.
7. 1953 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 94.
8. Ibid.
9. See the 1951 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 57, and the 1952 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 96. Surveys of congregations were far from complete, but the figures cited indicate that more than half of Brethren youth attended public schools.
10. 1949 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 55; 1951 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 57; 1954 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 95; 1955 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 12.
11. MBCI School Committee Minutes, October 27, 1951, Box L234, folder 22, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Fresno.
12. Ibid., July 21, 1960.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., September 19, 1963, Box L234, folder 23.
15. 1939 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 25.

16. From the pamphlet "Die Entstehung der Hoeheren Bibelschule und die Stellung der Manitoba Konferenz dazu", from the Northern District Conference Bible School Committee Files, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg, hereafter BSCF (Bible School Committee Files).

17. There was no Conference meeting at all in 1940 due to the strong anti-German feelings present among the Canadian public during the early part of the war. At the 1941 Northern District Conference meeting the Bible School Committee reported that "It will doubtless be understood by you that in the face of the present situation we are not able to report on groundbreaking work along the lines of school endeavours." 1941 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 15.

18. Minutes of the 1943 Bible School Committee meeting, BSCF. Also see minutes of a meeting of the Conference Bible School Committee with the MBBC Board of Directors, December 12-15, 1945, microfilm roll no. 40, p. 40, CMBS Fresno, hereafter BM (Board Minutes). At this meeting five goals of the school were listed: to produce Bible school teachers, missionaries, church workers, music directors, and bilingual graduates, because in 10 or 12 years they would be needed in the churches--they were even then beginning to be needed, according to the report.

19. BM, p. 81.

20. 1947 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 2-3.

21. MBBC Faculty Meeting Minutes, September 19, 1947, and September 7, 1948. MBBC Faculty Minutes File, CMBS Winnipeg, hereafter FM (Faculty Minutes).

22. Interview with J.B. Toews, Mennonite Brethren educator and leader, June 10, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Meeting of the MBBC Board of Directors with the Northern District Conference Bible School Committee, December 12-15, 1945, BM pp. 40-50; Report to the 1947 Northern District Conference meeting given by H.P. Toews, 1947 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 78-79; Report to the Northern District Conference Bible School Committee, given by J.A. Toews, February 23-24, 1949, BSCF. Report from the College given by H.H. Redekop at the 1950 Northern District Conference meeting, 1950 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 89.

23. BM, p. 56.

24. Ibid., p. 57.

25. Report from the College, January, 1947, BM, p.125; Report to the Northern District Conference Bible School Committee, given by J.A. Toews, February 23-24, 1949, BSCF; "A Short Overview of the Work in the M.B. Bible College" by A.H. Unruh, 1953, BSCF.

26. Minutes of the MBBC Faculty meeting September 19, 1947, FM.

27. Ibid., December 11, 1946.

28. Ibid., January 10, 1949.
29. Report from the College, January 1947, BM, pp. 85-86.
30. Report to the Conference Bible School Committee for 1947, February 19-21, 1948, BSCF.
31. Meeting of the MBBC Board of Directors with the Northern District Conference Bible School Committee, December 12-15, 1945, BM, p. 49.
32. 1946 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 98.
33. Ibid., p. 109.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 115.
36. Ibid., p. 114.
37. 1947 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 83.
38. 1948 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 62.
39. Ibid., p. 72.
40. The college took steps to encourage the learning of German through awards for proficiency in German study, and by making facility with German a pre-requisite for admission. (Faculty minutes of May 31, 1948, September 7, 1948, and January 31, 1949, FM.) It is not clear how strongly this requirement was enforced--in 1953 A.H. Unruh reported that it was impossible for the college to turn out "proper" bilingual preachers (A Short Overview of the Work in the M.B. Bible College, in Winnipeg, Manitoba," BSCF.)
41. Interview with J.B. Toews.
42. 1948 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 64.
43. Report to the Northern District Conference Bible School Committee, February 23-24, 1949, p. 8, BSCF.
44. Report from the College to the Bible School Committee, January 1947, BM, p. 99.

45. Further evidence of the highwire act which the college was compelled to perform is contained in Janzen's report on "The Inner Life of the Bible College", presented to the Conference Bible School Committee meeting of February 19-21, 1948, and subsequently presented to the 1948 Canadian Conference meeting. Here he claimed that the atmosphere of the college had improved from the earlier years; the negativity experienced at that time was due to the influence of non-Mennonite schools on incoming students. As things got rolling and students helped to create positive contact with congregations, the atmosphere was changing. Many congregations were now supporting the school, although not all. Helpful would be "an honest set-to in our hearts and in the congregations with various critical questions, not last the language question." The basic critique here seems again to be that the expectations of the constituency were too high considering the emotional and intellectual state of the students which it sent to the college. BSCF.

46. 1947 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 78-79.

47. Doerksen, "History of Education of the Mennonite Brethren of Canada," p. 103.

48. 1949 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 56.

49. Ibid.

50. 1950 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 90-91.

51. 1951 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 58-59.

52. 1952 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 97-98.

53. 1953 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 95-96.

54. Minutes of the Society for the Promotion of the German Language, May 15, 1952, Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC), Winnipeg. Hereafter SM (Society Minutes).

55. SM, July 29, 1952; October 19, 1952.

56. SM, October 29, 1955, p. 4.

57. SM, April 11 1953, and passim.

58. SM, passim; General Files of the Society, MHC, passim. Hereafter "GF" (General Files); 1954 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 97.

59. GF, Society membership catalogue. The Card-catalog system used by the Society did not record the church affiliation of every member, only those who had specified it upon becoming members.

60. Figures were arrived at by an analysis of the membership catalogue.

61. SM, October 29, 1955.

62. See for example the 1954 and 1955 reports given by the Brethren Conference Committee for the German Language to the Conference: 1954 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 97; 1955 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 13.

63. Letter to A.A. Martens, January 23, 1954, Society Correspondence File, 1952-54, MHC. Hereafter "SCF" (Society Correspondence File).

64. "Ansprache auf den Jugendvereinsprogramme der Schoenwieser Gemeinde, den 20 Juni, 1954", SCF, 1952-54.

65. "Vortrag gehalten von G.H. Peters auf der Gruenderversammlung des 'Mennonitischen Vereins zur Pflege der deutschen Muttersprache' am 27 September, 1952, in der Schoenwieser Kirche in Winnipeg," G.F.

66. A.H. Unruh, "Warum ist es notwendig, unsere deutsche Muttersprache zu erhalten?" Mennonitische Rundschau, 3 June 1953, p. 2.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., p. 3. See discussion of the Low German/High German question in Chapter Six.

69. Ibid.

70. e.g. "Die Gleichstellung mit der Welt", read at a youth gathering and printed in the Konferenz Jugendblatt, May-August 1951, pp. 3-5; "Die positive Beeinflussung der Jugend in den MBG Kanadas", manuscript of a speech read at a Conference gathering, AH Unruh Collection, Box 3, CMBS Winnipeg.

71. "Der Dienst der sprache", A lecture given at a membership meeting of the Society for the Promotion of the German Language, October 24, 1953, and published in the Rundschau November 25, 1953. From AH Unruh collection, Box 3, CMBS Winnipeg.

72. Ibid.

73. e.g. 1957 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 115; 1958 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 152-53; 1959 Northern District Conference Yearbook, pp. 129-30.

74. 1958 Northern District Conference Yearbook, p. 152.

75. Interview with Herb Brandt, Mennonite Brethren pastor and Conference leader, June 3 and December 19, 1989, Kelowna, B.C; J.A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 328.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion: Some Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives

In the parlance of sociologists the Canadian Mennonites can be described as an "ethnic church". The term "ethno-racial-religious group," coined by Isajiw and employed most recently by Herberg (1989), can also be used to describe Mennonites. I would add that the emphasis should be placed on "church", when using the former term, and "religious", when using the latter. Breton has used the term "ethnic enclosure" to describe the existence of social boundaries between an ethnic group and others, and the mechanisms used by a group to maintain such intergroup boundaries. "Compartmentalization" is the degree to which "institutional completeness" has been achieved, whereby ethnic institutions function to shield individuals from assimilative forces.¹

The Mennonite Brethren clearly exercised a certain degree of "ethnic enclosure", and the German identity was an important mechanism in maintaining social "boundaries", even if that was not its sole function. Enclosure was resisted by many Brethren, however, often because it came into conflict with their evangelical theology. The "compartmentalization" which took place via the erection of various institutions, including a variety of schools, was in response to the perceived degenerative and assimilative effects of Anglo-Canadian institutions and culture, and again Germanism played a part, although its role gradually declined.

Herberg advances the notion that "integration", or the temporary participation by members of an ethnic group in the larger societal structures and institutions, does not necessarily imply acculturation or disloyalty towards the originating group.² It would be difficult to argue that in the

case of the Russlaender Brethren the "integration" which took place did not have a significant effect upon loyalty to the group and its traditional religious culture. Herberg presses the point further by arguing that "An ethnoculture can be maintained even though English or French is the language of communication."³ The first generation of Brethren immigrants to Canada felt that the German language was crucial to the maintenance of Brethren identity, while those born in Canada generally did not. The ethno-religious culture which had emerged in Imperial Russia was, in the eyes of the first generation immigrants, rapidly in decline in Canada during the period under study. Meanwhile the second and third generations were undergoing the process of "ethnic differentiation" whereby Brethren identity was adapted to the Canadian context.

The pattern of Brethren acculturation is in keeping with broader trends: as Herberg remarks, "There were almost universally high rates of mother-tongue retention in the 1921-1941 era and then sharp declines by most groups through 1961 or 1971."⁴ It appears that the advent of official multiculturalism in the 1970's was too late to have a significant impact on the Brethren German identity. By then they had joined other Dutch and German groups at the bottom of lists of ethnic group mother-tongue retention in Canada.⁵

There is agreement among sociologists as to the importance of a common language as an indicator of both collective identity definition and ethnocultural cohesion.⁶ Hertzler (1965) emphasized the double implication of Sapir's theory of language as a source of social solidarity, which has been used as a basis for this study; a common language indicates both who is included and who is excluded from the ethnic group.⁷ Lieberman (1970) has

espoused a similar idea, stating that "Language similarities can support both in-group unity and out-group distance since language serves both as a symbol of other differences as well as a restriction on the communication possible between ethnic groups."⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr found that the language and traditions of European immigrants to America "were both the uniting bonds of the group and the symbols of its social solidarity," and that the immigrant religion and religious leaders were the most common foci in the struggle to maintain group identity.⁹ All of these statements clearly apply to the Canadian Mennonite Brethren, but the inherent connection between the German language and the Mennonite faith and way of life also contributed to the Brethren emphasis on language, and will be discussed further below.

Support for Sapir's theory has recently come from Jeffrey Reitz, who studied Canada's four largest urban ethnic minorities, i.e. people of Italian, German, Ukrainian and Polish descent. He concluded that

Language is important to ethnic communities not merely as an expression of traditional ethnic culture; the data suggest that ethnic language retention is a cornerstone of the ethnic communities themselves. Failure to learn the ethnic language leads to failure to participate in the ethnic community, and this to a large extent explains reduced participation in the second and third generations. Language loss is a well-founded concern of ethnic community leaders, however difficult might be its prevention.¹⁰

This accords well with the evidence presented in this study, pointing to the fact that in order to understand the dynamics of Mennonite Brethren Germanism in Canada, one must take seriously the elder generation's feeling that the socio-religious integrity of the group, at least as they had come to know it, was breaking down.

However, the question of why the German language and identity was so quickly and easily challenged, if it was so important, needs to be answered. As Lieberman suggests, a "critical step" towards unilingualism involves "the

transfer to the next generation of a mother tongue that is the second language of their parents."¹¹ Part of the answer may lie in the fact that the Brethren brought two competing ethnic languages with them; this will be discussed further below. Perhaps, following a theory of Dorothy Herberg, Mennonites encountered few "surprises" in terms of climate, language and social and family structure in Canada, and thus adapted rather quickly.¹² It is commonly remarked by Mennonite scholars that whereas in Russia the surrounding Slavic culture was deemed inferior, and thus easily avoided, in Canada the newly-impooverished Mennonites suddenly found themselves to be the poor, "backward" ones. The fact that the indigenous language is a potential social and economic asset¹³ would have meant that English became doubly-important to Russian Mennonites eager to regain their former status.

These factors are difficult to verify, but were undoubtedly operative to some degree among the Brethren. Throughout this study I have attempted to identify the most obvious and concrete reasons for the quick changeover, and these will be briefly summarized below. But it has been less my intention to give a final explanation of why the changeover occurred so quickly than to understand the contours of Brethren Germanism in its historical context.

In their study of language loyalty among American ethnic and religious groups, Fishman and Nahirny (1966) found that

Most major religious bodies in America are powerful de-ethnicizing forces, although there is considerable evidence that in former days religion served as a strong force on behalf of ethnic and linguistic continuity among American immigrants and their children.¹⁴

A variety of factors were at work in this trend, including indifference to the mother tongue among parents, the increasing diversity of ethnic membership, and the choice of religious over ethnic factors when the two came into conflict.

Religion played a similarly ambivalent role in language maintenance among the Mennonite Brethren, although somewhat more synchronically. The High German language was intimately associated with the Brethren faith and way of life, but its retention was threatened, in addition to a host of other factors, by the Brethren emphasis on evangelism. Fishman and Nahirny also offer insights into how language maintenance efforts become marginalized over time, with the goal of group maintenance ultimately becoming separated from that of language maintenance, and prevailing over it:

In the primordial ethnic community (the) two goals (of language and group maintenance) were indistinguishable. Under the de-ethnicizing impact of urban mass culture, however, the two have become increasingly unravelled.¹⁵

There are clear parallels in the experience of the Russlaender Brethren in Canada, especially in the post-Second World War decades, and further comment on this will be made below.

There seems to be some variation in opinion as to the degree in which religion reinforces language maintenance among ethnic groups. On the one hand, Hofman (1966) and Fishman and Nahirny (1966) conclude that ethnicity is dominant over religion/ideology in promoting language retention.¹⁶ On the other hand, Heinz Kloss (1966) maintains that the strongest factor contributing to language maintenance among ethnic Germans in the U.S. is religio-societal insulation, whereby groups "maintain their language in order more fully to exclude worldly influence and perhaps, because change in itself is considered sinful."¹⁷

Again there are parallels in the experience of the Brethren; and it is indeed likely that change was resisted to a certain degree simply because people could not imagine any other viable versions of Mennonitism. While I hesitate to assign relative weights to ethnicity and religion in promoting

the German identity of the Brethren, it seems safe to state that both were important factors, with socio-religious reasons being most often and clearly articulated. In using the term "socio-religious integrity" in reference to the Brethren, in this study, I have tried to indicate that both social and religious factors were involved; and by using the term "socio-religious" more often than "ethno-religious", it has been my intention to emphasize the strength of ideology and sense of voluntaristic community among the Brethren.

Glazer (1966) summarized the factors relevant to language maintenance among minority groups thus:

We have spoken of the time of immigration, the spatial pattern of settlement, the social structure of the immigrant group (and in particular the role of the professional, intellectual, and middle-class elements within it) and the role of religion. To these four factors we will add one more: the degree of ideological mobilization in the group. We may ask, is the emigration to be explained solely by economic factors, or are religious and political factors important? It seems reasonable that if people emigrate because of oppression, because they are not allowed national freedom, cultural freedom, religious freedom, they will cling more strongly to the national language than if they emigrate only to improve their economic situation.¹⁸

In historical terms, the time of the Russian Mennonite Brethren immigration to Canada was not propitious, coming between two world wars in which Germany, and hence all things German, were the enemy. The Mennonite Brethren did not settle in closed communities, which would have mitigated assimilation and acculturation. In terms of social structure, there was a relatively educated strata of preachers and teachers which made in some cases strenuous efforts to retain the German language and culture. The role of religion has already been mentioned, and will be discussed further below. Glazer's last factor, the ideological conditions of emigration, seems especially relevant to the Brethren. In addition to suffering economic ruin, their cultural and religious identity was severely threatened in Soviet Russia, providing a

final impetus to their departure. It is understandable that an emotional attachment to the particular configuration of language, faith and way of life which had emerged in Russia, and which had been saved only at great sacrifice, would have played a part in the resistance to linguistic, cultural and religio-ethical change in Canada.

There is some evidence that Mennonites have been more attached to the German language than other contemporary German groups. The comparison made in Chapter Three to Russian-Germans in Saskatchewan provides one example. Writing in the late 1930's, Elizabeth Gerwin singled out Mennonites among Alberta German-speakers as displaying the strongest interest in German-language retention, because of its role as a kind of "church Latin".¹⁹ In a study of ethnic-German University students conducted in the early 1970's, Leo Driedger and Jacob Peters found that "In all six identity factors, the Mennonites have retained greater identity than other Germans."²⁰ These included religion and language, along with other factors such as endogamy and voluntary organizations. Religion and endogamy were found to be more important than language as indicators of identity.²¹

This indicates the degree to which the German language had declined by this time; what had once been a bridge between ideology and ethnicity had crumbled, leaving the two poles standing alone.²² On the other hand, endogamy had always been an important sign of loyalty to both the community and the religious faith, since to marry an "outsider" implied rejection of the community and a lowering of religious and ethical standards. It is my feeling that during the 1930-1960 period religion was the most important indicator of Brethren identity, followed by language and endogamy in close succession. Such rankings threaten to cloud the picture, however, since all

these factors were organically related to each other.

However, the breakdown of the traditional organic community has been an underlying theme of this study, which parallels the general trend of Mennonite sociological analysis.²³ Individual identity factors such as language and cultural adherence were becoming abstracted from communal life; in the process they were employed by some as instruments of socio-religious integration, while they were increasingly ignored or rejected by others as being peripheral to Mennonite Brethren identity and a hindrance to a viable perpetuation of the faith.

This has much in common with the insights of Mennonite sociologist Donald Kraybill, who has recently argued that the differentiating and individuating impact of modern society has resulted in ethnic traits, such as language, becoming abstracted from communal life, and functioning as "portable" indicators of identity which can be employed or hidden at will. Traditional Mennonite ethnicity was concretized and expressed in tangible practices in a communal context; with the encroachment of modernity it has become situational and compartmentalized, allowing identity components to be acknowledged or discarded according to their immediate utility.²⁴

Calvin Redekop has pointed out that Kraybill's reliance on the rubric of ethnicity in analyzing Mennonites, on the other hand, obscures the ideological animus of the group and hence the roots of Mennonite behaviour. While Mennonites have exhibited "ethnicizing tendencies", the primary factor which has informed their identity is the consciousness of living out a "faithful original Christianity"; instead of an ethnic group, Mennonites have been and continue to be a utopian religious movement in conflict with its social environment, according to Redekop. The revolutionary nature of the

movement was not totally lost, "but...was turned inward and expressed in the inner life of the society, in an institutionalized form."²⁵ Further,

Maintaining a religiously informed "way of life" when the external opposition and oppression is being weakened or transformed puts an enormous load on "mundane", i.e. normal living, to continue to provide the ideology of protest and survival.²⁶

Redekop's perspective is a crucial corrective to the insights of Kraybill, and helps to explain the importance of the German identity to Mennonites in comparison with other "ethnic groups". There was more to their Germanism than a concern to maintain their "ethnicity", however defined: as an important aspect of "mundane" life, the communal language and culture took on added significance as a concrete symbol of being "Mennonite" and hence faithful Christians.

The experience of Polish Catholics in Canada provides a good point of comparison to the Russlaender Mennonite Brethren, because in their case there was also an influx of better-educated, "progressive" individuals into Canada during the 1920's, complementing the more rustic, pre-1914 immigrant community. The earlier immigrants had been relatively unconcerned about controlling education and maintaining the Polish language, in contradistinction to their Mennonite counterparts. The home seems to have been the primary locus of language instruction and maintenance. The group which arrived in the 1920's, however, was able to give leadership in language and culture maintenance efforts, and thus "Polish organizations in Canada began to take greater interest in the education of children, and the period 1930-1940 witnessed greatly increased activity in this field."²⁷ Although the Kanadier Mennonites had been more concerned about language and religio-culture maintenance than their Polish counterparts, with a portion of them migrating south for just that reason, the influx of the Russlaender in the

1920's also spelled a new era in conscious efforts by Mennonites to preserve the German language and culture.

Despite greater efforts at retaining the language, a considerable proportion of the second generation immigrants did not speak any Polish, and the amount of Polish ethnic identification and knowledge of the Polish language has decreased steadily since 1931.²⁸ Radecki cites the high rate of illiteracy among Polish peasants, and the fact that Canada attracted the poorest Poles as immigrants, as being responsible for the "few incentives for the retention of the Polish language."²⁹ Unlike the Mennonites, who had a long history of language/culture maintenance, for the Poles it was primarily after immigration to Canada that it became a prominent issue, and then they were simply too illiterate and ignorant of educational practices to do much about it.³⁰ In general, "Neither the Polish family nor the organizational structure was able to counteract the attractiveness or pressures emanating from Canadian society." Both the Polish press and the Polish Catholic Church were important agents in the institutional attempts to maintain the Polish language and culture, but the church clearly did not play as significant a role in this regard as it did for the Mennonite Brethren.³¹

A post-Second World War influx of Poles to Canada again stimulated interest in language and culture maintenance, but the general trend among Poles, like Mennonites, has been steady acculturation and assimilation (as well as "differentiation") to Canadian society. Children born in Canada simply do not have the necessary motivation or institutional support to learn the difficult grammar of the Polish language. The Catholic Church, as indicated, did not make language into as big an issue as Mennonite congregations did, and parents and leaders did not see the retention of the

Polish language as being all that important.³²

The higher levels of Brethren religiosity, education and communal consciousness seems to have led to a somewhat more intense struggle with the language/culture issue, if the end result was the same. Using Redekop's terminology, the utopian ideology of the Brethren contributed to a greater stress on perpetuating "mundane" aspects of life like the traditional communal language. It should be added that although there was some negative association in Canada with being Polish prior to the Second World War, Poles would not have had the same incentive to dissociate themselves from their heritage as German-speakers had. This, added to a significant number of educated immigrants arriving after 1945, helps to explain the continuing operation of Polish part-time schools.³³

The Mennonite identification of language with religion has a long history, and this may be related, along with the factors already cited, to the traditional Anabaptist/Mennonite suspicion of theology, and the consequent lack of a vibrant tradition of theological discourse. Dutch was retained in church services for 200 years among the Mennonites who had migrated from Holland to the Vistula Delta region of Prussia. The transition to German was barely completed before the migration to Russia, and some congregations, located in other parts of Germany, continued to use Dutch late into the 19th century.³⁴ In Russia the Mennonites maintained High German as the congregational language until their migration to Canada. Hence Mennonites of Dutch origin had for almost their entire history been conservative on language matters, and had maintained a religious language different from that of the local, "secular" society.

At the same time, Russian Mennonites had refrained from theologizing,

being content with the Martyr's Mirror, the writings of Menno Simons, and sundry German pietist devotional works; their theology was expressed primarily in their ethics and way of life. It seems probable that in this context, language, normally a very important component of individual and collective identity, assumed even greater stress as a carrier of those ideas, attitudes and forms of expression which defined one as being "Mennonite". Instead of possessing an abstract theological discourse which expressed their identity, and was linguistically translatable, Mennonites developed an organic configuration of language, religious beliefs, and way of life, parts of which could only be changed gradually if the whole were to survive intact.

Various individuals have reflected on the relationship between a distinctive language and the social-psychological attributes of minority groups. Lieberson remarks that "If language influences cognition, then ethnic groups with distinctive tongues may respond differently in the same social situations."³⁵ Canadian Mennonite theologian David Schroeder has also reflected on this topic. "There is a whole world tied up in the language we learn," according to Schroeder. "One can't just go direct from German to English and say the same thing." Low German, especially, and also High German, condition the speaker to say things more "frontally"--"The language requires that a spade is called a spade." This was especially important to Mennonites, Schroeder asserts, because of their traditional stress on honesty and humility, and the sensitivity among some groups such as the Sommerfelder (Kanadier Mennonites) to hypocrisy.³⁶

Gerhard Ens, longtime teacher at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna, Manitoba, agrees that the form of expression also affects content. An example for him is the German word "Bekehrung": associated with this word

is a deep attitude of change and repentance, according to Ens, quite unlike the English phrase into which it was translated, "to be saved", which he feels is a much more passive, shallow term. Another example is the German "Gemeinschaft", with its connotations of union and "solemn communion", versus the English "fellowship", which in Ens' mind implies "a wienie roast".³⁷

Mennonite scholar Adolf Ens, in an analysis of changes in language and cultural symbols among Canadian Mennonites during the 1950's, claims that Mennonite English-language periodicals which were begun in the 1950's featured a style and content that were entirely different than that of Der Bote and the Mennonitische Rundschau. The use of English in church services brought about a more "Protestant" form of worship and liturgy, according to Ens, and the term "evangelical" became an important cultural symbol among the Mennonites. "Most of the changes in cultural patterns which occurred during the 1950's were adoptions, sometimes with only minor adaptation, of aspects of the dominant culture."³⁸

Abe J. Dueck has argued that changes in Mennonite Brethren political attitudes paralleled the transition to English and the general process of familiarization with Canadian institutions and culture. Up until the later 1950's, Canadian Mennonites entertained their traditional view of politics as being an evil but necessary entity, which, except for voting, should be avoided at all costs. After this period, "a serious breakdown" of the traditional position took place, with Mennonite Brethren moving in a number of directions, most notably towards greater participation and acceptance of responsibility in the political process.³⁹ While there were clearly many more factors than language transition at work in this change in attitudes, it is noteworthy that changes in perspective and language took place nearly

simultaneously.

In his analysis of European immigrant churches in the United States, H. Richard Niebuhr noted that

With the adoption of English as the church language other changes inevitably set in. The poetry of worship in liturgies and hymns is essentially untranslatable. Though the immigrant church may make valiant efforts to retain its old forms within the medium of the new language, though it may succeed in holding fast to such classics as "Holy Night" and "A Mighty Fortress is our God", yet the charm has departed from prayers, songs and litanies which some uninspired poetaster has turned into a conglomerate of English words...The change of language is only one aspect of adjustment to the total culture with its democratic spirit, its industrialism, its patriotism.⁴⁰

Mennonite philosopher Delbert Wiens has echoed Niebuhr in describing the religious meaning of the German language for Mennonites. In a 1967 article, Wiens pointed out that the Mennonite Low German dialect was the language of daily life, while High German

was the language of the mind and of the soul. It was their Latin, a holy language. They did not have nor need recited creeds and organ pipes or Gothic architecture. But they had the Psalms, and they were close...in spirit to high church Anglicans...Our elders were right to cling to the land and to our German dialects, though they gave bad reasons for their stubbornness. For they sensed that to lose them was to lose something basic. The loss of our languages and of our pre-scientific dependence on the soil meant the loss of our liturgy and our worship. Because we did not know how to talk directly about these things, how to analyze them, we could not transfer their meaning to some other forms. To translate the service to English, the language now for all our needs, does not mean the same at all.⁴¹

Wiens's statement expresses well some of the notions already advanced in this chapter. It also raises the question of the role of the Low German dialect in Mennonite Brethren German identity. As I stated at the outset, this study is concerned mainly with the High German language and culture, and neglects analysis of the dialect in the identity question. Much research remains to be done on this topic. A few words on the relationship between the different German dialects spoken by Mennonites, however, are in order here.

There were two predominant variations of the Low German dialect spoken by Russian Mennonites, and they had essentially been absorbed during the Mennonite sojourn in Prussia.⁴² The dialect was unwritten (except for the pioneering efforts of a few writers), but was extensively spoken in everyday life. By the 1930's, however, a process had begun among the Russlaender in Canada whereby the Low German was replaced by High German as an everyday language. That this occurred at the same time that the Mennonite Brethren German identity began to be seriously challenged was no accident. In encouraging the use of the High German in family life, G.H. Peters, respected teacher at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, stated:

We can't allow ourselves the luxury of two languages here in Canada, like we did in Russia. At the very least no special energies should be spent on maintaining the Low German...Experience shows that High German can be spoken in the family and children will later still be able to pick up the Low German.⁴³

Peters still felt at this time (1937) that it was possible for Mennonite families to avoid the use of English altogether. In the same year, another prominent educator, the Brethren F.C. Thiessen, also strongly encouraged the use of High German in families.⁴⁴ As mentioned in Chapter Five, Brethren Bible expositor A.H. Unruh explained, in the early 1950's, that Low German could not serve as the common Mennonite "Volk-language" because it was "impure" (containing Russian and Polish words), and was open to variation. He implied that when compared to High German, it did not have the same unifying power. While the dialect was dear to him, it did not quite pass muster as a source of Mennonite identity and unity.⁴⁵

Other Mennonite intellectuals who lived through this period agree that the two German dialects were put into competition with each other, and that High German was consciously selected by educators and church leaders as the

language to be nurtured in Canada.⁴⁶ But Low German had a way of surviving, as G.H. Peters predicted. It was still prevalent in the decades after the Second World War, remaining a "popular conversational language".⁴⁷ David Schroeder tells the story of a Mennonite pastor who decided that his family would speak only High German. The man's father was staying with the family at the time, and said to Schroeder, when the pastor left the room, "I would just like you to know that the Low German will outlast the High German."⁴⁸ It is difficult to assess the degree to which this did or did not happen. What is certain is that eventually both dialects faded out of the mainstream of Mennonite life. Gerhard Ens feels that "We probably would have been better off, had we concentrated on keeping the dialect. As it is, we no longer have either (the Low or High German)."⁴⁹

Thus it is likely that an important reason for the rapid demise of the German language among the Mennonite Brethren was that the two dialects were put into competition with each other, neither receiving adequate stress to ensure its survival among the second generation. The bilingualism which had enriched Mennonite life in Russia bore bitter fruit in the Canadian context.

In conclusion, the story of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren German identity is rich, complex, and in need of further analysis. It is my hope that the foregoing study represents a first step in delineating the contours and patterns of the subject within its historical context. It should be clear that there were many more aspects to the German identity than a simple and conscious desire for "boundary maintenance".⁵⁰ As I have argued throughout this study, the socio-religious integrity of the Brethren was at stake in this issue, at least according to first generation immigrants to Canada. In the interwar period, elements of political, ethnic and

nationalist Germanism vied for position in defining Brethren identity and preserving Brethren socio-religious integrity. These elements were purged in the crucible of the Second World War, leaving the basic cultural and religious meanings of Germanism to slowly fade away in the postwar period, despite strenuous attempts to preserve them. By then the steady forces of assimilation, acculturation, and urbanization, along with a societal bias against Germanism, and an emphasis by the Brethren on outreach and an openness to English "evangelical" groups, had taken their toll.

Many other factors were at work in the demise of Germanism among the Brethren, some of which have been discussed in this chapter, others have surfaced elsewhere. My primary intention, however, has been to understand Canadian Mennonite Brethren Germanism in all its complexity and fullness. To do otherwise is to deny the Germanists their role as historical actors who were responding to very real challenges to their own identity and that of the Mennonite Brethren community as a whole.

On the other hand, many of their fears were unfounded, and some of their efforts to preserve the Germanic aspects of Mennonite identity were misguided and futile. The German culture and language were not crucial to the Mennonite Brethren faith and way of life, they were rather components of a particular configuration of it. Despite containing an often prescient understanding of the role of language and culture in maintaining religious identity and social solidarity, the Germanist perspective was essentially conservative and unrealistic in the Canadian context.

That the Mennonite Brethren faith community has persisted and prospered in Canada in a non-Germanic form can be interpreted as a triumph of "religious" over "ethnic" elements in Brethren identity. What makes this

neat observation problematic is the fact that Germanism served religious as well as ethnic goals, and hence its demise does not signal the clearcut victory of one sort of Mennonitism over another. In fact, it is possible that some traditional religious tenets (such as nonresistance) have more or less accompanied Germanism into obscurity.

This suggests a third possibility; namely, that a previous synthesis of faith, culture and community has been transformed into a new pattern which is different than the old one, but just as real. Instead of comparing a "religious" present with an "ethnic" past, perhaps contemporary Mennonite Brethren should ask themselves if the current synthesis of faith, culture and community does not have something to gain from an honest and respectful appraisal of the previous one.

NOTES, CHAPTER SIX

1. Edward Herberg, Ethnic Groups in Canada: Adaptations and Transitions (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1989), pp. 84-85; Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," The American Journal of Sociology 70 (1964):193-205.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 101.
4. Ibid., p. 122.
5. Ibid., p. 106; Alan B. Anderson, "Assimilation in the Bloc Settlements of North-Central Saskatchewan: A Comparative Study of Identity Change Among Seven Ethno-Religious Groups in a Canadian Prairie Region," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan, 1972), p. 200.
6. Herberg, Ethnic Groups in Canada, pp. 94-101.
7. Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Language and Ethnic Community Survival," in Rita M. Bienvenue and Jay E. Goldstein, eds., Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Canada (Toronto: Butterworth & Co., 2nd ed., 1985), p. 106.
8. Stanley Lieberman, Language and Ethnic Relations in Canada (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1970), p. 7.
9. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism (Hamden, CT: The Shoestring Press, 1954), pp. 222-23.
10. Reitz, "Language and Ethnic Community Survival," pp. 120-21.
11. Lieberman, Language and Ethnic Relations in Canada, p. 15.
12. Herberg, Ethnic Groups in Canada, p. 268.
13. Lieberman, Language and Ethnic Relations in Canada, p. 10.
14. Fishman and Nahirny, "The Ethnic Group School and Mother-Tongue Maintenance," in Joshua Fishman, ed., Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of Non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966), p. 97.
15. Ibid., p. 109.
16. See Fishman, ed., Language Loyalty in the United States, pp. 134 and 403 respectively.
17. Heinz Kloss, "German-American Language Maintenance Efforts," in Fishman, ed., Language Loyalty, p. 238.

18. Nathan Glazer, "The Process and Problems of Language Maintenance: An Integrative Review," in Fishman, ed., Language Loyalty, p. 365.
19. Elizabeth Gerwin, "A Survey of the German-Speaking Population of Alberta" (M.A. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1938), p. 145ff.
20. Leo Driedger and Jacob Peters, "Ethnic Identity: A Comparison of Mennonite and other German Students," Mennonite Quarterly Review (July 1973):240.
21. Ibid., p. 243.
22. Frank Epp has pointed out that to the extent that religion and ethnicity, the "two main meanings of Mennonite", are narrowly and superficially defined, they "become mutually exclusive with a consequent rending apart within the Mennonite body." See Frank H. Epp, "Problems of Mennonite Identity: A Historical Study," in Leo Driedger, ed., The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 291.
23. Leo Driedger and Calvin Redekop, "Sociology of Mennonites: State of the Art and Science," Journal of Mennonite Studies 1 (1983):53-54.
24. Donald B. Kraybill, "Modernity and Identity: The Transformation of Mennonite Ethnicity," in Redekop and Steiner, eds., Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 153-72.
25. Calvin Redekop, "The Sociology of Mennonite Identity: A Second Opinion" in Ibid., p. 187.
26. Ibid., p. 191.
27. Henry Radecki with Benedict Heydenkorn, A Member of a Distinguished Family: The Polish Group in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), pp. 88-93.
28. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
29. Ibid., p. 97.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., p. 99.
32. Ibid., pp. 100-104.
33. Ibid., pp. 98, 104-105.
34. Jack Thiessen, "A New Look at an Old Problem: Origins of the Variations of Mennonite Plautdietsch," The Mennonite Quarterly Review (July 1989):290-92.

35. Lieberson, Language and Ethnic Relations in Canada, p. 7.
36. Interview with David Schroeder, Mennonite theologian, June 20, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
37. Interview with Gerhard Ens, Mennonite educator and current editor of Der Bote, June 20, 1989, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
38. Adolf Ens, "Changes in Language and Cultural Symbols During the 1950's," unpublished paper (1988), Box 17, Folder F, no. 2, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg, pp. 5-11.
39. Abe J. Dueck, "Church and State: Developments Among Mennonite Brethren in Canada since World War II," unpublished paper (1980), Box 8, Folder E, no. 1, CMBS Winnipeg, pp. 3-6.
40. Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism, pp. 212-13.
41. Delbert Wiens, "The Old Wine; Will it Sour?" The Canadian Mennonite, 18 April 1967, p. 7.
42. Jack Thiessen, "A New Look at an Old Problem: Origins of the Variations in Mennonite Plautdietsch," Mennonite Quarterly Review (July 1989):285-96.
43. G.H. Peters, "Und wieder: 'Unsre deutsche Sprache,'" Der Bote, 7 April 1937, p. 3.
44. F.C. Thiessen, "Wie erhalten wir bei unsern Kindern die Begeisterung fuer die ererbten Gueter: Religion und deutsche Sprache?", Der Bote, 14 July 1937, p. 5.
45. A.H. Unruh, "Warum ist es notwendig, unsere deutsche Muttersprache zu erhalten?", Mennonitische Rundschau, 3 June 1953, p. 3.
46. Interview with David Schroeder; Interview with Gerhard Ens.
47. John Jacob Krahn, "A History of the Mennonites in British Columbia," (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1955), pp. 117-18; E.K. Francis, In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites of Manitoba (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), p. 243.
48. Interview with David Schroeder.
49. Interview with Gerhard Ens.

50. I have already noted Frank Epp's emphasis on "separation", and its inappropriateness when studying the Russlaender, in Chapter One. In the Mennonite academic literature, "boundary maintenance" has almost become a cliché. For an example of this kind of approach taken to its absurd conclusion see Elmer S. Miller, "Marking Mennonite Identity: A Structuralist Approach to Separation," The Conrad Grebel Review (Fall 1985):251-63. For my response see The Conrad Grebel Review (Winter 1986):60-63.

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