The Mennonite Old Colony Vision

Under Siege in Mexico and the Canadian Connection

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In 1947 Winfield Fretz wrote, "The story of the mass migration of five [six] thousand Old Colony Mennonites from Canada to Mexico in the '20s is one of the most fascinating and little known chapters in Mennonite history. These Mennonites demonstrated all the stout courage, persistence, industriousness, and amazing resourcefulness exhibited by any previous pioneering group," *Mennonite Life*, April 1947, page 47.

From these brave beginnings has arisen a community of around 80,000 Mennonites in the Republic of Mexico, with an additional 40 daughter colonies established in Belize, Paraguay and Bolivia. Another 40,000 Mexican Mennonites have opted to return to their former homeland in Canada and to various States in the U.S.A.

Migration has become a common experience for Mennonites over the centuries. In earlier times the relationship between the mother settlements and daughter colonies was characterized by continuous and unquestioning support, as in the case of the Dutch in the 17th century who assisted their brethren in the Vistula Delta to survive a litany of floods, fires, pestilence, military occupations, harassment and outright persecution.

The relationship between the Canadian Mennonites and their brethren in Mexico has more often than not been characterized by more sophisticated motives such as expansion of Canadian religious denominations and attempts at implementing modernization. As Dr. David Quiring correctly points out, the interaction has also been complicated by a steady stream of immigration to Canada as well as back to the Mexican colonies accompanied by new ideas and lifestyles.

In this work Dr. David Quiring has provided an insightful and scholarly examination of the historical roots which have shaped the Mexican Mennonite community and how the different world views - the one traditionalist and the other progressivistic - have impacted on their relationship with Canadian Mennonites. This book will lend a critical and objective perspective to discussions on these topics and thereby contribute to a more meaningful relationship between these two important Mennonite communities.

Delbert F. Plett, Q.C. - President, Crossway Publications Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS

FOREWORD

There are, in many religions, believers who cling tenaciously to old beliefs and practices which others regard as anachronistic. A few such groups, most notably the Old Order Amish (in distinction from the Amish congregations which joined Mennonite conferences), and the Old Believers of the Russian Orthodox Church, have been the subject of serious and sympathetic scholarly study. Others, however, have more often been ridiculed, criticized, or viewed with amused curiosity.

The Old Colony Mennonites, who broke away from the larger Manitoba Mennonite Church to establish their own church in 1875, fall into the latter category. They have often been portrayed as, at best, a curiosity and at worst an unprogressive anachronism and an embarrassment to more progressive Mennonites. A recent anthology edited by Delbert F. Plett, and a beautifully produced book of candid black and white photographs by Larry Towell, provide more sympathetic treatment. David Quiring's work adds to that work. He is particularly interested in the experiences of those Old Colony Mennonites who left Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the 1920s for Mexico.

Compulsory school attendance legislation passed by the provincial governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan required the closure of their own private schools in which special efforts were made to provide religious and secular schooling in a holistic manner. The Old Colony and several other like-minded Canadian Mennonite groups regarded education without religious underpinnings as "Godless." They were determined to protect their children from such an education, regardless of the cost. So they left for Mexico where they sought to maintain their distinctive religious, cultural and economic practices.

David Quiring has spent a period of time living with the people in the Mexican Mennonite colonies. He is sympathetic, though not uncritical, and has gained the confidence of these people. They have shared with and explained to him their aspirations and their frustrations. Quiring has matched and compared the information thus gained with the extensive archival documentation available in various Mennonite and Canadian archives.

Periodic severe economic difficulties have plagued some of the Mexico Old Colony Mennonite communities, resulting in the return of many to Canada. Assistance provided by other Canadian Mennonites, usually through the agency of the Mennonite Central Committee, was sometimes combined with evangelical missionary efforts which were disruptive of Old Colony church and community structures. A prominent theme of this study, therefore, is the impact of the return migrations and of "assistance" provided by other Mennonite groups.

I had the privilege of supervising David Quiring as he did some of the relevant research and then wrote up his findings as a Master of Arts thesis. The thesis earned high praise from members of the examining committee and a recommendation that he consider publication of the work. Now publication makes available to a larger audience the fruits of Quiring's unique research and interpretations of the experiences of the Old Colony Mexican Mennonites. It is the story of a small religious group of people who have struggled, in spite of poverty, harassment, and misunderstanding, to maintain their unique religious, social and cultural heritage.

T. D. Regehr,
Professor Emeritus of History,
University of Saskatchewan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people aided in making this research possible. Cooperation from within the Old Colony community and from those who know them well was, almost without exception, gladly given. The names of many who contributed information appear throughout this book. Various persons in the larger Mennonite community proved particularly helpful in making information available and opening doors.

This research originally took place under the structure of the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan. It benefited immeasurably from the guidance provided by faculty there. Past Graduate Directors J. M. Hayden and B. T. Fairbairn, Past Department Head Bill Waiser, and J. Handy all served on the advisory committee. T. D. Regehr served as the supervisor for the research. With the depth of his knowledge and interest in the field of Mennonite history, he was able to confirm and direct the research in many ways, while leaving sufficient freedom for the work to proceed quite independently. Prior to publication, Royden Loewen of the University of Winnipeg and Delbert Plett, author and the editor of *Preservings*, reviewed recent revisions to this work.

Financial assistance for this research came from grants from the Messer Fund for Research in Canadian History. A Graduate Teaching Fellowship from the University of Saskatchewan also helped make time available for the research.

The patience and support shown by my wife Suzanne and other family members during the time spent on this research also is appreciated. I offer a sincere thank you to all who helped.

David Quiring
Christopher Lake, Saskatchewan

PROLOGUE

Much like many other Canadians of Mennonite descent, I long ago heard of and formed impressions about the Mennonites in Mexico. Various books and church newspapers included stories about and pictures of these distant relatives who lived in that southern country. Almost without exception, the depictions, verbal and pictorial alike, portrayed a quaint people. They appeared to have very little in common with the Mennonites of Canada, other than common ancestry and the same family names.

Not until many years later did the opportunity come for me to gain more familiarity with the Mennonites who left Canada for Mexico in the 1920s. While studying at the University of Saskatchewan, I devoted much of the time from 1995 to 1997 to the study of the Mennonites in and from Mexico. Visits to a number of Mennonite colonies in Mexico, supplemented by archival research in Canada and interviews with those who worked with the Mexican Mennonites in Canada and Mexico, allowed for the collection of a considerable amount of historical data. The Old Colonists proved particularly fascinating. The process of learning about them also encouraged an exploration of my roots and various interpretations of what it means to be a Mennonite. That initial study of the Mennonites of Mexico became a master's thesis and did not receive wide circulation outside of limited academic circles. Following that research, my historical studies followed other paths for some years, focussing primarily on Canadian northern history.

Recently, the opportunity again arose to renew my interest in the Mennonites of Mexico. In October of 2002, a conference at the University of Winnipeg brought together many persons, academics and non-academics, interested in the history of the Mennonites in and from Mexico. That conference offered me the opportunity to present some work on the Old Colonists. Thanks to the subsequent interest and encouragement of a number of people, review and revision of the work from 1997 has taken place and appears in this book.

The research carried out in the 1990s forms the primary foundation for this book. In addition, this work incorporates some recent developments and updated information. For the most part, the trends that existed in the 1990s still continue today. Although some details may have changed, the issues remain much as they were at that time. This author sincerely hopes that this book will serve to make a constructive contribution to the debate surrounding the Mennonites of Mexico.

INTRODUCTION

Tens of thousands of Mennonites, whose ancestors came from Canada in the 1920s, call Mexico home today. Most identify themselves as Old Colony Mennonites, a conservative group that favours physical separation from the larger world.

The Old Colony move to Mexico fits into a long tradition of Mennonite migrations, motivated largely by religious factors. Their exodus from Canada qualifies as one of the boldest and most idealistic Mennonite movements ever, and the Mexican environment offered them a relatively clean slate for designing and implementing their vision. The Old Colonists successfully carried out this enormous enterprise, sacrificing material considerations to achieve their spiritual goals.

For decades, North Americans have obtained information about Old Colony Mennonites from television reports, the secular press, various Mennonite (non-Old Colony) sponsored media outlets, and books. Many of these sources present the view that the Old Colony leaders led their followers into material and spiritual poverty. Not surprising then, when outsiders think of this group, they often think in terms of difficulties Old Colonists have encountered, in Mexico, elsewhere in Latin America, or on the return of many to Canada. Frequently, those looking at the Mexican colonies have judged them by outside standards. By Canadian and American standards, many of the colony residents live under conditions of material poverty, although in comparison to their Mexican neighbours, most appear relatively well off. Many observers have not seen or described the countless Old Colonists who have lived contented lives, raising their families and worshipping God in keeping with the dictates of their consciences. By non-Old Colony Mennonite standards, the colonists suffer from spiritual bankruptcy, a point of view the outsiders have not hesitated to put forward. While Old Colonists also may view other Mennonites as spiritually lost, the former group does not have a history of interfering with the beliefs and practices of their critics and erstwhile brethren.

While the Mexican Old Colonists use the name Mennonite, they form a distinct group from other Mennonites. The most obvious distinguishing factor derives from the Old Colonists' belief that they need to live in homogeneous colonies, physically isolated from the world. In contrast, most other Mennonites today accept greater integration into the larger society. Somewhat ironically, other Canadian Mennonites still speak positively about their own families' history of living in closed colonies, both in Canada and Russia. At the same time, most Canadian Mennonite groups no longer view that old life style as possible or even desirable.

The Old Colonists in Mexico successfully designed and established colonies where they long succeeded in following their vision of living in separate communities from the outside world. In order to establish and maintain these communities, they developed elaborate defence mechanisms. Over time, most aspects of Old Colony culture came to serve a functional role in protecting the communities. Those defences have not worked perfectly, and the communities have experienced severe problems maintaining social and other boundaries between themselves and the outside world. Today, many believe it inevitable that

the Old Colonists must abandon life in their separate communities. Yet, the community leaders do not accept that the design of their society suffers from fatal flaws. Nor do they consider it incompatible with the twentieth or twenty-first centuries.

Clearly, many observers do not believe that the Old Colonists can continue to live successfully in their Mexican colonies. Those who take this point of view point to four major problems: the Old Colony leaders and their faulty decisions, primitive economic practices, unchecked population expansion, and an inhospitable Mexican environment. In the minds of many, inadequate leadership stands out as the most basic and influential factor.[1]

Without a doubt, various difficulties and challenges, some originating internally and others in the larger Mexican environment, have confronted Old Colonists in Mexico. But onlookers have largely ignored several other determinants of their history. Possibly the greatest threats to the survival of the Old Colony as a distinct group in Mexico have not come from Mexico, which has been remarkably hospitable to the Old Colony vision, but from Canada. This has taken place in two ways.

First, the inability of the Old Colonists to completely cut ties with Canada has endangered the survival of the group's communities in Mexico. Canada's citizenship and immigration laws have allowed many of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who long ago shook the Canadian prairie dust from their boots to return to Canada as a matter of right, as Canadian citizens. As a result, by the mid-1990s the Old Colony Church in Mexico lost up to 35,000, or roughly one-quarter, of its people to Canada. Those who moved to Canada did so in a disorganized fashion and in defiance of the Old Colony leadership. In the leaders' opinion, those who left became lost to the world. Had the doors to Canada not stood open, many of those who left for Canada would have had to find alternatives that may have accorded more with Old Colonist goals. Not only have tens of thousands moved north out of Mexico, but many have returned repeatedly to the colonies, carrying the outside world's attitudes and technological paraphernalia back with them, against the wishes of their leaders.

The Canadian government and most Canadians cannot be blamed for this migration north, for they have not tried to attract the Mennonites back to Canada. If anything, public sentiment has opposed their return. Canada's immigration laws remained generous though, since their primary purpose was not to exclude Mennonites from Mexico.

A second Canadian threat to the Old Colony has come from Mennonite groups in Canada. Since the 1940s, other Mennonites have investigated the economic, social, and religious situation of their Mexican "brethren," and, judging them to be in dire straits, have worked to help them. Canadian Mennonites have diagnosed the Old Colonists as biologically prolific, unhealthy, unhygienic, naive, poorly educated, illiterate, financially inept, vocationally misguided, and needlessly poor. The outsiders also have criticized Old Colony leaders for refusing to give their people choices in vocational, cultural, spiritual, and other matters. Canadian Mennonites in large part accept the twentieth-century values of liberal democracy, rejecting the traditional theocratic and isolationist values of many of their ancestors. Since they believe in the right of individuals to self-determination, they have not supported the authority of the Old Colony leaders.

Challenges to the leadership and traditions of the Old Colony resulted.

In addition to diagnosing various temporal ills in the Mexican colonies, other Mennonites who converted to an evangelical religious orientation have believed that the Old Colony people lack spiritual salvation. An Old Colony person probably will not confidently say, "I know that I am saved," or actively attempt to convince others to believe as he or she does. Instead, one may say, "I hope that I am saved," and try to influence others through exemplary living. Certainly Old Colonists do not adopt aggressive proselytization strategies. Colony members' uncertainty about personal salvation may have several sources. First, only God knows who will live in heaven. And second, just because someone follows God today does not mean that he or she will do so in the future. To other Mennonites, Old Colonists' doubts about personal salvation and their non-proselytizing approach have signified that they needed spiritual conversion. While to an outsider to the Mennonite world, the theological differences between the two groups may seem trivial, to those involved they mean the difference between eternal life and eternal damnation. Both sides confidently have judged themselves as right, but the Canadian Mennonites have sent scores of missionaries to Mexico to convert the Old Colonists. For a number of reasons, the Old Colonists have not reciprocated with interventions of their own. In addition to their non-evangelical orientation, the group's long history as victims of persecution and a strong preference for living secluded lives account for their relatively tolerant position.

Quite likely, the Canadian Mennonites' attempts to change the religious aspects of the Old Colony group have proven less disruptive than their efforts on the economic and cultural fronts. Old Colony theology possibly could have undergone modification without endangering the integrity of the isolated colony system. Other changes desired by the outsiders, though, called for a nearly complete make-over of the colonies into what the other Mennonites desired, rather than what the Old Colonists wanted.

The Old Colonists' responded by resisting and attempting to evict the outsiders from the colonies and Mexico. When opposition seemed futile, thousands fled to new colonies inside and outside Mexico. Fleeing unwanted influences in their mother colonies explains some of the outward movement, although population pressures also made this inevitable.

Other Mennonites who have intervened in the Mexican colonies often have confidently assumed that right stood on their side, that of evangelical religion, and that the Old Colonists lacked enlightenment. This sense of self-righteousness has justified dismissing and disregarding the Old Colonists' wishes, blaming the colonies' problems on the Old Colony leaders, and encouraging the people to defy and challenge their leaders.

In two of the three original colonies, the Swift Current and Manitoba colonies, the Old Colony church lost much of its strength by the 1990s. In the Swift Current colony, the Old Colony leaders left for South America, taking the "church" along with them, but leaving many former members behind. Old Colony churches survive on the Manitoba colony, consisting of those who did not leave and still refuse to accept that the entire church emigrated. Their members, however, no longer can live the life foreseen in their ancestors' vision. Instead, they have found themselves locked in a decades-long battle in which they con-

stantly have lost more ground to the vision of other Mennonites. Farther south, in Durango, the third original colony, the battle advanced more slowly. By 1995, recent skirmishes had not gone well for the Old Colonists, and it appeared that many might retreat to newer colonies in South America. The same situation has prevailed in many other colonies in Mexico. In recent years, drought, devaluation of the peso, high fuel prices, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the resulting poverty have created a greater vulnerability to the influences of the interventionist churches.

Some might argue that evidence exists to prove the correctness of the outside churches' position that the colonies could not continue as before and that they needed to join the modern world. Possibly the most convincing argument for this position comes from the contrast between the Cuauhtémoc area colonies, including the Manitoba and Swift Current colonies, and other more conservative colonies. Outsiders primarily have targeted the first group of colonies. In response, those colonies accommodated themselves to the encroaching outside world. They have modernized and enjoy relatively good financial health, while many of the more isolated colonies struggle for economic survival. Abandoning traditional practices has helped the one area prosper economically; but to assume that the Old Colony cannot survive without joining the world does not follow. Old Colonists have refused to place economic considerations first since the time they left Canada in the 1920s. And they have survived, so far, through good and bad times.

Canadian Mennonites have not remained neutral about the return of thousands of Mexican Mennonites to Canada during recent decades. Even though the Canadian churches recognize that the movement back and forth weakens the Mexican colony system, they have facilitated the flow north by looking after various needs, including immigration problems.[2] By advocating the migrants' cause with the Canadian government, Canadian Mennonite organizations successfully helped remove legal obstacles to the migration. Also, Canadian Mennonite "help programs" operating in Canada compliment the interventions of Canadian Mennonites in the Mexican colonies. Old Colonists seeking to preserve the integrity of their Mexican societies have resented the actions of outsiders in both locations. On the other hand, the services offered in Canada by the Canadian Mennonites have proven invaluable to many migrants, many of whom would have come to Canada even without the assistance offered by the Canadian Mennonites.

Some readers might think that speaking about two differing visions of what it means to live as a committed Mennonite Christian should not prove controversial or unpopular. After all, the Canadian Mennonites have not hidden their beliefs and attitudes about the choices made by the Mexican Old Colonists. Canadian Mennonite churches have displayed their viewpoints in conversations, the news media, the written records of their organizations, and their actions. Neither have the Old Colony leaders hidden their resistance to interventions from outside; they frequently and clearly have indicated that they wanted to be left alone. They also have not concealed their beliefs and vision for their people. Writing about the relationship between these two groups will not reveal the secrets of either side, as each is very aware of the issues and the tactics used by the other.

Yet, in spite of the two sides openly expressing their views, the discussion of these issues raises emotional reactions. On the one hand, some Canadian Mennonites react defensively when their programs and actions come under critical scrutiny. On the other hand, Old Colonists, who have lacked a strong voice outside their communities, welcome dissemination of information about the actions of Canadian Mennonite organizations. Old Colony leaders may hope that a wider awareness of the outsiders' interventionist programs will lead to increased sensitivity and respect for Old Colonists and their goals.

Shame should not result from discussing these conflicting visions of what it means to live as a Mennonite. Mennonites are not the only people who have experienced long-standing divisions with profound effects on the parties involved. Schisms also have divided various Jewish groups, the Canadian United Church, the Amish, and the Doukhobors, to mention only a few examples. Disagreement over maintaining the old ways and accepting changes forms a common theme; yet, the details of the divisions and the subsequent relationships of the groups to each other differ greatly. Discussion of differences can lead to healing and an increased respect for opposing positions.

The conclusions contained in this book developed over time, and differ substantially from initial impressions. When this exploration of the history of the Old Colony group in Mexico began my images of the Mexican Mennonites were based largely on media reports available in Canada. Early in the research process, reading the available literature on the subject and speaking to various people in Canada reinforced the view that the colonies in Mexico suffered from a multitude of problems, most of which their leaders failed to address. It became apparent fairly early in the investigation that Canadian and other Mennonites actively involved themselves with the conservative Mennonites in Mexico. Prior to visiting some of the colonies in Mexico it seemed evident that the Old Colony group had no alternative but to undergo massive changes in order to survive economically. It appeared that the other Mennonites facilitated necessary and desirable changes in the colonies. Information gathered in Canada suggested that those colonies that accepted major changes enjoyed relative prosperity, while those resisting change teetered on the brink of economic disaster. The interventions of other Mennonite churches appeared beneficial to their struggling Mexican brethren.

Numerous aspects of this book remain based on research in Canada. Time spent in the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa unearthed government documents about the Mennonite migrations to and from Mexico. The Provincial Archives of Manitoba allowed access to the Schmiedehaus Papers, which contain information preserved by Walter Schmiedehaus during his long residence near the Mexican colonies. The Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg was an invaluable source for the records of Mennonite organizations working with the Mennonites in and from Mexico. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers in Winnipeg, Ottawa, and other locations also proved co-operative in providing information about their organization's work with the Old Colonists. Thorough searches took place of various newspapers housed by the Mennonite Heritage Centre, including *Die Mennonitische Post*, *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexico*, and the various newspapers produced by Mennonites in Mexico. Clippings provided by other researchers and quotations used by other writers from

various newspapers and periodicals also provided valuable information. Personal interviews also played an important part in the process of collecting data and forming impressions. The data on the nature and size of the movement back and forth to Canada largely was gathered in Canada. Much of the information about the actions and attitudes of the Canadian churches and organizations also comes from Canadian archival, organizational, and individual sources.

Visits to a number of Mexican colonies included formal interviews and informal conversations. The time spent in Mexico supported a number of perceptions formed in Canada. Visiting the colonies corroborated that many residents of the colonies struggled against economic difficulties. Overcrowding and land shortages plagued colony after colony, largely explaining why many have left for Canada. It also became apparent that the conservative Mennonite culture has survived to a great degree in the tolerant Mexican environment. Mexico generally has honoured the commitments of the Charter of Privileges (*Privilegium*) issued by the Obregón government in 1921. Visiting the colonies also confirmed the presence of the conflict between the traditional Old Colony group and the forces of change originating with other Mennonite churches. Often, the biggest stories in the colonies were not the everyday problems reported by Mennonite presses. While colonists also dealt with drought, population growth, land shortages, and the everyday problems of living in Mexico, they passionately spoke about the challenges to their way of life brought by Mennonites from outside. Frequently, leaders and their followers alike did not welcome the other churches or view their presence as helpful to resolving problems. All too often, opposing sides formed and heated battles ensued. In the opinion of Old Colonists, the presence of other churches disrupted their everyday lives and interfered with the pursuit of their long term goals. Frequently, the Old Colonists responded by fleeing to more geographically isolated new colonies in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. In doing so, they followed their group's five-centuries-old strategy of retreat and retrench.

This research seeks to inform, rather than take sides for or against the Old Colony group. The author cannot pretend to judge the right or wrong of the theological and other positions taken by the Old Colonists and those who seek to bring religious, social, or material changes to the colonies. Yet, this does not preclude pointing out the issues that divide the two sides and the important role these differences have played and continue to play in the history of the Old Colonists. Pointing out that the Old Colonists have viewed the actions of other Mennonite churches as an aggressive and unwelcome presence does not demonstrate a bias in favour of the Old Colonists.

This work makes a contribution to historical scholarship in a number of ways. Most importantly, it introduces and emphasizes determining elements of Mexican Old Colony history. In a preliminary way, it describes the effects other Mennonite churches have had on the Old Colonists. The important and continuing effect of movement to and from Canada on the colonies and Canada is explored in some detail. This study also describes the relationship of the Mennonites to the Mexican environment. Importantly, this study seeks to incorporate the viewpoints of Old Colonists; as a result, this history offers a revision of the position of most past works on this subject.

In addition, this book serves to update many details of Old Colonist his-

tory, supplementing the work done by other writers. Walter Schmiedehaus concentrated on describing the early history of Old Colony settlement in Mexico. Calvin Redekop described their lives from a sociological perspective. H. L. Sawatzky brought a geographer's point of view to the subject. Kelly Hedges examined the linguistics of the group. Others have explored different aspects of this group's life and history. This present work does not seek to supplant the work done by others. Rather, it is hoped that information presented here will help provide a more contemporary, fair, empathetic, and complete picture of the Old Colony experience.

Large gaps remain in the research and writing about the Mexican Old Colonists. Unexplored treasures of information lie untouched in North American church and government archives. And the record of many important experiences exist only in the recollections of those who experienced them. Only timely oral interviews can tap this latter source of information. Also, no in depth study of the history of many of the Mexican colonies has taken place. Similarly, the experiences of the Old Colonists who left Mexico remain largely undocumented. The successes and struggles of conservative Mennonites elsewhere in Latin America and in Canada can provide research opportunities for historians and those in other disciplines. Also, the events described continue to evolve, leaving the final chapters of the story unwritten.

The beliefs and efforts of various groups deserve respect and fair treatment. Unlike in many other historical works, many of the players in this account still live and can agree or disagree with the information offered. The writer hopes that persons who read this work will enter into the dialogue, by confirming, contradicting, or adding to the information offered here.

CHAPTER 1
A WANDERING PEOPLE

In the 1920s, thousands of fair skinned Canadians known as the Old Colony Mennonites, arrived in Mexico.[3] Believing that Canada denied them the opportunity to follow the dictates of their consciences and betrayed guarantees given to them in 1873, they immigrated in search of the freedom to live as they thought they should. The subsequent years have not proven trouble-free for them as numerous crises have threatened them in Mexico. By 1997, the original 6,000 migrants had grown to about 150,000 persons, and further expansion of the population has occurred since. Long ago having outgrown their original Mexican colonies, the Old Colonists established new communities, spreading to various parts of Mexico, other Latin American countries, the United States, and back to Canada.

In some respects, the Old Colony Mennonites identify with the larger group known as Mennonites. Since their beginnings in the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, Mennonites have attempted to base all aspects of their lives on the Bible and particularly on the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament. How Mennonites have expressed and implemented their beliefs has varied greatly over the centuries as the group and the world around it changed.

The Mexican Old Colony Mennonites differ substantially from most twentieth-century Mennonites. The most obvious, and in some respects the most important, difference is that the Old Colonists consider it essential to live in their own settlements, excluding outsiders from the community. In contrast, most other Mennonite groups integrate with or accommodate themselves to the larger society. All Mennonite groups consider themselves to be Christian, and as such they often find their values and actions at odds with the larger world around them. But most Mennonites believe they can follow their Christian convictions while living in communities that include non-Mennonites. Somewhat ironically, while the ancestors of practically all Mennonites once lived in closed communities, many Mennonites today seem intolerant of those groups that still choose to live in colonies.

Members of the Old Colony group view themselves primarily as members of the Kingdom of God, and not as citizens of a specific country or of the world. Their main earthly connection is with other members of their group. While they find it impossible to live outside the boundaries of national states, they have not viewed the various countries where they have lived as homelands where they belong and to which they feel loyalty. The Old Colonists have not found it possible to avoid all contact with the world, but, aside from necessary economic relationships, have tried to minimize that contact by moving to remote and relatively unpopulated areas. Old Colony people consider it essential to live physically separate from the rest of the world in geographically isolated colonies and to control various aspects of their environment as much as possible. In numerous instances, when the encroaching outside world has threatened that isolation, Old Colonists have retreated to new locations and retrenched there.

A number of explanations account for the group's preference for life in isolated colonies. Certainly, practical experience continues to demonstrate to

the Old Colonists that they can best follow their beliefs and more successfully pass on their faith to subsequent generations by maintaining a distance from the world. Their group's tradition of living apart from non-Mennonites also dates back a number of centuries and forms a well-known part of Mennonite history. Some scholars, including Walter Klaassen and C. Harold Snyder, have looked farther back and found that the pre-Reformation monastic tradition influenced early Anabaptists.[4] But most Old Colonists seem unaware of those monastic antecedents and their influence on contemporary life on the Mexican colonies seems tenuous.

The Old Colonists stand out, not only for their strong sense of group identity, but also for their non-evangelical nature. Old Colony Mennonites do not proselytize outside their group, unlike most other Mennonite groups who believe that their Christian duty requires them to actively attempt to convert all nonbelievers to Christianity. The evangelical emphasis of other Mennonite groups originated in relatively recent times, in many cases during the mid-nineteenth century, and involved adopting an ideology foreign to their tradition. Nonetheless, their emphasis on evangelism soon became an identifying feature of a number of Mennonite groups.[5] In contrast, the Mexican Mennonite colonies remain closed, not only to non-Mennonites, but also usually to Mennonites from other groups who might want to join them. This exclusion represents another way in which the group protects itself from outside influences.

Old Colonists do not consider their rejection of the evangelical approach as un-Christian. Instead, they centre their lives around Christianity and look to their religion and philosophy to direct their actions. They strive to have their faith pervade and influence all aspects of their lives. Their theology includes a belief that they should minister to those in need. As a result, some connection with the outside world does take place. In numerous instances, Mexican Old Colonists have aided the poor and victims of natural disasters.

The Old Colony Mennonites' refusal to use some technological advances, aversion to higher education, commitment to their language, and various cultural peculiarities also distinguish them from most other Mennonites. In large part, these characteristics originate with the Old Colonists' desire to live separate from the world around them. Many of these unique features serve as barriers to protect the group.

Others have accused the Old Colonists of living in the past. To detractors, they appear to have reinvented the time before the Reformation. Not unlike the Catholic church of that time, the faithful hope to obtain redemption through membership in the chosen group, although they also believe in individual salvation. While not conducted in the Catholic's Latin, their church services utilize a language many of them do not understand well. In spite of attending school for a number of years, many can read little. Although Old Colony schools use the Bible as a text and the Bible is read in church, like pre-Reformation Christians many do not personally read the Bible.

On the other hand, they remain committed to their beliefs, often placing their material welfare second to following their convictions. They persevere as pacifists and scrupulously adhere to many prohibitions long abandoned by other Mennonites. In the minds of many within the group, they continue as the faithful carriers of the Mennonite traditions.

In spite of sharing the name "Mennonite," the chasm between the Old Colony group and other Mennonites is larger than that between many separate religious denominations. However, because both groups still use the Mennonite name, similarities and ties, that no longer exist, are implied. The shared name also ensures that some other Mennonites continue to consider the Old Colonists as their close relatives, who happen to be spiritually lost and in need of salvation.

Mennonites are descended primarily from Swiss, Flemish, and Frisian peoples.[6] Named after Menno Simons, an early Dutch Anabaptist leader and former Catholic priest, Mennonites formed part of the larger Anabaptist movement during the Reformation. Some use the term "Radical Reformation" to refer to the Mennonites and others who sought to institute reforms beyond those proposed by Martin Luther and other mainstream reformers. Much of what the Radical Reformers sought to accomplish involved emulating the early, pre-Holy Roman Empire Christian Church.[7] Early Mennonites' taught that all Christians could read and interpret the Bible, believers should base their lives on the New Testament, they should not kill or use force, church and state should remain separate, faith should be voluntary, only adults should receive baptism, and they should not swear oaths.[8] These beliefs and early persecution, including the killing of thousands of Anabaptists, helped create ethnic differentiation and a consciousness that God had set them apart as his people.[9] In large part, the history of the Swiss Mennonites followed a separate path from that of the Flemish and Frisian Mennonites, the primary subjects of this discussion.

Some of the characteristics that in time would differentiate Mennonites from other Christian groups emerged only slowly. The earliest Mennonites did not insist on living in geographically isolated communities, nor on maintaining barriers between themselves and the world. Instead, many lived in or near various urban centres. The rapid growth in their numbers also demonstrates that the group welcomed new converts to their radical interpretation of Christianity. Without that openness, the Mennonite Church would not have grown or possibly survived. Neither did most early Mennonites stand out for their opposition to modern technology nor advanced education. Adherents participated in a wide range of occupations in the various areas where they lived. During the following centuries, the Mennonite sense of group identity was reinforced by distinctive settlement patterns, barriers to group membership, and a unique culture. Substantial variations also became apparent between groups of Mennonites. Differences in ethnic background, leadership, theology, and experiences account for much of the diversity that developed.

Those Mennonites who much later became known as Old Colonists descended primarily from Flemish Mennonites. Although some intermarriage and other interactions took place with Frisian Mennonites, the Frisian and Flemish Mennonite communities remained identifiable and quite distinct as the centuries passed. As time went on, a further division of the Mennonite community took place over theological issues. The Flemish Mennonites adhered more closely to various traditional positions than did some Frisian Mennonites. The Flemish group insisted on maintaining the old democratic methods of decision making and self-governance within their group, quite successfully resisting the rise of autocracy from within their group and control from outside. Also importantly,

most Flemish Mennonites did not participate in the evangelical movement that swept through a number of Protestant denominations in the centuries after the Reformation. In contrast, the evangelical approach to Christianity affected a larger number of Frisian congregations.

Beginning as early as 1534, some Mennonites moved eastward from the Netherlands. Large numbers, especially of Flemish Mennonites, settled in the Polish territories of the Vistula and Nogat valleys and delta, where they received undeveloped land and lived in a state of relative safety and religious freedom. Since they spent centuries among the Polish people, some intermarriage took place, which added some local names to the Mennonite group. Mennonites who assembled there, including those who also spoke Flemish or a dialect of Dutch, adopted their distinctive Low German dialect, known as "Plautdietsch," as their principle language. Although in decline by that time in the region, Low German earlier had served as the principle language of the Hanseatic League. Because the Bible was not translated into Low German and the declining use of Low German as a written language, Mennonites found they needed to know another language. Dutch served as that second language until displaced by High German. Many Flemish Mennonites did not adopt High German as their written language until after 1750 and possibly not until the 1780s, much later than many Frisian Mennonites. Even then, Low German remained as the primary spoken language of the Mennonites.[10]

In general, the Mennonites prospered while living in Polish territory, which later became Prussia. Clearly, the Mennonites did not live completely isolated lives there. However, they and others recognized that their beliefs separated them from those around them. Rulers respected their convictions and granted them special privileges, including military exemption and freedom of religion and education.[11] Some see at least some roots of Old Colony separation in these early *Privilegiums*.[12]

After Mennonites spent several centuries in Poland and Prussia, their situation their became increasingly untenable. The state, fearful of military weakness that would result from pacifists owning large amounts of land, prevented the Mennonites from purchasing additional land. Also, the state and the Lutheran church brought taxation pressures to bear on the Mennonites. Pressures for assimilation also arose, making their continued existence there uncomfortable for many. These constraints, along with the availability of land in new Russian territories in the present-day Ukraine, caused them to move eastward again. As in later Mennonite migrations, various motivations accounted for the move. Clearly though, those who led the emigrants acted largely out of concern for the survival of the Mennonite communities. Mennonites of Flemish background demonstrated the strongest early interest in relocating to Russian territory and formed the majority of those who moved prior to 1815.[13]

In 1788 and 1789, the first group of 228 Mennonite families moved from Prussia to Russia, in response to the invitation extended by Catherine II.[14] They came as colonists, settling in colonies provided for them by the Russian state. The immigrants obtained a *Privilegium*, which allowed them their own schools, local political institutions, and a military exemption. This *Privilegium* reinforced the Prussian precedent, thereby setting Mennonite expectations of governments for the future. Not only did the agreement grant the Mennonites special privi-

leges; it reinforced their separateness, leading to a preference for and recognition of the value of living in closed colonies. This physically separate condition had not existed in Prussia, although Mennonites had experienced considerable cultural seclusion there.[15]

The first to arrive in the southern Ukraine settled at Chortitza. The name "Old Colony" originated there, since the Chortitza colony became the oldest or first colony of the Mennonites in Russia. More traditional and conservative, the Chortitza group predominantly descended from Flemish origins, as opposed to the Frisian background of some other Mennonite groups who also emigrated to Russia.[16] Within thirty years of settling there, population growth in the Chortitza colony led to the establishment of daughter colonies. Bergthal and Fürstenland became the two primary offshoots.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, major conflicts, that would continue in Mexico in the next century developed within the Mennonite colonies of Russia. Johann Cornies became an instrumental figure in this. While his work in the area of agricultural innovation received considerable acclaim, his efforts to introduce advanced education and other changes to the established Mennonite way of life generated opposition among the more traditional Mennonites. Possibly with justification, Flemish Mennonites viewed Cornies as autocratic and a threat to their communities. Yet, Cornies' program of change and reform proved powerful and gained increasing sway in the colonies. By 1870, even the Chortitza leaders who once had resisted educational change accepted extensive education. However, the daughter colonies of Bergthal and Fürstenland reacted by becoming more conservative, and their leaders rejected the innovations. Polarization took place as the innovators favoured modernization, expanded education, contact with the world, and personal conversion through evangelical religion, while the conservatives clung to their traditional religious practices and a community-based life separate from the world. The relationship between local civil and religious authority also divided the colonies, with the conservative groups favouring extensive subordination of the civil to the religious.[17]

External pressures also came to bear on the colonies by the late 1860s. Concern arose when it appeared that the Russian state would not respect the terms of the *Privilegium*. Alexander II introduced reforms that "were meant to transform the Russian feudal state into a homogeneous, integrated society in which no special privileges would exist for any one group."[18] Pressure also grew for the Russification of Mennonite schools, including instruction in Russian. However, the matter of nonresistance and military service became the primary issue that led to eventual migration to North America. In 1871, alarm arose among the Mennonites when they heard rumours that compulsory military service would include them and end their exemption.[19] The possibility of alternate forms of service to the state did not satisfy at least some of the Mennonites. Almost certainly, many of the more traditional Mennonites also sought to escape the influence of more liberal Mennonites who sought to impose change on their brethren.

By that time, although not yet known as Old Colonists, that group selected a different path from that taken by other Mennonites. Many of the principles that would differentiate Old Colonists from other Mennonites appeared by then. The strong preference for physical isolation from the world in isolated colonies

where they could live in peace and harmony, opposition to advanced education, and a sense of belonging to a group distinct from other Mennonites appeared.

Opposition to accommodation with the changing Russian environment concentrated primarily among the descendants of Flemish Mennonites, which led to the exodus of many of their number from Russia. Bishop Johann Wiebe, the Fürstenland elder, led the group that later became known as Old Colonists to Canada. Even though the most influential Chortitza leaders opposed moving to Canada, many of their people joined the emigration.[20] As time went on, some who at first did not leave also did so. Others regretted not having joined the migration.

Generally speaking, the most conservative or traditional Mennonites left Russia first, fleeing the unwanted changes that threatened them from within and outside the colonies. However, mixed motives existed for the move, with some desiring new opportunities and land in the new world. Some religious leaders likely encouraged immigration to Canada partly to maintain their traditional community model. Their traditional methods of community governance had undergone erosion in Russia, due to the increasing influence of the secular aspects of the colonies represented by Cornies and the encroachment of the Russian environment. Without adequate authority, they could not lead their followers towards fulfilling the vision of living in a separate religious community. With some, particularly the leaders, spiritual motivations for the move likely stood foremost, while others went along for various other reasons, including the lure of new possibilities in the new world.[21]

At that time, the Canadian government desperately wanted to attract immigrants to settle the Canadian west. In 1872, William Hespeler received authorization to act as a special immigration agent to contact the Mennonites and invite them to Canada.[22] On July 25, 1873, John Lowe, secretary in the Dominion Department of Agriculture, offered a Mennonite delegation exemption from military service, full freedom of religion and education, and the right to affirm instead of swear oaths.[23] Canada offered the Mennonites land in Southern Manitoba, on what soon became known as the "Mennonite Reserves." The East and West Reserves lay on opposite sides of the Red River.

The Mennonites viewed the letter from John Lowe as their new *Privilegium*, as their guarantee of essential liberties.[24] Article 10 of the agreement read: "The fullest privileges of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever, and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools."[25] Not until decades later did the Mennonites discover that the latter part of the clause violated the Canadian constitution. Since the British North America Act of 1867 granted control over educational matters to the provincial governments, the educational provision always lacked validity. Seemingly without the Mennonites' knowledge, Canada added the words "as provided by law" to the clause, altering and limiting the Mennonites' educational rights. The immigrants relied on the word of the Canadian government and possibly did not become aware of the alteration to the agreement until some years passed.[26] Before many more decades passed, problems over the educational clause profoundly affected the lives of these Mennonites in Canada.

In 1873 and 1874, approximately 12,000 to 17,000 Mennonites, about one-

third of the total Mennonite population of South Russia, migrated to Canada and the United States.[27] Most Bergthalers moved to the East Reserve, while many from Fürstenland and Chortitza settled on the West Reserve, occupying seventeen townships or 1,620 square kilometres.[28] On these blocks of land, they set up their "Strassendorf/Gewannflur" pattern of village and land organization. This continued their village type of settlement, considered by them as essential to their religious lifestyle. Their elders gained much more authority than they held in Russia, since the new province of Manitoba still operated with relatively few rules and regulations. The freedom found in the new country allowed for the establishment of traditional communities.[29] In the decades that followed, the new settlers found economic prosperity by farming the rich, fertile soil of southern Manitoba.

During this early time in Canada, the Old Colonists emerged as a distinct group, separate not only from the larger Canadian society, but also from the larger Mennonite world. Led by Bishop Johann Wiebe,[30] they took the name of Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde. But they commonly referred to themselves as "Altkolonisten" or Old Colony people, because of their origins in the old colony, Chortitza. By 1890, a strong sense of Old Colonist identity united them. The Bergthaler church became an alternative for some unwilling to follow the old ways.[31] While the Bergthaler also clung to distinct ways, in some respects they lived less conservative lives than the Old Colonists.

The conflict between different Mennonite visions soon threatened the Old Colony group in Manitoba, as differences emerged between the Bergthaler and Old Colony groups. The latter rejected interaction with the outside world and various innovations, and reversed some of the changes they reluctantly had accepted while still in Russia. They opposed advanced education and attempted to strengthen their strict, church-controlled society. In doing so, the Old Colonists looked to the models utilized by their forebears in Europe.

Various threats to the Old Colonists' isolation arose by 1880. Bergthal Mennonites from the East Reserve spread onto the West Reserve, bringing with them pressure to adopt teacher training. Mennonite Brethren and General Conference evangelization efforts also threatened the Old Colonists and other conservative Mennonites.[32] The Sommerfelder, who later would play a greater role in Old Colony history, came into being as a splinter group from the West Reserve Bergthaler.[33] The presence of other Mennonites, who did not share the Old Colonist's goals, made it difficult to maintain their unified and isolated communities. The Bergthaler made gains in the conflict of ideologies, increasingly threatening the survival of the Old Colony.[34]

Threats to the desired isolation also came from civil authorities. Manitoba's reeve system of local government threatened the Mennonites' traditional organization.[35] And government did not support the Mennonite system of *Vorsteher* and *Schult*, which administered the civil aspects of the villages. Canada's Dominion Lands Act, with its individualistic orientation, only supported voluntary participation in the colony life considered essential by the Old Colony group.[36] Government concessions "were permissive, not binding, and at best allowed certain modifications to prevailing settlement practice subject to the Mennonites' ability to achieve universal compliance within their own ranks."[37] If anything, the years spent in Canada had strengthened the Old Colonists' pref-

erence for living in self-controlled colonies, and they opposed erosion of internal control over the colonies and all aspects of life therein.

The above factors, along with increased overcrowding on the West Reserve, led to the movement of about 1,000 persons to the Osler and Hague area in the parklands of Saskatchewan beginning in 1895. An additional 900 or so people migrated to the treeless prairie south of Swift Current, Saskatchewan in 1905.[38] In both areas, large plots of land set aside for the Mennonites again allowed them to live in segregated communities. They once more established homes and villages similar to those left behind in Russian, placing the house and barn under one roof and aligning farmsteads along both sides of the main village street. Many Old Colonists still remained in Manitoba.

Pressures soon mounted, mainly over educational issues, in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Old Colonists in both provinces preferred their German language confessional schools, which taught their own curriculum. For a time the state allowed these to continue. Not all Mennonites agreed with the Old Colonists. Some Manitoba Bergthaler, for example, wanted public schools, and, in 1889, formed a school association and opened a normal school.[39]

Movement from the freedom of having their own church schools, which operated in German, to public schools, where students would learn English, proceeded slowly but irreversibly. A crisis occurred by the end of World War I. The state did not view all Mennonite schools as substandard, although in some instances the quality of education had deteriorated, particularly among the Old Colonists. Rather, objections to the schools arose over the German curriculum. Meanwhile, the conservative church leaders opposed learning English, since they feared this would mean a breakdown of the barrier between their people and the world.[40]

Some other settlers in western Canada applied pressure on governments to assimilate the Mennonites and other recent immigrants from non-English speaking nations. Particularly residents of British origin, including Protestant immigrants from Ontario, wanted to spread their culture and the English language, using the schools to accomplish this.[41] They did not support the Old Colony group's desire to live separate lives in colonies. One Saskatchewan official, E.H. Oliver, said: "I venture to state that the function of our schools must not be to make Mennonites, nor Protestants, nor Roman Catholics, but Canadian citizens."[42] Those promoting assimilation thought of the children as belonging to the state. Old Colonists, on the other hand, owed their loyalty to their religion and closed society, and rejected the Canadian vision of life for them. Unlike the French, the Mennonites held insignificant political power, and "were not legally recognized as corporate bodies; they had no historical claim; and their assimilation appeared eminently desirable, not only in order to facilitate administration and safeguard national unity, but also in order to strengthen the Anglo-Saxon element in its struggle for dominance over the French Canadians."[43]

Both in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the dispute gathered momentum. Saskatchewan's Premier Scott seemed ambivalent about using force with the Mennonites on the education issue, but, as in Manitoba, the trend was towards greater firmness. Scott's successor, Premier Martin, proved considerably firmer. In 1917, "The first plank of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party platform . . . dealt with education, and was concerned especially that every child obtain a thorough

knowledge of the English language."[44] By 1918, private Mennonite schools in both provinces no longer could function as the Old Colonists wanted. In many cases, it appeared that public schools would replace the private schools.

In 1919, Manitoba Mennonites, who had not forgotten the 1873 government promises, lost two test cases decided by the Manitoba Court of Appeal. The court ruled that Manitoba's law regarding education overrode the federal promises to the Mennonites. According to the court, Ottawa had gone beyond its legitimate authority when making the promises in the 1870s. Petitions directed to the provincial administration and legislature failed to bring positive results, and the Privy Council in London refused to hear the Mennonites' appeal.[45]

Saskatchewan's Premier Martin made a political decision to set aside the 1873 promise. He said: "It was unfortunate that these people came here deceived by some document that they had from the Dominion government."[46] At issue were two concepts of religious freedom: "a narrow one referring to an individual's freedom in matters of belief and worship and a broader one referring to the freedom of a group to pursue a particular way of life."[47] Premier Martin did not recognize how public school attendance could interfere with religion. Government did not necessarily rule out separate schools, but they lost their freedom as they had to follow provincial rules.[48]

Government directed schools opened, sometimes in former Old Colony schools, staffed by "English" teachers. But sometimes no Old Colony children attended.[49] Some parents, who used passive resistance and did not send their children to the public schools, received fines and even jail time. The Old Colony group particularly suffered from the flood of prosecutions. At one point, eleven men served time in jail, and government confiscated goods and chattels to pay fines. One family near Swift Current first lost "three horses, a hog and five cured hams." When outstanding fines still remained, the police took "five cows, two heifers and two horses."[50] Some families paid more than $700 a year in fines, with fines of ten dollars per month per child.[51]

World War I and the years that followed also added to pressure on the Mennonite schools, as the provinces increased pressure to assimilate their minorities. This formed part of a larger, national policy aimed at assimilating ethnic minorities for purposes of national unity and cultural uniformity.[52] Particularly strong pressure came to bear on Germanic peoples, including the Mennonites, who some suspected were allies of the enemy during World War I. And resentment among many Canadians of the Mennonites' pacifist stance added to the pressure for their assimilation. Canadian governments did not bend in the face of appeals for compromise from within and outside the Mennonite community.[53] While some Mennonites yielded to the government demands, the Old Colony leaders did not, feeling that: "To surrender complete freedom of education was to them the equivalent of surrendering freedom of religion."[54]

Other issues also placed pressure on the Mennonites. World War I brought universal manpower registration and an effort by the government to limit the military exemption of the Mennonites. In 1917, though, Canada reinforced the promise of military exemption. Nevertheless, sentiment increased against the German-speaking pacifists, and the public and officials alike viewed the Mennonites as undesirables. The growth of nationalistic, pro-British feelings caused unease among Mennonites. Unlike some Mennonites, the Old Colonists

did not give in to pressure to buy war bonds, and they also refused to support the Red Cross.[55]

The War-Time Elections Act of September 20, 1917 disenfranchised conscientious objectors and persons of German descent, including the Mennonites. Most did not seem to mind much since their churches forbade them to participate in elections anyway. After May 2, 1919, Canada prohibited the immigration to Canada of any additional Mennonites.[56] Press censorship also affected Mennonites in 1919, when government suspended the publication of official Mennonite periodicals. And it became difficult to circulate church liturgical and educational materials.[57]

Increasingly overwhelmed by the hostilities and difficulties that originated in the surrounding society, many Old Colonists reluctantly decided to emigrate from Canada. Once again, doing so meant leaving recently established farms and homes. The exodus also split the church, communities, and families.

While other factors contributed to the Old Colonists' decision to leave Canada, the primary reason was the educational issue.[58] Years later, when asked why they left Canada, Bishop Isaak Dyck gave as a reason that they could no longer have freedom of schools. Outwardly, it appeared that freedom of religion and belief remained. But, "when the school, as the first planting place in man's heart, was held in common with the world, then the church also couldn't remain free therefrom."[59] The school issue, which the Old Colony interpreted as the attack of the world on their group, clearly demonstrated to the faithful that they had to leave: "the voice from above was clear to them. If the church is to be kept faithful to the teaching of the gospel, she will once again have to live among the heathen people and begin anew."[60]

Old Colonists and the provincial and federal governments of Canada agreed on the crucial role of education for the fulfilment of their very different visions.[61] In order to understand the Old Colonists' actions, including their various migrations, one must appreciate the importance placed, then and now, on transmitting their values to their young. For their part, governments sought to create a homogeneous national society by inculcating "Canadian" identity and values in the young.

Additional impetus for the flight from Canada came from the Old Colonists' concern about preserving their physically separate colony way of life. Not only did the leaders consider it essential to retain control over the schools, but they wanted to maintain their authority over many other aspects of community life. To do so required continuing physical and cultural separation from the larger society. Most other Mennonite groups in Canada did not agree with the Old Colony's assessment of the Canadian situation, and demonstrated their willingness to continue living in Canada, even if that meant accepting the English language and more aspects of Canadian culture.

For some who followed their leaders from Canada, economic motivations may have influenced the decision to emigrate. Those who left asked about seventy-five dollars an acre for their land in Canada and paid $8.25 an acre in Mexico. However, a post war economic slump sharply reduced Canadian land prices and the actual profits realized.[62]

Tradition also may have played a role in the emigration. Old Colonists knew the history of their people and that they belonged to a wandering people.

Many still remembered the circumstances of the recent movement from Russia in the 1870s. Obvious parallels existed: outside pressure for change increased, governments removed rights, and internal splits took place in the group.

Old Colony people accept the point of view that, "the exodus from Canada was tantamount to expulsion."[63] For them, the move from Canada became part of the much longer story of persecution of the Old Colony church. Elder Dyck, in his later writings about the circumstances and process of leaving Canada, viewed what happened as persecution.[64]

For its part, the Canadian government considered most of the emigrants not as Canadians, but mostly as Germans, Russians, and Americans. Officially, the government seemed unconcerned about the Mennonites leaving.[65] Given the intolerant sentiments towards many non-British immigrants that dominated the prairies at the time, many Canadians likely welcomed the Mennonite emigration. Some sympathetic voices, including that of A. Vernon Thomas, a former writer for the *Manitoba Free Press,* arose in defence of the Mennonites' rights as outlined in the *Privilegium*.[66] But the cries of those Canadians calling for assimilation of the Mennonites drowned out the voices of moderation and pushed governments to act against the Mennonites.

Some Canadians believed that the Old Colonists were only bluffing when they spoke of leaving Canada. In August of 1920, the Manitoba *Free Press* doubted "whether any substantial number even of the Old Colony Mennonites are prepared to join the exodus from the pleasant and fruitful lands of Manitoba."[67] In October 1920, the *Free Press* confidently said that the bishops "have acquired considerable proficiency in one of the characteristic arts of the North American continent – that of making a strong bluff on a poor hand."[68]

But Old Colony leaders had no intention of compromising their principles or remaining in what they viewed as a hostile country. In 1919, their delegates began to search for a new home. Although they considered Mississippi, Minnesota, and Quebec, they wisely decided against a move to one of those areas. Especially Quebec still possessed large, sparsely settled areas in northern Quebec that might have suited the Mennonites in the short term. But probably, no Canadian or American jurisdiction would have offered the conservative Mennonites the long term cultural and physical isolation they sought. The conservative Mennonites also likely needed to find a country with greater cultural differences and a lower standard of living. Doing so would accentuate the differences between the Mennonites and their neighbours, which in turn would assist with the maintenance of protective community barriers. Cultural distinctness also would increase the effectiveness of the Old Colony's disciplinary measures, including the ban, by reducing alternatives for their people to remaining obedient to the community. Recent decades in Manitoba and Saskatchewan had again demonstrated that the presence of less traditional Mennonite groups represented a threat to the solidarity of the Old Colony community.[69]

Delegations also explored Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina, and later Mexico, which proved more promising than South America.[70] In February of 1921, another delegation went to Mexico and obtained a *Privilegium* from President Obregón. Mexico promised an exemption from military service and the swearing of oaths. It also granted freedom in matters of religion, education, and internal property and economic system administration.[71] These concessions,

which fit the pattern of previous agreements reached with governments, would facilitate the re-establishment of separate, self-controlled colonies and the pursuit of religious freedom.

The Old Colony Mennonites purchased land at three locations in Mexico. Two of these were near San Antonio de los Arenales, later to become Cuauhtémoc, in the state of Chihuahua.[72] The Old Colonists named these sites Manitoba colony and Swift Current colony, after their places of origin in Canada. The group from Manitoba bought 62,728 hectares (155,000 acres) and the Swift Current group 29,998 hectares (74,125 acres) from Don Carlos Zuloaga. That large landowner feared losing land to the *agraristas,* peasants seeking land, and preferred selling it to the Mennonites. The land lay in a semiarid high plateau, known as the Bustillos Valley, surrounded by low mountains. Manitoba colony initially included twenty-four villages, while Swift Current colony had ten. Farther south, in Durango state, near Patos, later named Nuevo Ideal, Old Colonists from the Hague, Saskatchewan area purchased about 14,165 hectares (35,000 acres). Their colony became variously known as Hague, Patos, Nuevo Ideal, or, most commonly, Durango colony. About 1,000 Sommerfelder Mennonites also emigrated to Mexico at that time, buying about 6,120 hectares (15,125 acres) in the Santa Clara valley northwest of Cuauhtémoc. Their colony, originally consisting of three villages, became known as the Santa Clara colony.[73]

According to estimates, approximately 3,200 Old Colonists left Manitoba, 800 to 950 the Hague-Osler area, and 1,200 to 1,500 the Swift Current area. In all, about 5,500 Old Colony Mennonites moved to Mexico, or about one-half of their population in Canada.[74] A smaller percentage of Old Colonists from Saskatchewan participated in the migration than from Manitoba, possibly because of less resistance on the Saskatchewan colonies to the government attempts at assimilation and to greater difficulties encountered in selling their land. In many cases, the poorer people remained behind. All the bishops and ministers, except two from the Hague area, made the move south, leaving those who stayed behind leaderless and without a church. Those who emigrated also took all the church documents with them. Many of those who left believed that the faithful should accompany them, and considered those who did not do so as disobedient. Leaders planned to cut official ties with those remaining behind, although the break between the two groups did not happen quickly. Elders and preachers returned to Canada each year until 1926, serving communion to those who remained behind, until it looked as if no others would move to Mexico. Many more would have emigrated had they possessed enough money to do so. Also, as in the case of some from the Hague area, a number decided not to leave when they saw the difficulties encountered by the new settlers in Mexico. The Mexican leadership again sent ministers back to Manitoba in the late 1920s to try to persuade more to move to Mexico.[75] Those left behind in Canada fell into disarray and felt abandoned, told that they no longer could belong to the church. A large number joined the Sommerfelder Mennonites.

Many of those who stayed in Canada conformed with government wishes, moving towards assimilation.[76] The two ministers, Johan Löppky and Abram Wall, who remained in the Hague area, helped reorganize a church in 1930. But not until 1936 did the Old Colony church in Manitoba officially reorganize. The new church in both provinces adopted the name Altkolonier

Mennonitengemeinde. Congregations chose new bishops in the Hague-Osler area and in the West Reserve, but not in Swift Current, where matters had disintegrated too far to allow reorganization.[77] The new churches needed to make new membership registers, since those who left for Mexico took the old ones.

A contradiction in Mennonite philosophy, which has shown itself at other times in Mennonite history, also appeared in the emigration to Mexico. Without question, Mennonites place great importance on transmitting their beliefs to other members of their community and retaining their offspring within their circle. Yet, when leaving Russia, Canada, and in later moves within and from Mexico, moves undertaken for the stated purpose of preserving their beliefs, the community failed to help some of its financially weaker members. While some of the poorer community members did receive help to make the move, others did not. Old Colonists even abandoned close relatives to the "world." These actions demonstrate that financial and other motives often have worked against the more noble goals that they espoused.

The Old Colonists encountered difficulties with some business aspects of the move. Their leaders wanted to sell the land in Canada as a block and buy the new land in Mexico in a block. While the Old Colonists did not farm or live communally, the leadership and the people wished to make the move as a group and retain community control over land ownership within their settlements. Selling their land in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in blocks did not appear crucial to the Old Colonists' plans. When they encountered difficulties and controversies with regard to the planned block sales of land in both provinces, individual land sales became common. Difficulties also arose in obtaining a good price for much of the land.[78] Although block purchases of the land in Mexico did proceed, these possibly could have been handled more skilfully. The Old Colonists could have had more than three times as much land in the Cuauhtémoc area as they bought, for no additional charge.[79] They rejected taking over range and mountainous land that later would have proven very useful.

Although many Mennonites stayed behind for financial reasons, some remained because they did not as strongly oppose the coming changes in Canada. Similarly to what happened after the conservatives left Russia, the movement to Mexico exerted a liberalizing effect on the remaining communities. A new group of Mennonites, commonly referred to as *Russländer* who arrived in Canada in the mid-twenties, bought much of the recently vacated land. The presence of this group also helped liberalize the remaining Old Colony people.[80]

The Mennonites who left took advantage of north-south rail lines that connected Canada with Mexico. They paid up to $30,000 per chartered train to Chihuahua, spending about one million dollars on the movement. Some emigrants made sure that they had Canadian citizenship papers and left large deposits in Canadian banks, allowing themselves a way to return to Canada. The first train left Plum Coulee, Manitoba on March 1, 1922, heading for San Antonio de los Arenales. The second left the next day from Haskett, Manitoba. In all, about thirty-six trains carried the settlers from Swift Current and Manitoba in the period from 1922 to 1924. The Hague group did not begin its move until 1924. On June 15, 1924, the first train of twenty-three families from the Hague and Osler area arrived in Durango. Instead of using trains, some of the Durango settlers used trucks to make the move.[81]

Separate or later movements of Mennonites to Mexico also took place. In 1924, several Kleine Gemeinde families from Kansas settled near the Chihuahua Old Colony settlements. They eventually became part of the Manitoba colony Old Colony group.[82] Stragglers also kept arriving from Canada, possibly compelled by the Canadian school issue, loneliness for friends and relatives in Mexico, and guilt over not following the church.[83]

Some Russian Mennonites, unable to enter Canada or the United States, also arrived in the Cuauhtémoc area in the 1920s. Due in part to the Old Colony's refusal to accept them into their group, these less conservative Mennonites eventually became affiliated with the General Conference Mennonites of the United States and Canada.

World War II and resulting demands by the Canadian government for the Mennonites to provide alternate service caused dissatisfaction among conservative Mennonite groups in Canada, including the Sommerfelder, Chortitzer, Kleine Gemeinde, and Old Colony. The Family Allowance Act, implemented on July 1, 1945, caused additional concern. By making payments available for students up to age sixteen, the act placed pressure on Canadian Mennonites to keep their children in school several years longer than they preferred. The program also threatened the patriarchal family, since government directed the cheques to mothers. These events renewed interest among conservative Mennonites in moving to Latin America in the 1940s.[84]

Members of the Kleine Gemeinde church came from Manitoba between 1947 and 1952, fleeing aspects of the Canadian world that they viewed as undesirable. About 600 persons founded their Quellenkolonie (Los Jagueyes) on about 22,000 hectares of land near Santa Clara, north of Cuauhtémoc. Their settlement in Mexico would prove quite successful.[85]

In 1948, Elder Johann Loeppky of Osler led thirty-eight families, a total of 246 persons, to Mexico. All but a few of them, however, soon returned to Canada. They had participated as a separate group with the Kleine Gemeinde emigration to Mexico. Lack of adequate financing appeared at least partly responsible for the failure. This group used vehicles for the trip to Mexico, which contributed to the Old Colonists in Mexico not accepting them. After Elder Loeppky returned to Canada, the Mennonites in Mexico whitewashed the walls of the churches where he had preached.[86]

By the 1950s then, three conservative Mennonite groups lived in Mexico: the Old Colony, the Sommerfelder, and the Kleine Gemeinde. Each group moved there in search of the freedom to live as they chose and to do so in relative isolation. For a time, they lived independent lives, largely free from each other's influences. In addition, some Mennonites who became affiliated with the relatively liberal General Conference Mennonites arrived in Mexico in the late 1920s. Beginning in the late 1940s and 1950s, representatives of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and various evangelical Mennonite churches also arrived in Mexico. Many of the latter group came primarily to work with their more traditional brethren in the areas of spiritual, economic, and cultural change.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Old Colonist settlers encountered many difficulties. Although, at least officially, the Mexican Revolution had ended, marauding remnants of Pancho Villa's army continued to disrupt the peace, creating problems for the Chihuahua colonies. Many break-ins also occurred. While

the Old Colony church taught that Christians should suffer physical aggression rather than harm their souls by resisting, some protected themselves and shot at intruders in the night. On occasion, that just worsened the situation, since the bandits went to the next village seeking revenge. Over the years, a number of the Mennonites died at the hands of Mexican attackers. Some regretted leaving Canada and wanted to return. Crime did ease at times, only to worsen again later on.[87] In 1929, soldiers helped deal with the situation in Chihuahua. Farther south in Durango, robberies and attacks led to the Mennonites building a barracks for the soldiers, and after 1944 they shared the maintenance expense of the police force.[88] At night, soldiers protected the villages and their inhabitants. Summary executions on both the Swift Current and Durango colonies led to a large reduction in crime.[89]

Threats also came from the Mexican government, when it implemented various policies that would affect the Mennonites. The most notable problems arose in the areas of land reform and educational and religious freedom. The presence of Mexican squatters on Mennonite land near Cuauhtémoc resulted in a drawn-out dispute over the land and in a commission from Mexico City coming to investigate. Eventually, after the President of Mexico and the Governor of Chihuahua became involved, the matter was settled to the Mennonites' satisfaction.[90] Land disputes in various colonies, often related to Mexico's land redistribution to the landless, recurred for much of the rest of the twentieth century,.

Although the post-revolutionary Mexican government restricted religious services in much of Mexico, the Mennonites continued to enjoy religious freedom. Enforcement of a 1927 law allowing only those born in Mexico to preach did not take place among the Mennonites.[91] Instead, the Catholic church became the target of most antireligious sentiment. The Mennonites' *Waisenamt*, a trust fund for widows and orphans, came under attack, and for a time, it appeared that government would treat it as a bank. The Mexican system had difficulty differentiating between the large Mennonite institutions and land holdings, which in fact were owned by many, and the vast individual holdings of those the revolution aimed to dispossess. In the end, the government usually recognized the Mennonites as distinct from the large landowners, but often not until after the Mennonites experienced many difficulties.

In 1927, the Governor of Chihuahua "pointed out that the Constitution, in Article 3, prohibited both the teaching of religious doctrine in elementary schools and the involvement of a 'religious corporation' in the operation of such schools."[92] No action resulted at that time, but uncertainty grew. Then, in 1935, the Mennonites faced their most serious challenge when the Mexican government closed their schools. This prompted the Mennonites to consider and explore a large scale return to Canada. On December 18, 1935, the Mennonites of Chihuahua issued an ultimatum to the Mexican government threatening to leave Mexico. By December 20, the officials gave in to the Mennonites. In 1936 the Mennonite schools reopened, and interest in leaving Mexico waned.[93]

Other problems occurred in the early years in Mexico. Malaria or typhus took many lives.[94] Mennonite funeral practices, which delayed burial for several days, also caused problems with the government, as did the Mennonites' large number of graveyards. Negotiations helped resolve difficulties created by the levy of a Mexican tax imposed on all vehicles, including wagons.[95] Because of

their prohibition against graven images, Mennonites resisted participating in the program that required them to obtain identity documents.

Economic difficulties also tested the new arrivals' commitment. The Mennonites did not understand the climate or soil, and crop failures occurred until they adjusted their farming practices to the new environment. Bishop Dyck later said that the strangest thing in Mexico was the climate. Sometimes they encountered drought and at other times adequate rainfall. Some also expected a warmer climate than they found in northern Mexico. Shortages of supplies occurred, and a prairie fire destroyed much livestock feed. The lack of markets for their agricultural products, the depression of the 1930s, and a number of bank failures, which led to the loss of possibly close to one-half million dollars, also caused many difficulties.[96]

During the difficulties before leaving Canada and after arriving in Mexico, the Old Colony leaders found their capabilities strained by the necessity of doing many things with which they had little experience. Even when their knowledge of Mexican government, business, agriculture, and markets seemed inadequate, the Mennonites relied on optimism and faith that God would help. Leaders enjoyed general support from their people through the difficult learning process and the various trials faced. The group proceeded as best it could, relying largely on the strength of their vision and on God.

Several German-speaking people in the Cuauhtémoc area helped the Old Colony, as they had difficulty dealing with the Mexican authorities due to a lack of familiarity with the language and of the procedures for settling difficulties. Walter Schmiedehaus, the German consul in Chihuahua state, likely became their most notable benefactor. He helped the Mennonites in numerous negotiations, including over the *agrarista* issue, with the Mexican government.[97] Schmiedehaus also wrote extensively about the history of the Old Colony Mennonites.[98] A Russländer Mennonite, Cornelius Klassen of Cuauhtémoc, also worked with and aided the Old Colony Mennonites. Canada had denied entry to Klassen because of suspected trachoma when he emigrated from the Fürstenland area of Russia in the 1920s. Speaking both Spanish and Low German, Klassen helped Old Colonists accept the identity photographs required by Mexico and move money from Mexico to El Paso banks.[99]

The Old Colonists survived the difficult early time in Mexico, and successfully established the isolated, separate society they and their ancestors valued. For the most part, they found that the freedom to live as they wanted compensated for deficiencies that existed in the Mexican environment and within their own group. In their isolated colonies, the Mennonites found the liberty necessary to successfully fashion their society.

CHAPTER 2
LIFE IN MEXICO BECOMES REALITY

Memories of Canada remained strong for many years after arriving in the unfamiliar Mexican environment. Canada also continued to play a role in the lives of the new arrivals, since immigration from Canada continued sporadically, and some of the disillusioned returned to the northern country. As a gradual adjustment to the new environment took place, Canada's influence faded, at least for several decades.

Unlike some utopian enterprises, the leaders and the overwhelming majority of the people felt a strong commitment to living in separate communities. They considered no sacrifice too great, as long as the corporate community enjoyed religious freedom. Demonstrating considerable skill, the Old Colonists built settlements, including their structural, social, cultural, and spiritual elements.

The adjustment period required the Mennonites to come to terms with the economic reality of Mexico. In many ways, the northern Mexican plains differed greatly from the Canadian prairie, with its fertile soils and generally adequate rains. Often the Mexican soil lacked the quality of that in Canada, and the climate proved hotter and drier. Crop yields could not equal those in Canada, as long as those who tilled the soil used dryland farming techniques. Since irrigation technology did not see widespread adoption by the Mennonites for many decades, the immigrants needed to lower their economic expectations. Additionally, colony size limits meant that most farmers had to content themselves with small farms, which, even with the best of crops, could not produce great wealth. However, the difficult economic times of the North American economy during the 1930s soon made the economic disparity between the Mexican farms and those farther north less obvious, and World War II accentuated the advantages of living in isolation in Mexico.

The Mennonites' initial time period in Mexico not only brought a lowering of economic prospects but a change in expectations about the nature of relationships to the surrounding society. In many respects, the Mennonites would have found life easier had they remained in Canada. Poverty, landlessness, crime, bureaucratic corruption, and a lack of health care facilities all formed part of the surrounding Mexican environment. And Mexico still experienced the effects of the political instability that had characterized its recent history. As residents of that country, the Mennonites depended on its economic and political systems for their survival. However, the Old Colonists found that the freedom to live in their communities, relatively free from interference, compensated for the limitations imposed by the Mexican environment. Paying an economic price mattered less than the ability to follow their beliefs.

In some respects, the relationship between the pioneering Mennonites in Mexico and the Mexican state differed little from the pattern that once existed in Poland, Russia, or Canada. There, as in Mexico, the group exchanged their expertise, primarily in agricultural methods, for political and religious concessions. Mennonites eventually also became known within Mexico for non-agricultural skills and innovations. Generally speaking though, the more traditional

groups maintained the closest ties to the land.

After their initial adjustment to Mexico, the Mennonites experienced some relatively good economic times, when the rains came, crops grew bountifully, and the marketplace bought what they produced. Economic prosperity proved fleeting though, since it depended on rains, markets, and sufficient land to support the rapidly growing population. Crises occurred as a result of the droughts of the 1950s and 1990s and various market problems, including those resulting from NAFTA. Fretz in the 1940s,[100] Redekop in the 1960s,[101] and Sawatzky in the 1980s,[102] all described economic difficulties in the Old Colony world. Both success and crisis have formed part of this group's history in Mexico. The Cuauhtémoc area colonies, for example, enjoyed relative prosperity in the mid-1990s, while settlements in many other areas barely managed to survive.

Evaluating the success of the Old Colony group by economic standards tells only a small part of the story. Judging this basically religious enterprise by financial measures usually demonstrates that those engaged in the venture did not make sound business decisions. But to look primarily at material matters is to judge the Old Colony by an outside standard that the group itself rejected repeatedly.

Looking at economics also causes observers to dwell on the negative aspects of the Old Colony experience in Mexico. In fact, many have lived happy, fulfilling lives there, and for them, in large part at least, the vision of the leaders who left Canada became reality. This seemed particularly true until the 1960s, when various pressures, often not directly economic, erupted into the open. Since then, these pressures have waxed and waned. But overall, since the 1960s, the Old Colony vision in Mexico has increasingly come under siege, and the group has experienced worsening crises.

To understand the dynamics of Old Colony history in Mexico requires one to know more about the colonies, including their organization, leadership, and culture. The Mennonite society built there is more than a quaint remnant of another age. Instead, its designers deliberately created an environment separate from the larger world. The Old Colony group, with unprecedented freedom, backed by their *Privilegium*, and with sufficient geographic and cultural isolation to support them, set out to create the kingdom of God's people on earth. Their philosophy directed the establishment of unique systems of leadership, social control, religious practice, education, and various aspects of culture. While tradition governs this group, they established many of the traditions, consciously and purposely, to maintain barriers between themselves and the world.

With the support of their followers, the Old Colony leaders directed the implementation of their community's vision. While the increasingly intolerant Canadian society had challenged the Mennonite leaders' position in Canada, once in Mexico the leadership enjoyed increased authority and control. Overall, instead of resenting this situation, community members welcomed it. As some observers point out: "Among the Old Colony Mennonites . . . the contractual elements are clearly stipulated . . . yet there is an atmosphere of common purpose and unity which mitigates the severity of the objective and bureaucratic rules."[103]

The Old Colony leadership structure includes religious and secular branches, with the religious leaders, or *Lehrdienst*, above and in control of the

secular. While this system may appear theocratic, Old Colonists in Mexico choose their leaders democratically in elections, as their ancestors have done for centuries. To some extent at least, voting to fill positions of authority means that the common people maintain control. However, only male landowners have the right to vote for candidates who run for civil office, and only male church members can participate in the elections for church positions. Critics may find fault with the Old Colony for not extending the franchise to women, poorer men who do not own land, and those who have not joined the church. But extending the franchise has not arisen as a major issue in the more traditional colonies. For their part, Old Colony women do not openly appear to question male domination of the formal decision making positions and process.

Most colonies have one bishop or elder, the head of the colony, although the large Manitoba colony utilized two bishops for the past several decades.[104] Once elected, the bishop and the ministers can hold their positions for life.[105] Even though some spend up to seventy-five percent of their time on church work, they receive no pay. Neither do those elected to civil positions receive a wage or salary.

Particularly the bishops have worked to maintain the old ways. Sources close to the Old Colony say some bishops made a vow to their predecessors that they would not allow changes, a promise they have taken seriously. Outside observers, unsympathetic to the goals of the leaders, interpret this dedication to tradition as a desire to keep the people ignorant and under control. Some outsiders describe the leaders as arrogant. From the bishops' point of view, following the traditions of their ancestors forms an instrumental part of living according to the will of God in their communities.[106]

Additional elected positions exist in the religious realm. Colonists choose deacons to look after the material and social welfare of the members. The *Armenkasse,* which distributes money to those who cannot meet their own financial needs, acts as the primary institution to dispense aid. Men, usually six to eight per church, also fill elected *Vorsänger* or song leader positions.

Civil leaders have attracted less controversy than those on the religious side. The *Vorsteher,* the official in charge of the entire colony, often holds his elected position for a long period of time, which allows for continuity in this important role. A large community, like Manitoba colony, has two *Vorsteher*. With less authority than the *Vorsteher,* each village has a *Schult,* or village chief, who looks after road maintenance and various other village matters. A number of other officials also serve in the administration of the colonies.[107]

Both sides of the administration work together in planning for expansion of the colonies, either to purchase additional land in the area or establish daughter colonies. The ultimate responsibility for the planning rests with the religious arm, while delegation of much of that responsibility to the secular arm may take place. Certainly, secular officials looks after much of the work involved in establishing new colonies, including negotiations with the government.[108]

Once democratically elected, colony religious leaders often actively serve until their death. Although they remain accountable to the colony members, the church leaders carry considerable power, including final authority over secular matters. It might be argued that giving wide powers to the clergy violates one of the early Anabaptist principles, that of separation of church and state. Yet, the

colonies' political organization remains minimal in most respects. Also, each colony operates under its own organization, and no larger structure ties the various colonies together.[109]

Critics of the Old Colony frequently characterize the bishops and ministers as autocratic enforcers of nonsensical rules. Yet, in fairness to the colony leaders, community consensus accounts for the origin and continuance of many of the rules. Old Colonists have various reasons for following the dictates of their leaders and community. A genuine belief exists among many that God has chosen their group as his community and that the colony norms represent God's will. In addition, community pressure, the threat of excommunication, and fear of punishment from above serve to control behaviour. Numerous calamities have reinforced the belief that God will punish with crop failures, lightning strikes, illnesses, and accidents. Although Old Colonists rely heavily on the New Testament for their faith, they also know the Old Testament accounts of punishments from God.[110]

Although for much of their history in Mexico, the Old Colonists willingly followed the church and community rules, an increasing defiance of authority took place in some colonies since the 1960s. Leaders and communities still deal with infractions, although what constitutes a breach of the rules and the method of dealing with transgressors varies a lot. The community often deals with offenders either at *Donnadach*, gatherings held on Thursday, or at *Nachkirche*, meetings that take place after church on Sundays.

Once the *Lehrdienst* decides something and the community seals it with prayer, no persons should change the decision. New bishops who assume office must agree to remain true to the old ways. When change comes, the community often does not retract or change the rules, but only stops punishing offenders. That may occur when violations of a rule become so widespread that punishment seems ineffective and counterproductive. Reluctance to change may seem like veneration of the old for the sake of the old. Yet, the Old Colonists also respect the wisdom of past decisions, reached between God and man. Respect for the wisdom of their ancestors and elders provides a possibly welcome contrast to the veneration of brash youthfulness in contemporary North American society.

For a relatively minor transgression, the leaders will ask the trespasser to correct the behaviour. In cases of more serious or repetitive offenses, and if the lawbreaker refuses to comply, excommunication may result. The church will only lift the ban when the offender admits his fault and promises to follow the rules in the future. Bans usually apply only to men, since Old Colonists believe that the wife and family follow the husband and father in disobedience or obedience.[111]

Excommunication, a tool already used by Mennonites in Europe,[112] has played a key role in Mexican Old Colony history. It has served as the last recourse to keep control and force conformity within the colonies and to maintain barriers between Old Colonists and the outside world. The excommunicated cannot go to church services, take communion, or even attend some weddings, funerals, or other community activities. Most importantly though, the church teaches that excommunication excludes the banned from heaven. Support for this belief comes from Matthew 16:19, which outlines the bishops' authority:

"And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; whatever doors you lock on earth shall be locked in heaven; and whatever doors you open on earth shall be open in heaven!"[113] Countless Old Colonists have modified their behaviour out of fear of excommunication, even when they did not agree with the rules.

It often happened that excommunications took place for actions that the church later accepted, but the bans remained in force until the offenders came to the *Lehrdienst* and admitted their fault. As Bishop Banman of the Manitoba Colony stated, disobedience, not using rubber tires or owning cars, constituted the offense. Disobedience threatened community solidarity, and those who disobeyed the rules needed to set things right with the church.[114] Some have settled matters with the church even if they did not want to attend the church and would join another church instead. On the other hand, some tough persons have lived with excommunication for decades, following their own ideas about right and wrong.[115]

Conservative Mennonites have long known that excommunication loses much of its force when the number of excommunications rises to the point that the banned can form a new community or when an alternate group exists that is willing to accept the excommunicated. Mennonites already experienced this in Canada and Russia. The Old Colony leaders know that they need to use excommunication with care, although at times it does not look that way when they ban large numbers.[116]

Some of the most serious challenges to the Mexican Old Colony leadership's authority have occurred over technological prohibitions.[117] Since the justification sometimes seems obscure, the rules regarding technology established by the Old Colonists often look ridiculous to outsiders. However, most prohibitions make sense when viewed from the point of view of their society and not from that of the rest of the world.

Precedent for living a simple life, free from unnecessary technological innovations and materialism, dates back in Mennonite history to a time long before the Old Colony became a distinct group. That position has its roots in the early Anabaptists' reading of the New Testament and may even include influences from the medieval monastic tradition. For centuries, adherents of various Mennonite groups valued living a simple, non-materialistic life. Others descended from Anabaptist roots, including Old Order Mennonites and the Amish of the United States and Ontario, share similar preferences. After the Old Colony Mennonites moved to Mexico, their position and that of less traditional Mennonite groups about the acceptance of new technology and materialism increasingly diverged. While many so-called "liberal" North American Mennonites continue to personally reject the North American materialist culture, most of their churches do not set limits on personal consumption and the use of technology.

In addition to the theological justification for living a simple life, another reason exists for Old Colony prohibitions, both technological and other. Many of the rules form part of a logical and well thought out plan to protect the community from the outside world. On the other hand, observers can use logic and reason to explain and justify the actions of the Old Colonists, giving them credit for foresight and wisdom that sometimes did not exist. In truth, leaders often imposed prohibitions on new technology before knowing the implications of the technology. In some instances, their reasons proved illogical, and

various prohibitions have caused more harm than good. Overall though, the prohibitions on technology form part of a plan that effectively creates a barrier to the outside world. To a great degree, and likely to a far greater extent than in most societies, the structure of Old Colony society resulted from deliberate planning and not from haphazard development.

The prohibitions and barriers serve to protect specific aspects of Old Colony communities from perceived dangers. Old Colonists believe they have something worth protecting. First and above all, these traditional Mennonites seek to protect their religious beliefs. The concept of a community where Biblical teachings, and particularly the teachings of Christ, form the basis for all aspects of life sets them apart, in their minds at least, from many others who call themselves Christians. In the Old Colonists' view, the distance between their lives and beliefs and much of the rest of the world constitutes the distance between heaven and hell. Yet, many Old Colonists do not rule out the possibility that members of other groups also qualify as Christians.

Secondly, the barriers serve to protect the Old Colonists' unique communities and the importance of these in their lives. Because of their distinctive religious beliefs, these communities differ substantially from those in the world around them. Individuals must place their will and personal interests below those of God and their group. All should seek to maintain close community, family, and friendship ties, while avoiding disruptive personal goals and efforts at self fulfilment. Simplicity and function hold a high value, and the group members reject ostentatious displays of wealth. Pride constitutes sin, while humility is a virtue. Again, the similarity of these Old Colony teachings to principles of the monastic movement are striking.

Thirdly, technological and other prohibitions serve to keep out influences seen as sinful and disruptive. Old Colonists consider many things embraced by the world around them as wrong and disruptive to their community. Some of the most notable differences exist in behavioural codes that reject the use of violence and govern matters of sexuality and marriage.

Clearly, the Old Colonists built the walls that surround their communities to protect those things that they consider important. Without the various barriers, much of what they seek to preserve would quickly disappear.

Three issues – rubber tires, vehicles, and electrical power – stand out in the history of battles over technology. Contrary to first impressions, the Old Colony Mennonites do not in principle oppose the use of advanced technology. For decades, they have used tractors, combines, and other machines for field work.

Already in Manitoba, the "Brotherhood" decided not to use cars, which demonstrates that the rejection of some technology predated the move to Mexico. That earlier decision also likely influenced the widespread opposition to the use of automobiles among the immigrants to Mexico. Although Old Colonists already used tractors with steel wheels in Canada and Mexico, when tractors with rubber tires appeared in Mexico, the church judged that these fit the definition of a car and consequently prohibited their use.[118] The colonies' farmers could use tractors, but only those with steel wheels. Since rubber tired tractors offered the potential for rapid transportation to the nearby Mexican towns and their corrupting influences, the justification for the leaders' decision not to

allow the Old Colonists to own a means of rapid transportation seems clear. Quite likely, this restriction also has helped restrict the size of farms, as the lower speed of the steel wheeled tractors limits the amount of land a farmer can work. This serves as a positive influence on the community, helping prevent the rise of a class of large and wealthy landowners. Whether the leaders intended to limit farm size by prohibiting the use of rubber tires remains unclear, but it has had this effect.

Many did not agree with the prohibition on rubber tires though. Tractors with steel wheels used more fuel, had higher repair bills, offered less comfort to the operator, and made it nearly impossible to work far away land, sometimes necessary for the expansion of overcrowded colonies.[119] Some disobedient persons used rubber tires in the 1940s, and by the early 1960s the church excommunicated nearly everyone in two entire villages in the Manitoba colony. After a third village sent back the excommunication letter, no further excommunications took place for rubber tires there.

The introduction of rubber tires led to major splits, first within the Manitoba colony and then between it and the other colonies.[120] This issue ended the close relationship, which had included preaching in each other's churches, between the Manitoba colony and the more conservative colonies. Manitoba colony ministers faced shunning from other colonies until the more conservative residents of Swift Current, Nord, and Santa Rita colonies left for Bolivia in the late 1960s. They left largely because of the rubber tire issue. Originally the Durango colony did not oppose rubber tired tractors, but followed the lead of the Chihuahua colonies for the sake of unity.[121] In 1996, Durango still had more tractors on steel than on rubber, although the battle between competing camps seemed heated.

Disputes over the use of rubber tires on tractors have had far reaching effects on Old Colony history, contributing to splits within and between many communities. The issue contributed to movements to new colonies including El Capulin and Buenos Aires in northern Chihuahua, La Batea in Zacatecas state, and various locations in South America. Differences over rubber tires also may have contributed to Manitoba colony abandoning the residents of Yermo colony, thereby allowing the Kleine Gemeinde to gain a foothold in the Old Colony group.[122]

In many colonies, tractors, new and old, still roll on narrow, shop built steel wheels. The owners of the machines often put away the rubber tires, in expectation of the day when their elders will pronounce them legal. In spite of the disobedience and disunity that has accompanied the rubber tire issue, the residents of many colonies continue to accept that they need to use steel wheels in order to maintain the vision and essence of their community.

Motor vehicles represent the second technological cause for excommunication and disunity. The Old Colony church prohibited owning and driving cars and trucks, although it allowed hiring and riding in these vehicles. Ideally, the Old Colony leaders likely would have banned not only the ownership but also the use of motor vehicles. To do so seemed impractical though, given their reliance on the outside world, particularly in economic matters. As a concession to pressing necessity, the church has allowed limited use of vehicles owned by others, but not as a daily convenience. Vehicle ownership would have removed

much of the isolation of the colonies. It also would have allowed people to show off their wealth and status, although they also can do that to some extent by owning a fast horse and a well-cared-for buggy. In many ways, the lifestyle made possible by car ownership conflicts with the values and intentions of the Old Colonists. The prohibition against car ownership makes complete sense when considering their goals.

Heated battles over cars took place on the Cuauhtémoc area colonies from the 1960s to the 1980s. By the early 1970s, the church seemed increasingly powerless to do much against the growing use of motor vehicles. When the battle appeared lost, the second wave of migration to South America took place. But the more traditional segments of the communities only suffered clear defeat on this issue in the 1980s.[123] The more conservative colonies still reject the use of pickups and cars, and excommunications still take place for owning them.

Whether or not to use electric power became the third technological issue to split the Old Colony communities. Resistance to using electricity already existed prior to the availability of today's vast array of electrically powered appliances. The objection to electricity appears to partly derive from the electric lines' obvious physical link to the "world." Electricity and its uses also challenged the simple life valued by the Old Colonists. The leaders likely acted wisely when they placed quite a general ban on using electricity, rather than having to deal with each specific use of the technology as new gadgets appeared.[124] The latter course would have led to endless debates and problems. Without question, television, videos, and the internet, to mention only a few uses of electricity, seem incompatible with the Old Colonists' vision of separate religious communities. Banning electricity has proven an effective decision for keeping a distance from the world, since the world increasingly has relied on electricity.

Electricity already became an issue by the 1950s, although at that time the Old Colony formed a fairly united front against it. Gradually the leaders allowed the use of some electricity for farm purposes, providing that farmers produced it with their own small generating plants and only used it to power tools and light barns. As with tractors and motor vehicles, the Old Colonists negotiated the use of electricity, controlled its use, and attempted to limit its negative effects. Although some wired their houses in anticipation of the day when their community might permit the use of electricity there, coal oil and gas lamps still light many houses and numerous households do not use electric appliances. The main exception developed in the Cuauhtémoc area colonies, where, by the 1990s, residents commonly used microwave ovens and other electrical devices. Even there though, some, including Bishop Banman, still did not use electric light inside their houses.

It seems that the Old Colonists have allowed greater use of modern technology in the men's sphere than in that of the women. Men work the fields with mechanized equipment and light the barns with electric lights, while the household realm often has few modern conveniences. However, in many cases at least, men also severely limit their use of new technologies, while women have embraced some innovations. For example, the technological level of the gas powered washing machines used by some women may approximate that of tractors on steel wheels. As well, women and men often share the chores in the

barn, with both benefiting from the use of the electric lights there. The numerous technological restrictions affect both men and women.

Prohibitions also long have existed against the use of various other devices, including telephones, radios, bicycles, and musical instruments. The reasons for these bans resemble those already examined. Some technology provides an unwanted or unnecessary direct link to the world, some has the potential of working against goals of church, community, and family solidarity, and some is condemned as sinful or as making it easier to sin.

While usually not the cause of mass excommunications, many have challenged various prohibitions. By 1986, two-meter two-way radios, usually unregistered in violation of Mexican law, saw use in the Cuauhtémoc area.[125] Many Mennonites rapidly adopted this technology, and by 1991, some residents of Las Virginias and La Honda also used two-meter radios.[126] Telephone service came to villages in the Cuauhtémoc area in 1990.[127] Community leaders there likely saw the usefulness of telephones and proved willing to compromise by allowing telephones, called *Casetas*, in some businesses and houses for general public use. In the more conservative colonies, two-way radios and telephones remained hidden in the 1990s. The advent of cellular telephone service made it much easier to violate the ban against having telephones. Two-way radios and telephones increased links with the outside world, endangering the closed nature of the communities.

Over the years, Old Colonists brought much used farm machinery from Canada and the United States. Tractors, mowers, binders, and threshing machines, up to seventy years or more in age, still see regular use. Farm families also rely on horses to help with many tasks. The use of horses and of the older and smaller machinery supports the close-knit communities and families by limiting farm size and requiring group labour. As an example, one man with a modern combine can singlehandedly harvest a crop of grain. Without a combine though, harvest requires a large crew, including workers to operate the mower, binder, and threshing machine. In addition, labourers gather the grain bearing stalks into stooks and then haul them to the threshing machine using horse drawn racks. The large extended families often help meet the high labour requirements imposed by the use of small and old machinery.

Some Old Colony farmers do own new tractors and large, modern equipment. By the 1990s, the Cuauhtémoc area colonies mechanized to a much greater degree than most other colonies. Numerous farmers there utilize the latest agricultural innovations much as their counterparts in Canada and the United States do. This has helped some farmers achieve considerable economic prosperity. But the use of large farm machinery can help widen the economic distance between the rich and the poor by increasing inequities. Community solidarity also suffers with the reduction of interdependence within families and communities.

Old Colony philosophy has not opposed all new technology, but has recognized that “urbanization, industrialization, commercialization, communication, and interaction with the outside will lead to the breakdown of a system.”[128] The group accepts technology, but on their terms. They evaluate new options and then choose those that they believe will not interfere with their goals, at least as much as economic realities allow for choice.

Resistance to change has helped maintain community boundaries. Sometimes the group seems not to understand the reason for following various rules. But even if the present generation does not understand the reason for not changing things, a blind following of their ancestors' maxim not to change helps maintain the barriers and those things that the barriers protect. On the other hand, Old Colonists, by accepting a limited range of new technology, have demonstrated their willingness to allow controlled change. Some critics, who view the Old Colonists' resistance to change as nothing more than pointless stubbornness, fail to recognize the validity of their boundary maintenance actions. Often outsiders see only the quaintness and not the reasons, conscious or unconscious, for it.

Technological issues often have proven negotiable in the colonies. Pressing economic necessity has caused leaders to change some boundaries. Even though modification of a boundary takes place does not mean that it cannot still separate Old Colonists from the world. Old Colonists also can accept some technology, using the new tools to help the community and its vision survive, rather than allowing it to tear down the walls. A careful acceptance of technology also does not mean that the Old Colonists and the world come closer together. Instead, the world continually develops new technology, ensuring that the technological gap and barrier between the two remains as large as ever.

In addition to the technological area, other issues of control and discipline exist within the Old Colony communities. These include sexual immorality, drunkenness, violence, and defiance of authority. Church members also stress the need for humility, as demonstrated by the popularity of German language books on the evils of pride and haughtiness.[129]

Led by their elected leaders, the relocated Old Colony communities successfully established colonies in Mexico. They enjoyed greater freedom to design and implement their vision than did their forefathers in Europe and Canada. The use of excommunication and restrictions on technology, along with the physical isolation afforded by the Mexican environment, helped protect the enterprise. In addition, their entire culture, including their language and educational system, helped repel threats from outside.

The design of many elements of the colonies resembled the old pattern first established in Russia and then in Canada. However, various aspects of their society, that had not previously performed a defensive function, came to serve as barriers to the Mexican world around them. Their society became increasingly anachronistic, with various peculiarities serving as part of the barrier to the world.

Knowing details of the Mexican natural environment and how the newcomers adapted to this can help understand their history. Most Mennonite colonies in northern Mexico lie in previously sparsely populated valleys, surrounded by low mountains. Settlers live at high elevations, between 2,000 and 2,600 metres (6,500 to 8,500 feet), on semiarid land with most precipitation occurring from June to October.[130] The Mennonites divided their colonies into villages, often designated by both a name and a "Campo" number. Most villages carry the German names of beloved settlements in Canada and in Russia before that. Older colonies, and some newer ones, follow the *Strassendorf* and *Gewannflur* system of layout, "a linear one-street village with its surrounding fields and pasture."[131] Farms lie on both sides of the street. The Old Colonists' ancestors, first in Russia and then in Canada, also used this system of village design. Villages commonly

consist of ten to thirty farms with an average of 160 acres each.[132] Some land is used for common purposes, such as churches, schools, cheese factories, roads, and for a common pasture.

Some newer villages only have farms on one side of the street, with pasture land behind the house and farm land across the street. Some newer colonies though, including Sabinal and Villa Ahumada, still follow the traditional form. Also, with the expansion of many colonies onto neighbouring land, diversity developed in the shape and size of individual pieces of land. Most farms became smaller and some farming more intensive. In contrast, some farms grew in size, while the number of landless also rose.[133]

As a practical defence mechanism, the original land registrations did not include the names of individual owners. Old Colonists hoped that measure would allow them to control the resale of land and prevent disgruntled individuals from selling land to Mexicans or other outsiders.[134] In choosing that form of land ownership, the Old Colonists followed a pattern already preferred by their ancestors in Russia during the nineteenth century. That decision made sense from the point of view of aiding with the survival of the traditional community. However, on the Mexican colonies, during recent decades erosion of much of the central control over land has taken place. As a result, non-Old Colonists own land in some colonies. This often accompanied the arrival of other Mennonite churches and the loss of colony residents to those groups. Particularly where the Old Colony church's presence weakened and alternatives to the old church exist have individuals obtained titles to the land.

As of 1993, government subsidy programs required the drawing of village maps, showing who farmed the land. The Mexican government still did not require individual titles, although some newer colonies found they needed to purchase their land under numerous titles. Often, these still did not correspond with actual land ownership, allowing the community to control the sale and purchase of land.[135]

The Mexican land ownership system has utilized land titles and *Certificados de Inafectibilidad*. While land titles served as collateral for borrowing money, they did not always offer protection from the demands of the *agraristas*. Mexico would only issue a *Certificado de Inafectibilidad*, thereby guaranteeing security of land holding, if the landowner did not own more land than the maximum allowed.[136]

Land ownership became more secure with the repeal of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which regulated land claims and *ejidos*. This took place in the 1990s, during the Presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. The term *ejido* refers to the land used by some Mexican communities, which often once belonged to large landowners. Land redistribution came about through land reforms introduced following the Mexican Revolution. Much of the threat from the *agraristas*, present in Mexico since the 1920s, disappeared with the repeal of Article 27. Mexicans now also can obtain titles for *ejido* land, which they can rent or sell. This opens new possibilities of colony expansion for the Mennonites.[137]

No one pattern exists for transferring land and other assets to succeeding generations. Since the small farms rarely can support all the children once they reach adulthood, often one son or daughter takes over the farm when the par-

ents retire or die. At other times, someone from outside the family buys the farm. Even though one child may take over the farm, all daughters and sons usually receive equal shares of the estate, including the value of the farm, after parents die. The *Waisenamt* often helps to settle legal matters.[138]

When the Mennonites came to Mexico, they brought with them the wood frame European *Wohnstallhaus* style, which placed the house and barn under one roof. Seventy five years later, most barns now stand separate from the houses. A shift also occurred, first to adobe houses, with lower slope *caliche* covered roofs, and then to concrete buildings with metal roofing. Most newer houses look bleak from the outside, with their unpainted exteriors. The sparsely furnished interiors seem austere and functional, although they offer a basic level of comfort. The architecture, while obviously adapted to the Mexican environment, remains distinct from that of the Mexicans.

Given the absence of community water and sewage infrastructure systems in most areas, many households rely on their own small systems. Residents of un-modern colonies, assisted by the often bountiful wind, rely on windmills to pump water from wells up to 250 feet deep.[139] Many carry water into the house by hand as needed. Wealthier families may have running water, gravity fed from elevated cisterns. Some even draw hot water, heated in gas fired water heaters, from their taps.

The distinctive land ownership pattern, village design, and architecture all form part of the Old Colony's barrier to the outside world. Similarly, the group's church practices separate them from the people around them. Many aspects of the Old Colony religious practices and rituals are unique.

Usually one for every three or four villages, the unpainted churches appear plain inside and out. Men and women enter through separate doors before seating themselves on backless benches on separate sides of the church. Most men wear dark coloured shirts and suits, but cannot don ties. The women wear head coverings and long, dark, pleated dresses. Children, who receive religious instruction in school, do not attend church services. At the front, on a raised platform, stands a pulpit, with the ministers seated on one side and the *Vorsänger* on the other. The latter lead two or three songs during the course of the service. No musical instruments are used and the singing is in the *Langeweise*, a chantlike ornamented style.[140]

Each colony's ministers and bishop rotate among the various churches within that colony to deliver Sunday sermons. Their tall black boots and long black jackets command respect. Twice a year, they offer communion to their flock.[141] Baptism, which marks admission to the church community, normally takes place in the spring shortly before the marriage season. This timing works well, since the church will not marry anyone not yet baptized. Normally, persons from outside the community do not join the Old Colony church. If the unusual circumstance arose where an outsider lived among the Old Colonists, the community could decide to admit that person to their church.[142]

With decades of diligent work, the Mennonites transformed portions of the northern Mexican wilderness from desert and grazing land to productive fields. Their example also influenced the farming methods of Mexican farmers.[143] However, particularly Leonard Sawatzky has criticized the Mennonites for not using conservation but exploitation techniques on the weak Mexican soils.

Better adjustment to the land and conditions, thanks to the use of new techniques, appears present in newer colonies.[144] As in other farming locales around the world, Old Colonists face the challenge of caring for the land while extracting a living from it.

The largest part of farmers' incomes in most colonies comes from selling milk to the cheese factories, and most crops grown become feed for the milk cows.[145] The cheese industry has allowed the Old Colonists to produce a product that they can sell outside the colonies, providing essential income, while minimizing interaction with the world. While milk production stands at a low level – commonly ten to fifteen litres per cow per day – many farmers seem satisfied with this, since it allows them to survive financially. Some have only one cow, and, selling most of the milk from it, live from that income.[146] More prosperous families commonly milk five to twenty cows.

Some cheese factories operate as cooperatives. On the Durango colony, the cooperative, founded in 1946, has three factories with about 600 members.[147] In 1996, Durango colony had twenty-four cheese factories, mostly small, unmodern, family-owned operations. In contrast, some large and modern factories operated. On the Swift Current colony, the largest cheese factory in the colonies, Queseria Dos Lagunas, handled 60,000 litres of milk per day and made twelve to thirteen tons of five types of cheese.[148] Many factories do not pasteurize the milk and use no chemicals to make the cheese.[149] The market for cheese fluctuates greatly, although in good times strong demand means that the factories can sell all they make, at high prices. Cheese making has proven the financial salvation for many colonies.

Old Colonists also grow many crops other than fodder for the cows. Increasingly, particularly in the Cuauhtémoc area colonies, they have planted apple trees. Irrigation is essential for orchards, and some have efficient systems delivering water individually to each tree.[150] The labour intensive orchards provide considerable employment on relatively little land, compared to growing traditional crops.[151]

At first, the Old Colonists planted Canadian varieties of wheat, oats, and corn. But they did not grow well. Experimentation with more suitable strains followed. Growing wheat proved especially difficult, but it did make a comeback in the late 1950s. The Mennonites have produced most of Mexico's oats for many years.[152] Before 1965, the colony farms used no chemical fertilizer, but ten years later, about fifty percent used commercial fertilizer.[153] In the Cuauhtémoc area, corn, beans, and oats represented the three main crops in the 1990s.[154] The primary crops in Durango colony consisted of oats, kaffir, and sorghum, although some apples also grew there.[155] Farming practices there remained less mechanized and sophisticated than at Cuauhtémoc.

Although Mennonites in the northern colonies have enjoyed good agricultural periods, recurring drought has brought setbacks. Possibly the two most serious dry periods occurred in the early 1950s and in the 1990s. The droughts and generally dry conditions have led to increased irrigation. By 1996, in the Cuauhtémoc area, farmers irrigated about ten percent of the land, with the Manitoba colony irrigating the most at about 15 percent.[156]

Durango colony also uses some irrigation, although to a lesser extent than in the Cuauhtémoc area colonies. In 1996, irrigated land there totalled only

about 1,000 hectares, with generally backwards irrigation technology in use. Although the rainfall proved more reliable there, many years not enough rain fell to grow a crop.[157] Other colonies use varying amounts of irrigation. Farmers in some areas, as in the hot and dry Nuevo Casas Grandes region, consider irrigation as indispensable.

Old Colonists have considerable contact with Mexican society in order to market their crops. The government's CONASUPO (Compania Nacional de Subsistencia Populares), handles many crops, while private Mexican buyers purchase others. Some isolated colonies, such as La Batea, lie far from markets and transportation infrastructure systems, making marketing of surpluses more difficult.

Overall, the Mexican Mennonite agricultural system has helped maintain separation from the world. Unlike many of their Flemish ancestors who lived in or near urban areas during the early Radical Reformation, today's traditional Old Colonists live almost exclusively in rural areas. Critics often have said that the Old Colony considers farming as the only acceptable vocation. In 1970, the bishop of the Manitoba colony, Abraham Dyck, said: "We are farmers . . . if my children have a big education they will not want to milk cows or work in the fields. And we want our children to remain in the country."[158] Already in the 1940s, J. Winfield Fretz critically observed: "As long as the Old Colony Mennonites prohibit their members from entering business and industry, it is obvious that Mennonites in that country will never become industrial leaders."[159]

While the Mennonites favoured farming, some vocational alternatives, including those of storekeepers and schoolteachers, always existed.[160] The cheese factories also soon began to operate, and other occupations met various needs within the colonies.[161] A limited occupational diversification helped support the self-sufficiency of the colonies.

Clearly, agriculture is conducive to maintaining the separate communities, lifestyle, and values of the Old Colony group. Several additional reasons account for the preference for farming. Honest and moral in nature, farming fits well with the religious principles of the group. Also, the Old Colony community thinks of wage earners as servants, even placing them below landless persons in terms of social status.[162] A spiritual justification for being farmers also comes from 1 Corinthians 7:20: "Usually a person should keep on with the work he was doing when God called him."[163] In the case of the conservative Mennonites, this means they should remain as farmers.[164] Additionally, the Old Colonists have said that the status of their agreement with the Mexican government, their *Privilegium*, depends on their remaining farmers.

Most notably, in some areas of the Manitoba colony the emphasis on farming has diminished during recent decades. But even there, at least away from the main highway in the dozens of Old Colony villages, farming remains the principal activity. Farming also continues as the most important vocation in most colonies outside the Cuauhtémoc area.

Selective vocational diversification, as long as it takes place on the colonies, also can fit with the goals of the Old Colony community. Work opportunities in the nearby Mexican areas represent a greater threat. Traditionally, the leaders prohibited their followers from working outside the colony. Yet, residents of the larger colonies commonly work in the surrounding area. Good

wage-earning opportunities remain scarce though. And those who want employment encounter fierce competition from Mexicans, even for low-paying jobs. *Maquiladoras*, or foreign factories, also have appeared in the Cuauhtémoc area. The extreme isolation of many other colonies has served to limit the threat to the community that off-colony employment represents.

While critics attack the Old Colony group for its emphasis on farming, they likely either do not understood or agree with the goal of physical separation from the world. The Old Colony leadership appears correct in its assessment that an agricultural lifestyle best serves to maintain physical and social isolation. Their restrictions in this area, as in others, demonstrate deliberate planning. They have not denied that their vocational decisions carry a price.

Language and education count among the strongest barriers created by the Old Colony group. Both form key aspects of the Old Colony leadership's strategy to maintain their community's vision. Other Mennonite groups also once used their distinctive language and teaching patterns as barriers, but, except for the most conservative groups, no longer do so. Many other Mennonites now view the Old Colony educational system as a symptom of what has gone wrong with the Old Colony group, rather than as a powerful and positive tool. Critics who long agitated for educational change likely will be pleased that the Old Colony on Manitoba Colony recently adopted some educational reforms. More isolated colonies have not encountered the same pressure for change as Manitoba Colony.

A trilingual pattern characterized Old Colony Mennonite society, in Russia, Canada, and now Mexico. The group has utilized Low German, or *Dietsch*, as their everyday language, High German as the language of church and school, and a third language, first Russian, then English, and now Spanish, to relate to the world around them. Community members developed full fluency in Low German, while facility in the other languages has varied.

Already in the early 1500s, many Mennonites utilized a form of Low German, Nether Saxon Low German, as their primary spoken language. Although at one time it served as the principle language of the Hanseatic League, the written form of Low German fell into disuse. On moving east to the Danzig area, the Mennonites' everyday language changed to the Eastern Low German spoken in the area, although the newcomers modified it with additions they brought with them. Then, during the years the Old Colony's forefathers spent in Russia, their Low German again underwent modification, with the addition of some Russian and Ukranian words. Later in the Americas, a heavy sprinkling of both English and Spanish words became part of the language.

Largely because of the failure of anyone to translate the Bible into Low German and the decreasing use of Low German as a written language, the Mennonites relied on a second language when they needed a written language. Some Mennonites already spoke Flemish or a dialect of Dutch, which became their primary written language when they moved east to Polish territory, if not before. Eventually, the Mennonites in Prussia adopted High German as their written language. The Flemish group, from which the Old Colony largely descended, did not change their church or written language to High German until possibly as late as 1783-1784, later than the Frisian Mennonites in the area. Historians today argue about some details of the Mennonite linguistic history, but

all seem to agree that the Old Colony Mennonites utilized Low German as their spoken language and High German as their written language before they emigrated to Russia.[165]

The High German preserved by the Mexican Mennonites for use in church and school has evolved less than that in use in Europe today. It has not incorporated many changes and additions made during the past centuries in Europe. Normally this does not create a problem for the Mexican Mennonites, as they rarely need to relate to the European German environment.

Many in the Old Colony group have opposed changing or modernizing their High German. The more conservative among them have looked on those wanting to modify the language as proud. Heated and divisive battles have taken place over making changes to the language. The most notorious dispute flared up in the 1940s and again in the 1960s over the pronunciation of the "proud a.'[166] Most Old Colonists, when they speak High German, pronounce the "a" as "au," much as they say it in Low German. In the Manitoba colony, the teachers at Blumenau and Blumenort began teaching the "a" pronunciation in school. Other teachers also sporadically joined them. This turned into a conflict that resulted in excommunications when some who promoted the "a" usage resolutely refused to change their minds and speech. Years later, Bishop Banman said that the sin came not from saying "a" but from thinking oneself better because one used the "a."[167] Although the controversy died down, residents of the colony indicate that the "au" continues in dominant use. Quite likely, the dispute involved much more than whether or not to change the pronunciation of the German language. It became a symbolic battle between those who wanted to hold the status quo on various fronts and those who welcomed alternatives. Some wanted to maintain the barriers, including various old ways, while others wanted to allow in the new.

Most Old Colonist children do not learn High German until after they start school. By then, learning the language carries with it many of the difficulties of learning a foreign language. Even though most school instruction takes place in High German, many still know little High German when they leave school. Many Old Colony people, including some teachers, cannot converse well in High German, although some seem anxious to practice their skills. The common lack of fluency raises questions about what some gain from the time spent in school. Some also understand little of that spoken and sung in the High German church services. This creates a situation that resembles the pre-Reformation era when the forebears of today's Old Colonists could not understand the Catholic services conducted in Latin. Even some ministers and bishops, who lead the German services, cannot converse well in High German. Old Colonists themselves can see the need to address these issues, including by improving German language instruction in school.

Old Colony reading materials, including school books, newspapers, the Bible, and the *Gesangbuch* (song book), appear mainly in High German. Besides attending school and church, reading offers the main opportunity for learning German in the colonies, but many read little or not at all. In that respect, Old Colonists differ little from many other Mennonites or North Americans.

Few Mexican Old Colonists identify with the Flemish or Dutch dialects once spoken by their ancestors. With more than two hundred years of High

German use behind them, Old Colonists accept that language as their mother tongue. Somewhat surprisingly, they seem to value High German more than Low German. They commonly think of Low German as an inferior variant of German and give it less respect than High German. Possibly because it is not widely written, they view Low German as inferior to High German, English, or Spanish, as incomplete and not finished.[168] Yet, the people have an intense love for their expressive and colourful Low German.

During the twentieth century, various people from outside the Old Colony group worked to develop Low German into a written language. Canadian Mennonites played an active role in this.[169] As a result, various competing Low German dictionaries appeared. Old Colonists now can access the New Testament in Low German, and *Die Mennonitische Post* carries some Low German articles. Often with great fervour, other Mennonites have promoted the growing repertoire of Low German literature among the Old Colonists.

Some outsiders have suggested that Low German should take the place of High German and possibly Spanish in the Mexican colonies. Carsten Brandt, a German who taught in Mexico, favoured developing Low German into a more versatile, self-sufficient language. High German could remain as the church language but Low German would fill many of the other roles presently occupied by High German and Spanish in the written realm.[170] More recently, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers promoted Low German literacy, offering classes.[171] Why MCC chose to promote Low German literacy, when it could direct its efforts to improving existing High German skills, is unclear. Development and promotion of written Low German, although of doubtful effectiveness in bringing changes to the pattern of language usage, does not seem to immediately threaten the barriers erected by the Old Colony.

Old Colonists commonly know more Spanish than High German, although their Spanish oral ability usually surpasses their reading or writing skills. The men speak more Spanish than do the women, who live lives more sheltered from Mexican society. Some women though have learned Spanish, from the radio, from their husbands and children, and at Spanish lessons facilitated by MCC.[172] Old Colony schools do not teach Spanish, although some other Mennonite groups do teach it in their schools. Clearly, the once strong Old Colony resistance to having their people learn Spanish has largely disappeared.

Many Mexican Mennonites know some English from time spent in Canada, and English proficiency carries more prestige than does knowledge of Spanish. Many view knowledge of English as a tool that will help those who travel to Canada to work obtain better paying work there. In the Cuauhtémoc area, ministers do not openly oppose or preach against the use of English. A different situation may prevail in more remote areas where the Old Colony church still openly opposes the movement to Canada and the influences that people bring back with them.[173]

Although High German likely stands in third place, behind Low German and Spanish, as the language of everyday usage, the Old Colonists have not abandoned it. After all, protection of this language formed part of their motivation for leaving Russia and then Canada. Even though a higher percentage of the community once enjoyed fluency in High German than today, the language still plays a vital role, along with Low German, in maintaining isolation and a

sense of community identity.

Outside the Old Colony, in the schools and churches of the other Mennonites in Mexico, language use has undergone more rapid change. Within Old Colony society though, little interest exists in changing the uses of High German and Low German or in deposing High German as the language of church and school. Major battles have not taken place over the respective roles of High German, Low German, and Spanish, which demonstrates that Old Colonists largely have ignored this matter. If the issue arose, the Old Colony likely would oppose altering the formal position of High German in their society.

Yet, changes have taken place in the respective roles played by the languages. Outsiders increasingly put Low German in written form and use it in religious radio broadcasts and literature directed at the Old Colonists. The ministers and bishops themselves have altered some of the traditional uses of language. They sometimes mix Low German commentary with their High German sermons in church.[174] And some easily fall into Spanish conversations outside church. However, Spanish will not soon enter the church or school spheres. Language does not represent the last, or even the primary, battleground in Old Colony society. Rather, the traditional uses continue to undergo a gradual evolution. Kelly Hedges rightly has said that language use is not negotiable, including the roles played by High and Low German.[175] On the other hand, few insiders have made an issue of renegotiating language in the Old Colony.

For more than 200 years, the primary languages of this group have differed from the dominant tongue spoken in the countries where they lived. This language barrier still effectively helps maintain a sense of identity and community, although the opposition to learning both English and Spanish lessens as the Old Colony barriers weaken.

Closely related to the subject of language is that of schools and education. Already long ago, some in colonies said: "As the school so the Church."[176] They believed that if their school failed, so would the community and its vision. As they already demonstrated in Russia and Canada, education falls among the areas that the Old Colony group refuses to negotiate with the outside world.

The Old Colonists fear that too much education will interfere with their salvation. Some argue that, "High learning does not make Christians."[177] Uncontrolled education will point out alternatives to their beliefs and isolated lives and can make people question their religion and the system they live in. This can result in the loss of the individual and endanger the colonies.

Menno Simons and other early Mennonites obtained advanced educations for their time and stressed the importance of education.[178] But by the time the group lived in Poland, educational options underwent some restriction. Many Mennonites no longer promoted advanced education, and some communities limited reading material to the Bible and approved texts. The community discouraged competition, which it viewed as a manifestation of pride, and schools did not grade the children's work. Neither should the students exceed a certain level of competence. "In school, children were overseen, guided, and disciplined rather then instructed or taught."[179]

The later conflict in Russia, which arose when the forefathers of today's Old Colonists resisted the efforts of Johann Cornies' faction to introduce educational change, also may account for many of the educational conflicts that later

took place in Canada and Mexico. The Old Colony group as well as some who have offered educational alternatives to them in Mexico know the history of the dispute. Both sides consider it an old and important battle.

The *Lehrdienst* has kept watch over the schools to control what they teach and their instructional methods. They understand the crucial importance of the school in maintaining a barrier to the outside world and of the role of their education system in preserving their uniqueness.[180] The school prepares Old Colonists for life in their world, and not for the larger world outside. According to Hedges, the school does not play the role of helping "attain goals of public service or upward economic mobility or higher social status. Instead, teaching a child to read and write in High German and in a script used by few others in the world reinforces the boundary between the *Jemeent* and the *Welt* and the uniqueness of the internal structure of the *Jemeent*."[181] Old Colonists also consider it important not to teach things that take away from the spiritual dedication and nature of the colonies. The school should prepare children for life in the church, largely for their baptismal day, when they will recite the catechism in front of the church.

Most villages have a one room school, with one male teacher, who lives at the school with his family. Sometimes, his wife assists with the teaching. Even though teachers have not taken formal teacher training in approved institutions outside the colonies, the Old Colony has employed many skilled and respected teachers over the years. But the presence of some incompetent teachers attracted the attention of outside observers. The community sometimes chose landless and poor men as teachers, not because of their teaching abilities but because they badly needed a job and a roof over their heads. In some cases, students soon knew more than their teachers. Conversations with Old Colony leaders reveal that they consider it necessary to improve the standard of education. Upgrading programs, working with experienced teachers, and other forms of training should help improve teacher qualifications and lessen criticism of the Old Colony educational system.

Old Colony schools look much like the other buildings in the village. Although boys and girls enter through separate doors, all children sit in the same classroom, with the girls on one side and the boys on the other. Sometimes up to seventy, eighty, or even one hundred children attend a one-room school. Beginning at age seven, children first study the "Fibel," a German reading book, and then the Catechism, New Testament, and Bible.[182] Commonly, boys attend school for seven years and girls for six years. Various explanations exist for this difference, but the most common claims that boys need more education for farming and their other activities than girls do for being housewives and mothers.[183] In keeping with the emphasis on noncompetitiveness, teachers assign no homework and give no exams. The school year often extends for six months, scheduled so that the children can help their parents at the busy times of the farm schedule.

Critics say that the educational system does not encourage creative or critical thinking. The curriculum includes reading, writing, recitation, and basic arithmetic. In addition, students learn about morals, hygiene, and cleanliness and also pray and sing. The teaching materials include many of a religious nature. But the program does not teach more advanced music, art, history, or

physical education. Teachers still attempt to teach students to read by using a system known as *Buchstabieren,* a method which saw use in various parts of the world in the nineteenth century.[184] They also stress memory work, although students may memorize the High German words without knowing what they mean. The primary script in use remains the Gothic script, and the Latin script used in the western world is not commonly taught.[185]

Outsiders often have wanted to see an expansion of Old Colony educational resources. In the 1950s, Walter Schmiedehaus, known as a friend and helper to the conservative Mennonites, obtained hundreds of books for the schools through the German Embassy in Mexico City.[186] The Old Colony people seemed to accept these, possibly because trust existed between them and Schmiedehaus. More recent attempts by other Mennonites to introduce new materials often meet firm resistance. One recent exception to this occurred with the distribution of approximately 5,000 copies of "Diese Steine: Die Russlandmennoniten," a book by Adina Reger and Delbert Plett.[187]

When asked about the condition of their schools, the leaders commonly answer, "they are a bit weak." When asked to elaborate, they defend their basic system, but suggest it could work better if parents helped the children more with learning and teachers and students worked harder. Surprisingly, a report in March 1997 indicated that the Manitoba colony planned to reform its education system. Old Colonists there planned to introduce a one percent levy on incomes, part of which would help fund educational reform. The plan included having a school committee visit the schools, with a view to improving the teaching.[188] Because the colony ranked among the most liberal in Mexico, strong pressure for change existed there. Several years later, it appears that positive change has begun.

Old Colonists and outsiders agree that education has deteriorated. Some see defensiveness on the part of Old Colony parents and leaders, and suggest that they do not want the children to know more than they do. Unlike other groups, where children often possess better educations than their parents, in the colonies the opposite situation applies, because of the long term deterioration in language skills and education.

In spite of the system, the Old Colony group has produced some well-educated people. Most colonies have individuals whose literacy and knowledge stand out. Other Old Colonists seek out these people to perform various tasks, including record keeping, filling out applications for government programs, and helping with immigration documentation. Some adults, leaders and others, have interest in and possess considerable knowledge about both Mennonite and Mexican history.[189]

The Old Colony educational system differs from that of the other Mennonite churches in Mexico. While the Kleine Gemeinde teachers may lack university training, some have attended secondary school.[190] Many EMMC and General Conference teachers have studied and qualified as teachers. General Conference schools employ teachers trained in teachers colleges, and the schools operate with government accreditation.[191] Non-Old Colony teachers operate without the restrictions on curriculum of the Old Colony system.

Critics of the Old Colony may exaggerate the extent of illiteracy in the group. One recent guess estimated that ninety percent of the adults qualified as

illiterate.[192] And critics of the system jokingly say, "The Old Colony is illiterate in four languages."[193] These characterizations are extreme and unfair to the Old Colony and their educational system. On the other hand, personal observations revealed that a surprising number of Old Colonists cannot read or write well in High German or Spanish.

Illiteracy may not bother many Old Colonists, partly because the group relies heavily on oral communication. They handle many communications and records, that in other societies take place in writing, orally. Hedges has argued that the Old Colonists do not qualify as illiterate, at least not by their own standard, which includes reciting the catechism before the whole church prior to baptism.[194] Possibly critics from outside the colonies have applied an outside standard of literacy to the Old Colonists. Hedges admits that most cannot read or write well in German, or any other language, but adds, "reading and writing have particular meanings for the Old Colonists other than the ability to encode and decode spoken language into a written form."[195] Just because members of the group cannot read or write well does not mean they are illiterate. Rather, they have developed communication methods appropriate to their communities. Hedges does appear correct, at least to a point. Many have assumed that the Old Colonists' attempt to continue in their separate agrarian communities, far from the modernist standards of the twentieth century, lacks feasibility. While this assumption may appear true for the colonies of the Cuauhtémoc area, it does not fit for many of the other colonies.

For the most part, the Old Colonists in Mexico can learn well. Many have proven their inventiveness and skill as workers in various trades. They have a reputation of only needing to watch something done once before knowing how to do it themselves. Yet, frequently their lack of education and knowledge may mean that they remain unaware of solutions to problems encountered.[196] An example can serve to illustrate this point. Although unable to read the instructions, an Old Colonist recently installed a gas heater in a sleeping room. When the heater would not light, he called this author to read him the instructions. In large print on the heater and in the instructions was a warning prohibiting installation of the appliance without a constant source of ventilation. Had the Old Colonist managed to complete the installation without understanding the instructions, someone may have died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

In summary, judging the Old Colony people as illiterate or not depends largely on whether their goal of continuing to live in their closed communities appears realistic. The Cuauhtémoc area Mennonites and those who emigrate to Canada appear illiterate by the standard of the larger society into which they seek to move. On the other hand, the Mennonites of La Batea and numerous other colonies qualify as literate, since their limited level of reading and writing skills suffice for their environment. Possibly these latter people do not need to improve their literacy skills. For decades, the Old Colonists have proven those wrong who said they could not survive in their closed communities. Their education system, for the most part, has prepared the children for their adult lives, and changes in the education system could endanger the important religious and cultural goals of these Old Colony communities.

Tradition and community opinion, and the desire to control colony boundaries, also severely restrict social activities. Prior to marriage, in their primary

social activity, separate groups of girls and boys walk up and down the village street. This takes place especially in the evenings and on Sunday afternoons. Adults also enjoy visiting friends and relatives, particularly on Sunday, the day of rest.[197] Auction sales, held to sell land and goods when people die or move away, also serve as a social activity.

Old Colonists look on most competitive sports and games as originating with the world and the devil. Even owning a ball has brought criticism from the *Lehrdienst*.[198] On the other hand, crokinole and checkers qualify as "cultural and don't fall into the 'dangerous' category."[199] In some colonies, change has occurred in the area of recreation. By 1994, Buenos Aires colony allowed frisbees, and some played volleyball.[200] In the changing Manitoba colony, at least seven baseball teams played in 1996. And in 1997, Abram Siemens planned the first meeting of the new *Deutsche Baseball Verein* (German baseball club).[201] Still in a more conservative colony, a well respected man who wanted to jog only ran at night out of fear of social disapproval. He stopped running after injuring his foot in the dark.[202]

The colony leaders prohibit all musical instruments and most music, other than hymns. Yet, given the opportunity, many do listen to worldly music.[203] Prohibitions also apply to radios, televisions, movies, theatre, and most books and magazines, although residents sometimes break these rules.[204] The Bible, the Catechism, and the *Martyr's Mirror* number among the few books in many homes. The rules permit catalogues though, presumably because of their practical function. *Die Mennonitische Post*, published by Canadian Mennonites, receives wide distribution, although it at times has crossed the line of acceptability. Other reading material also increasingly enters from "the world." While the church still prohibits photographs, many do own some, often taken by outsiders. Neither do the regulations allow for pictures on the walls of rooms. Yet, because of their functionality, residents can have as many picture calendars as they want. This explains the large demand for calendars, met by a calendar print shop on the Manitoba colony and printers in various Mexican communities.[205] Suspecting their origin as pagan, the church does not allow the use of Christmas trees.[206]

Since a multitude of prohibitions exist, many things qualify as temptations. Since many give in to these, much behaviour that deviates from community norms takes place.[207] The view from inside the communities appears quite different than from outside. An outsider may see an orthodox, conservative community, while the insider will know about the hidden cellular telephones, mouth organs, pictures, and pickups that create tensions and hurt community solidarity. As contact with the world increases, community members increasingly challenge and break the old rules.[208]

Much like their ancestors, the Old Colonists remain very family oriented.[209] The level of respect and obedience teenagers and young adults show for their parents contrasts sharply with that often seen in the outside world. The Old Colony does not share the western world's preoccupation with a culture of youth. Particularly residents of the more isolated communities still respect old age and the wisdom it can bring.[210]

Gender roles have changed little in Mexico since the 1920s. In 1951, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs wrote: "The patriarchal system

still prevails rigidly among them and they are still, from the male standpoint, in the enviable position that their womenfolk know nothing about emancipation."[211] Women still have not demanded the right to vote in church or colony affairs. No public questioning of their roles seems evident.[212] Men, as household heads, appear to expect and receive obedience and respect from their wives and children.

Most Old Colonists marry quite young, often in their late teens or early twenties, and almost always within the group. The marriage regulations and patterns also serve to maintain the integrity of their society. Weddings usually follow shortly after the baptism of the bride and groom. Due to strong religious prohibitions against ending marriages, relationships seldom end through divorce or separation. Many simply do not consider divorce as an option, and most household economies need both husband and wife. Additionally, divorce would result in excommunication and ostracism. Those who divorce often leave for Canada.[213]

Over the centuries, the Mennonite population has remained sufficiently large to minimize the effects of random inbreeding.[214] In the smaller Old Colony gene pool though, marriage of distant relatives happens quite commonly. Marriage of close relatives almost never occurs. Very few physical or mental disorders appear the result of intermarriage. However, because the genetic pool has remained closed for hundreds of years, some diseases have become concentrated in this group due to phenomena known as genetic drift or founder effect.[215]

Old Colonists, particularly those who live in the traditional colonies, often help each other reciprocally. Due to the lack of refrigeration, many families have shared butchered meat, and people often have shared farm machinery and tools. These customs reduce dependence on the outside world.

Those who know little about the Old Colony Mennonites commonly and falsely believe that they live communally.[216] Some institutional mutual aid, including the *Waisenamt,* the *Armenkasse,* and a fire insurance program, dates back to the Mennonites' time in Europe. The *Waisenamt* acts as a trust company, caring for the funds of widows and orphans, administering estates, and lending money.[217] The *Armenkasse,* replenished by donations from community members, sometimes helps those unable to meet their own needs.[218] This fund more commonly meets medical needs than living expenses. When possible, the family and community cares for sick people, including the seriously ill and dying, in the home, in a warm community environment.[219] In these areas, the desire for self-sufficiency and separation from the world also appears strong.

The Cuauhtémoc area colonies have some trained medical personnel. These include some Mennonites from Canada and a Mennonite doctor trained in Mexico. Largely because of their isolation and the high cost of utilizing the mainstream health care system, many Old Colonists rely little on professional medical care. Some colonies have untrained doctors, dentists, and midwives. Mexican practitioners have attempted to drive unqualified Mennonite doctors and dentists out of business, but in spite of arrests and harassment some still operate.[220] Old Colonists commonly use home remedies and often do not see a doctor until an illness advances considerably.

Infant mortality among the Old Colonists long has stood at a much higher

rate than in most of North America.[221] Old Colonists frequently opposed immunization of their children. But, due to strong government pressure, most now accept immunizations.[222] Many Old Colonists have poor dental hygiene and dental problems stand out.[223] Critics also have noted the poor hygiene and health practices of many.[224] Cigarette smoking remains common among the Mennonites, and some seem not to understand the health risks of smoking. In some colonies, most notably in the Campeche area, pressure against smoking is rising.[225]

Old Colonists often view mental health problems and mental disorders as not needing outside treatment. As in many other matters, they also reject "the world's" solutions in this area. Redekop suggests that the sectarian view is that: "Christ is the answer to all men's needs."[226]

Traditionally, families cared for their physically or mentally handicapped members. In some cases, Mexican Old Colonists have depended on programs in Canada to care for needy individuals.[227] In the 1990s, a home for the handicapped opened at Strassbourg Platz on the Manitoba colony. Old Colonists from that area have given strong support to the home.

For the most part, families still care for their aged members; first the parents help their children and then the children provide aid to their parents. While this arrangement works well for many, it does not meet the needs of some. Prior to the 1986 opening of the Altenheim (Seniors' Home), also located at Strassbourg Platz on the Manitoba colony, no institution provided care for seniors. Because the church argued that a seniors home "would allow families to shirk their own responsibilities," the impetus for the new facility came from other groups.[228] Area Old Colonists have come to support the home. But the more isolated colonies still follow their self-sufficient traditions in this matter.[229]

Serious accidents often happen among the Mennonites, bringing crises to families and communities. Some of these involve motor vehicles, technology once seldom seen on all colonies. In one twelve-month period from December 15, 1992 to December 15, 1993, for example, at least fifteen persons died and sixty-three suffered injuries from traffic accidents on the paved highways on the Cuauhtémoc area colonies. This number included some non-Mennonites.[230] Motor vehicles frequently hit horse drawn wagons and buggies while they still remained in common use on the colonies near Cuauhtémoc.[231] While few still use horses and buggies in that area, these types of accidents continue elsewhere. And other accidents, particularly from lightning strikes, sometimes occur.[232] When death comes to the colonies, the Mennonites look after their own funerals. Since the Bible says "and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy," they dress the deceased in white.[233]

In the patriarchal Old Colony society, men hold the position of household head. As such, the family and community expects them to act as the primary disciplinarians. Community members accept reasonable corporal punishment as necessary and justified by Biblical teachings. Few question the adage "spare the rod and spoil the child." Yet, extreme physical force is not condoned. Already in Russia, the ancestors of today's Old Colonists opposed and took action against excessive corporal punishment in their schools.[234] In some cases, husbands extend the use of force to their wives, possibly believing it their duty to reform their wives if they do not fit the desired norm.[235] As happens in other groups,

actions can easily go too far and become abuse. The spectrum of family relations, much as in other societies, extends from the gentle and loving to the abusive.

Because of their fair skin and unique attire, Old Colony people stand out from the Mexican environment. Men wear blue bib overalls (*Schlaubbekjse*) and buttoned shirts. They also commonly wear straw cowboy hats, particularly white ones, although some wear caps. The dress code does not allow the wearing of t-shirts, belts, white collars, ties, beards, or rings.[236] In recent years, some of these prohibitions have lost their force. Particularly in the Cuauhtémoc area, many younger men wear jeans and shiny, pointed cowboy boots in place of their traditional attire. In their loud and fast short-box pickups, they do not fit the Old Colony stereotype. Their garb and various customs no longer serve to separate them from the world around them.

The church and custom dictate that Old Colony women's clothing must be modest, thereby hiding both physical shortcomings and attractiveness.[237] Their dark dresses once covered the ankles but now just reach to below their knees. Women do not cut their hair, wearing it braided and tightly tied to their heads. They carefully comb their hair, parting it in the middle and curving it down onto the forehead on both sides. Yet, it should not reach too far down the forehead, since that demonstrates pride.[238] Married women wear black kerchiefs, while unmarried women wear white or coloured kerchiefs. For protection from the sun, they often wear straw hats over the kerchiefs.

While the Old Colonists' codes of dress and style may appear odd, they do not seem more so than those of other societies. Virtually all social groups use many peculiar or nonfunctional items of attire and decoration. The Old Colonists' emphasis on plainness and modesty distinguishes them from many other groups.

Some aspects of Old Colony society play a planned role in maintaining boundaries with the world. Others seem to be mostly odd cultural survivals. Yet, these also perform a function, even if not always by design. Their distinct culture and the prohibitions against changing it serve to create a wall between them and the outside world, much as Hutterite and Amish cultural peculiarities also create effective barriers to the larger society. Opponents of the old ways cannot easily break down these cultural barriers, since they have become part of the moral code. Those who want to understand the Old Colonists should not underestimate the importance and effectiveness of these barriers for the survival of the group.

A strong desire to preserve their religion and culture, as opposed to the attraction of money or material goods, lies behind many Old Colony decisions. Many of their choices have carried a high economic price. As long as they can get by, as long as "es geht noch," the individuals and community have proven willing to make the material sacrifices necessary to allow them to live according to the dictates of their consciences.

Various stands taken by the Old Colonists have created serious problems for them. The hard line taken on technological innovations, excommunication, education, and population control have helped make what might have been a comfortable material existence into a seemingly never ending financial and community crisis. The Mennonites likely know this better than anyone else though,

since they consciously and deliberately made their decisions. Had they not taken a firm stand against innovations, the barriers to the world would have broken down much more than they have. Had they not used excommunication to enforce these rules, the communities may not have split to the degree that has occurred. But again, barriers to the world would have broken down. Many Old Colony people believe that they had no choice but to follow the path they did, without betraying their professed beliefs.

The Old Colonists successfully designed and established the physical, social, and religious aspects of their new theocratic society. They put numerous defence mechanisms in place to protect what they built. Mexico allowed them to follow their vision and live according to their beliefs to a far greater extent than permitted by Canadian society. Both the leaders and their followers deserve credit for persisting in the pursuit of their vision, in spite of much adversity. Unfortunately for the Old Colonists, the communities and structures that they built would not necessarily endure in all areas. The leadership and the system they designed and implemented cannot be blamed for subsequent problems in the colonies, without also taking into account the effect of other factors, including population explosion, economic problems, and outside influences.

CHAPTER 3
POPULATION PRESSURES AND DAUGHTER COLONIES

The initial Old Colony settlements in Mexico succeeded largely because of adequate leadership and the establishment of an economic system capable of meeting most of their needs. Successful founding of the colonies, let alone their survival for more than seventy-five years, never would have occurred without skilful planning, design, and implementation.

Population control ranks high on the list of challenges that have faced the Old Colonists in Mexico. While Old Colonists continue to view large families as a blessing from God, recently that blessing has brought difficulties with it. Blame for rapid population growth, if it should settle anywhere, does not belong only to the leadership. The people elected their many and varied leaders, which came from among the people. Therefore, to fault the leaders also places responsibility on the people. From the Old Colonists' point of view, they did nothing more than sincerely attempt to follow God's will in matters of reproduction, as in other areas.

The Old Colonists' explosive rate of population growth ranks among the highest in the western world, and has caused problems for the group for decades.[239] Even though population pressures also strained the resources of Mennonites in Russia during the nineteenth century, rising life expectancies and falling child mortality rates have contributed to accelerated population growth in Mexico. Accurate population statistics for the Mexican Mennonites do not exist, since Mexican census figures do not provide separate numbers for the Mennonites. Neither do the Mennonites keep a central registry. Instead, individual villages enter the names of baptized members in their record books.[240] Once a year, at New Year, some colonies do announce year-end membership, population, birth, and death statistics.

By 1996, the descendants of the original 6,000 to 7,000 Mennonites, who went to Mexico in the 1920s, likely totalled between 120,000 and 150,000. An estimated 50,000 or more lived in Mexico, a minimum of 35,000 in Canada, 28,000 in Bolivia, 10,000 in the United States, and thousands more in Belize, Paraguay, and Argentina.[241] One formula suggests that a doubling of the population takes place approximately every fifteen years, although in some colonies this doubling likely occurs even more quickly.[242] By 2002, speculation existed that the offspring of the original settlers in Mexico numbered more than 200,000.

Old Colonist beliefs about fertility and birth control account for much of their remarkable population growth. Today, as in the 1920s, parents use very little birth control, and the average families may include from six to nine children.[243] Many still believe that having numerous children makes them fortunate and wealthy, although not in a material sense. And many large families do seem happy and blessed, especially if they can manage financially. Those who find themselves unable to have many children may feel deprived, while parents who have larger families may pity those with only a few children. The church long has taught against the use of birth control. In the past, a bishop prohibited birth control even when another pregnancy would endanger the woman's life.[244]

Religious leaders and others sincerely believe they should have as many children as God gives them. Yet, rumours suggest that not all follow the church's teachings in this matter and that some do use various forms of birth control. The Mexican government has encouraged Mexicans to limit the size of their families, and Mexican doctors strongly encouraged Mennonite women to have fewer children.[245]

As a result of the high birth rate, population density has risen greatly in some colonies. Already in 1957, the population of the colonies expanded at a rate of 200 families per year. To adequately accommodate this increase required the addition of ten new villages of twenty families each year.[246] Statistics also point out the excess of births over deaths. Available figures from some of the colonies for the year 1986 indicate 1,507 births and 183 deaths.[247] The situation in 1988 remained much the same, with 1,626 births and 221 deaths.[248]

Manitoba and Swift Current colonies originally bought enough land to allow for expansion and so did not need to buy more land for some time. Durango colony and the Sommerfelder, however, had not bought much surplus land and soon encountered a land shortage.[249] Even in the Manitoba colony, by 1938 settlement pressure in the well-watered areas led to expansion into the less desirable areas.[250] In 1947, J. Winfield Fretz commented: "The problem of a developing landless class is a perennial one. In each village one can find from two to a dozen heads of families who do not own land but who work for others. When a sufficient number of this landless class develops, a pressure is exerted to seek for new land."[251] Some in the Cuauhtémoc area colonies also farmed Mexicans' land, in spite of laws not allowing rental of *ejido* land for extended periods of time. To operate within the law, the Mexicans hired the Mennonites to farm the land.[252]

Durango colony soon required additional land, and by 1930 its residents bought land for five new villages. Further additions to that colony took place in the 1930s and 1940s. But, because they could not farm land at too great a distance, little further expansion took place. Colony members rented nearby land as early as 1935, and by the 1960s rented about one-third of the total land farmed. By 1980, laws governing *ejidos* sharply reduced the amount of rented land used.[253] At that time, Durango had the least land per person of the Mexican colonies, a situation aggravated by the lack of alternate employment. Of the 1,100 families, 350 had no land and another seventy-five had less than ten acres.[254] The situation worsened further by 1996, when likely only about one-half of the families had any land, and only about one-third farmed enough land to earn a living.[255] In many societies, including those of some other Mennonites, these numbers might not cause concern. But the continuing community expectation that colony residents should work primarily as farmers and the scarcity of other employment opportunities mean that poverty and suffering accompany land shortages.

Various other colonies find themselves in a situation similar to that at Durango. Population growth, combined with the Old Colonists' preference for agriculture as an occupation, has led to chronic pressure on their land resources. As a result, searching for new land, near the colonies and in far flung areas of Mexico and Latin America, long has played a crucial part in Old Colony life. Land shortages also drive much of the ongoing movement to Canada.

The Old Colonists' desire to remain true to their vision of living as a

separate people also lies behind much of the search for land in new areas. Many who move to the daughter colonies do so because of their opposition to change and innovation in their former colonies. They accurately perceive threats to their communities' chosen way of life

In spite of numerous successful efforts to expand the land base, most communities still experience perennial land shortages, as each new generation struggles to find land for its many offspring. Commonly, one or more adult children live in the house or on the yard of their parents, even once they have large families of their own. They may have a few cows and employment outside the family farm, but remain too poor to venture out on their own. Most children though find it necessary to eventually leave their parents' farm. Those who can find land in the village of either the husband or the wife may stay there. Some live as *Anwohner* on land that once served as common pasture, while some own several acres and others rent a little land and a house. Expansion of occupational alternatives has helped ease the population pressure on farm land in some colonies, especially in the Cuauhtémoc area. But employment opportunities remain in short supply on most isolated colonies. Many make the difficult choice to leave their home villages.[256]

Moves to new colonies often prove difficult, since they usually mean leaving family and friends behind and pioneering unbroken land. To finance the new venture, those making the move often sell whatever land and other goods they have, using this money for a down payment in the new colony. Parents also often help pay for the move. Mother colonies often help by buying the new land and then selling it to the settlers. Customarily, they sell units of twenty to fifty acres to the landless on credit, without requiring any down payment.[257] The high birth rate causes some new settlements to become overcrowded before they reach a state of financial security and can finance new settlements. This makes the founding of further new settlements problematic.[258]

In 1986, about two-thirds of the Old Colonists in Mexico lived in the Cuauhtémoc area.[259] Considerable expansion of the land base had taken place there, although the surrounding mountains and pressure from Mexicans competing for the land limited this. Nord and Santa Rita colonies, northeast of the Manitoba colony, resulted from a series of land purchases made by the Manitoba Colony beginning in 1935. Santa Rita and Nord colonies separated from each other in 1962.[260]

By 1996, northern Chihuahua state was home to at least ten newer colonies, far removed from the original colonies. The Manitoba Old Colony group established Buenos Aires in 1958 and El Capulin in 1962. These two colonies remained conservative, not using rubber tires, vehicles, or electric power. Many who moved there did so at least partly to flee the coming modernization in their mother colonies.[261]

Both Buenos Aires and El Capulin managed to alleviate land shortages somewhat by purchasing nearby land – Buenos Aires by buying El Cuervo and El Capulin by buying adjoining land. This reduced the need to emigrate to Canada or other colonies, although out-migration accounted for much of the empty space in these settlements in the mid-1990s.

Las Virginias, established in 1980 by Manitoba colony, enjoyed freedom from takeover by *agraristas*, since the residents obtained a *Certificado de*

Inafectabilidad. From the beginning, the community allowed rubber tires on tractors and other farm equipment, but not motorized passenger vehicles. The colony largely dependent on irrigation, with about 3,500 hectares irrigated in 1992.[262]

In 1992, Manitoba and Nord colonies bought previously uncropped land at Villa Ahumada, also in Northern Chihuahua, calling it Nord-Manitoba colony.[263] Settlement of this colony proceeded slowly though, largely because of water shortages.

La Honda established a colony at Sabinal in 1990. Although it hardly seems possible, they chose an even more isolated location than that of most other colonies in the northern area. Most of its settlers fled change at La Honda, and moved to Sabinal with their leaders.[264]

Not only the Old Colony established new settlements. Other Mennonite groups also established theirs. In 1985, Reinländer from Swift Current colony founded Buenavista, near Asención, Chihuahua.[265] In 1992, the Sommerfelder began a colony at Pestañas, about thirty kilometres from Galeana, Chihuahua.[266] Recently, Kleine Gemeinde people set up a colony south of Nuevo Casas Grandes called Colonia El Valle.[267] And by 1996, they also had a colony called Oasis in northern Chihuahua state.[268] A group of people, made up of people from various churches, settled at Saladas.[269] Individuals also independently established other settlements.

Durango colony bought land for its daughter colonies farther south in more climatically hospitable areas. In 1961, it founded La Batea, located in a high, isolated valley in Zacatecas state.[270] Because the former landowner possibly sold more land to the Mennonites than non-Mennonite neighbours and the state approved of, many problems with *agraristas* resulted. In 1996, La Batea's population included about 140 families and 800 to 900 people living in four villages. A severe land shortage plagued the colony.[271]

In 1964, Durango founded La Honda colony, also in Zacatecas,. The leaders offered about twenty percent of the land in the new colony to the landless, without requiring any down payment. The colony filled by 1978. La Honda modernized after a major community split in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[272] A large dairy operation there has aided with economic and vocational diversification. La Batea, which remained more conservative and isolated, appeared to face a more difficult economic struggle.

Movement also took place to the southern state of Campeche. In 1983, Durango founded a daughter colony at Yalnon.[273] La Batea founded Chavi colony in 1986. And in 1987, La Honda founded Nuevo Progreso.[274] Buenos Aires and El Cuervo bought almost 5,000 hectares of land in Campeche in the 1990s, naming the colony El Temporal. They borrowed $150,000 for a thirteen-year term from the Beechy Amish in the United States to make the purchase.[275] Old Colonists founded all of these Campeche colonies.

Tamaulipas state also is home to some colonies. Sommerfelder began their Gonzalez colony there in 1951.[276] In the early 1980s, the Gonzalez group founded the Villa de Casas colony. Nord colony Old Colonists began a colony at Nueva Padilla in 1982.[277] But the Old Colony preferred not to start more colonies in Tamaulipas due to the small size of potential settlements there and consequent closeness to the world. However, the colonies there succeeded finan-

cially, possibly prospering more than any of the other new colonies in Mexico.[278]

A colony, formed by members of various Mennonite groups, began at Monclova in Coahuila state in 1974. The colony suffered considerably from disunity and financial problems. It received help from MCC.[279]

The larger history of Mennonite migrations includes both successful and failed settlement efforts. Since some settlements in Russia and various parts of Canada did not succeed, the presence of failures in Mexico should not come as a surprise. Between 1944 and 1990, of seventeen colonization attempts by the Old Colony people in Mexico, thirteen seemed "at least a qualified success."[280] Some clearly failed. The first daughter colony of the Cuauhtémoc Old Colony, Agua Nueva, near Saltillo in Coahuila state, failed shortly after being established in 1944, due to the salty nature of the land there. Manitoba colony founded Yermo, in Durango state, in 1950, in a dry region where growing crops required irrigation. After years of great difficulties due to harsh, dry, environmental conditions and inability to find a way to make a living there, the last settler left in 1974. Many did not return to the Old Colony, but instead went to the Kleine Gemeinde's Quellenkolonie, as the Old Colony had abandoned the settlers.[281] In 1950, Durango Old Colonists founded a colony near Yermo called Conejos. Only eleven families participated, and, by 1952, they gave up due to water shortages. Some joined the settlers at Yermo.[282] In 1952, Durango colony tried a settlement, called Cerro Gordo, between Canatlán and Durango. Because of poor land and drought, it also failed.

Because some of the problems on the abandoned colonies occurred due to inadequate financing and not thoroughly examining the soil and farming conditions before buying the land, failures of colonies left the leadership open to criticism.[283] In some cases, the ventures also may have gone better had the leaders turned to the Mexicans for help about new crop varieties and irrigation techniques. On the other hand, in many instances the Old Colonists have proven remarkably adept at surviving and sometimes even prospering under the extreme challenges posed by the weather and Mexican environment. Outsiders accustomed to the rich soils and usually adequate rains of Canada's farming regions would react with amazement that the Old Colonists manage as well as they do under the difficult conditions found on some of the remote colonies of northern Mexico. Survival there is living proof of the settlers' ingenuity, perseverance, and dedication to their vision of living as a separate community.

Mexican land reform and claims by the *agraristas*, to a great degree, cut off avenues of expansion for the Mennonites.[284] Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution resulted from the Mexican Revolution, allowing the *agraristas* to obtain land in *ejidos*. The government revoked the article in the early 1990s while Carlos Salinas de Gortari was president, ending the threat to the Mennonites' land.[285]

Yet, prior to that time the Mennonites could have taken advantage of Mexican land reform laws that would have allowed them to obtain land, as millions of *ejidatarios* did. In 1979, the Secretariat for Agrarian Reform offered Durango colony 38,500 hectares in 100 hectare units in Chiapas state, at no charge. The colony rejected the offer because it only included usufruct rights, and not outright land ownership. Mexican law did not allow the government to offer more than it did. In that case, Mennonite fears about the security of land tenure likely

lacked foundation, since the government dealt well with them in other matters.[286] The Mennonite preference for land ownership remains clear.

In spite of some missed opportunities, for many decades numerous Old Colony leaders have actively worked to expand the land base. Sometimes they also have aided the landless to obtain land through levies. Colony members have voluntarily paid fees, on crops and the milk delivered to the cheese factories, which served to finance land purchases. The Chihuahua Old Colony began this in 1956, and numerous other colonies followed suit.[287]

As a result of almost continuous land searches during many decades, Old Colony leaders developed substantial knowledge and expertise about real estate in Mexico. Still, being human, they continued to make errors in purchasing land. Sometimes, they failed to investigate the new location thoroughly enough prior to its purchase. But, in their defence, they could not have foreseen the severe climatic and economic variations that made otherwise viable ventures struggle and even fail. Hindsight seems infallible.

Old Colonists also moved and continue to move to other countries south of Mexico. The same two reasons for the expansion within Mexico – land shortages and a desire to follow the vision of living as God's separate people – drive this migration. Fleeing the advancing world, often personified by other Mennonite groups, motivates many to leave Mexico. The leaders often offer the increasing worldliness of the mother colony as the reason for the move, but some people go along primarily to gain much needed land. Even though many do not oppose the use of rubber tires and cars, they make a commitment to maintain the old order in the new home.[288] On the other hand, some leave without the support of a mass migration from their own community, joining those from other colonies to set up a new conservative colony. Some demonstrate a very strong philosophical commitment to separation from the world. The opposite phenomena, that of wanting to flee conservatism by moving to new liberal colonies, has not occurred often in Mexico.

The first movement out of Mexico took place to British Honduras (later Belize) in 1958, to the newly founded Blue Creek and Shipyard colonies. Most emigrants came from the Cuauhtémoc area colonies. Land shortages initially drove this migration, although some wanted to escape the growing conflict over rubber tires. Some also preferred to live under an English rather than the Mexican government. The Kleine Gemeinde also bought land in British Honduras. Because of great early difficulties, many would be settlers lost everything. Some returned to Mexico, while others went to Canada. By September 1958, twenty-nine people died, as tropical diseases took their toll. In spite of the early struggles, the settlements survived, and by 1966 more than 2,700 Old Colony people lived there. Although movement to Belize in the later 1960s likely occurred largely because of modernization in the home colonies, it eased land pressures in Mexico. Thousands of Mennonites, including many conservative Old Colonists, still live in Belize.[289]

In 1967 and 1968, the movement to Bolivia of most of the Old Colony bishops and ministers and many of their followers from Swift Current, Nord, and Santa Rita colonies began. The rubber tire issue formed part of the reason for the relocation. Later emigration from these colonies to Bolivia also took place over the issue of using motor vehicles. Even though the later arrivals rejected

the rubber tires they formerly accepted in Mexico, the first groups to move did not accept those who came later, due to their disobedience in not leaving in the first migration.[290] A desire to continue living in isolated communities played a large part in the movements.

By 1972, about 5,000 settlers from Mexico and Canada moved to Bolivia. And by the 1990s Bolivia had the largest number of Old Colonists south of Mexico. Recently, Buenos Aires and El Cuervo founded Casas Grandes colony, to which settlers moved in the mid-1990s. Escaping power lines and innovations at least partly motivated the movement. El Capulin also lost residents to Bolivia, where they bought land. In 1996, families began leaving La Batea as part of a joint settlement effort with a group already in Bolivia. In the same year, of twenty-five Mennonite colonies counted there, six or seven were the original colonies formed by Mennonites from Mexico. Settlers who first had gone to Belize or elsewhere founded others. And some began as daughter colonies of the older colonies in Bolivia.[291]

Beginning in 1969, Old Colonists settled in Paraguay. Due to land shortages and the growing dispute over vehicles, the Manitoba colony lost many residents to Rio Verde in eastern Paraguay. Some from Swift Current colony joined them. Durango founded Nuevo Durango colony, where about 150 persons from Durango and La Honda lived.[292]

By 1986, movement of conservative Mennonites began from Bolivia and Mexico to Argentina. Durango bought 8,670 hectares of land near Pampa de los Guanacos in the Chaco area of Argentina in 1994 for a price of $476,000. The government gave the Mennonites a guarantee of religious and educational liberty, but not of freedom from military service. Some suggest that the Mennonites received a verbal promise of the latter, providing that they lived as they said they would. By 1996, about eighteen young families from Durango moved there. The colony had room for about 200 families.[293]

Old Colonists also considered other countries for settlement. In 1976 and 1977, Durango colony looked at Brazil as a potential home.[294] Costa Rica, which offered the Mennonites land and privileges, also came under scrutiny. In 1978, eight colony leaders from Manitoba and Nord colonies travelled to Australia to investigate opportunities there and to discuss the possibilities of a *Priviliegium* with government representatives.[295]

Many Mennonites from Mexico moved to the United States, partly because it often proved easier to enter than Canada. In the 1970s, the main destination became the Seminole, Texas area, where local farmers hired them as farm labourers. Many Mennonites found a welcoming environment there. By October of 1980, 653 persons there received immigration papers. But a report in 1983 described at least three-quarters of those living there as illegals. The United States treated the immigrants quite leniently, including by declaring some amnesties.[296] Local persons and even a senator came to the Mennonites' support. By 1995, the Seminole area may have included about 4,000 Mexican Mennonites. Some affiliated with the Old Colony church from Canada. The EMMC, with its roots in Canada, also became active among the area people.[297]

Some Mexican Mennonites moved to Storm Lake, Iowa, and others to Walhalla, North Dakota. California, Kansas, Oklahoma, and many other parts of the United States also became home to those seeking alternatives to the their

lives on the Mexican colonies. By the mid-1990s, total numbers in the United States possibly reached 10,000, although estimates of their numbers remained vague.[298]

George Reimer's comment that "Permanent migrations to Canada . . . tend to indicate the preeminence of economic considerations over religious, while migrations to South America suggest the reverse," appears at least partially accurate.[299] And similar economic motives drive much of the movement to both the United States and Canada. Yet, many in the Mexican colonies suffer from poverty so extreme that they cannot afford to move to South America. To flee north offers the only feasible escape for many.

The Mennonites in Mexico, both leaders and individuals, take the population problem very seriously, while rejecting any restriction of the population growth. Families with means often have tried various things to provide for their children's futures, including buying land for them and helping them become established in business. And many succeed to live in prosperity or at least without severe economic hardship. Yet, numerous Old Colonists agonize over the future of their families and colonies, with the future of their children being one of the greatest preoccupations of parents.

Considering the obstacles they face, the Old Colony continues to achieve remarkable success in finding new places to settle. The prognostications long offered by outsiders that the world no longer has space to accommodate the separate societies of the Old Colony have failed to materialize. In the 1990s, the Old Colony still bought land in remote parts of Mexico, Bolivia, and Argentina and established relatively unmolested, isolated societies. They also quite successfully managed to convince the governments of the various countries to which they moved to meet their requests for special status.

For many decades, uncontrolled population growth has formed one of the greatest challenges faced by the Old Colony people in Mexico. While many societies once considered large families as a blessing, contemporary western society views rapid population growth – whether in the Mennonite, aboriginal, or third world communities – as a problem that adds to overcrowding on an already heavily populated planet. Aware of their burgeoning population and its effects, some Old Colonists attempt to limit the number of their offspring, develop diverse occupational skills including those once practised by their ancestors in northern Europe, and move in search of employment. But many, especially residents of the more traditional communities, continue to reject the obvious solutions of having fewer children, encouraging a much greater occupational diversification, and moving into mixed non-Old Colony communities. Firm dedication to their beliefs and values has eliminated many options. Consequently, they have carried the burden of trying to deal with the population challenge primarily by relying on land expansion. However, acquisition of farm land has not kept pace with the demand. As a result, at least from the point of view of some Old Colonists, many individuals have made undesirable choices, including movement north and all that entails.

CHAPTER 4
THE MEXICAN ENVIRONMENT

Old Colony leaders of the 1920s chose well when they selected Mexico as their new home. While not a wise choice if measured only by economic parameters, Mexico proved a hospitable environment for the more important religious and cultural elements to survive. The refugees from Canada quite successfully maintained their communities, at least as long as their villages could remain isolated and closed. But loss of control occurred when outside factors entered the scene.

Mexican society represented the largest potential threat to the Old Colonists' attempt to establish their colonies in Mexico. Shortly after their arrival in Mexico, the Mennonites feared that the Mexicans would overwhelm them by swallowing them into their society or forcing them to move on once again. The problems of the 1920s and 1930s added to these fears. Outside observers also predicted that dire consequences would come from the Mexican environment. In the 1940s, scarcely twenty years after moving to Mexico, Fretz feared negative effects from the Mexican environment. Others also expected that the Latin American environment would overwhelm the Mennonites.[300] Yet, this threat did not materialize.

In all major respects, Mexico has respected the promises of the Obregón *Privilegium.*[301] The *Privilegium's* five points remain as free from infringement as at any point since the initial immigration to Mexico.[302] Time demonstrated that the Old Colony leaders negotiated wisely when they chose the *Privilegium's* terms, since this agreement helped protect their unique society. Other Mennonite groups who came to Mexico also benefited from the *Privilegium*. Even without similar guarantees, they informally have received the protection of its provisions.

The survival of a substantial Mennonite culture after eighty years in Mexico may seem unlikely. Yet, while some change did originate in the Mexican environment, the primary distinguishing factors of the original Old Colony culture survived. The fact that about one-half of the Old Colonists remained in Canada in the 1920s while one-half went to Mexico allows for some comparisons to take place between the two groups. Without doubt, the Old Colony Mennonite culture survived to a much greater extent in Mexico than in the Canadian environment. The culture that still exists in many of the Mexican colonies closely resembles that of the Old Colony group of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, while that of the Canadian Old Colony group largely has become that of the "English," which the Mexican Old Colony people fled. The relative survival rates of the all-important belief system are more difficult to determine.

While the Mexicans sometimes have resented the strangers from Canada and the special treatment given to them by the Mexican government, over the decades the Mennonites blended into the landscape in the areas of Mexico where they settled.[303] Mexicans sometimes seem curious about the Mennonites. Commonly though, the local people react with an indifference that comes from long familiarity with their fair skinned neighbours.

Cultural, language, and religious differences between the two groups,

rather than threatening the Mennonites, have helped the colonies survive. The Mennonites appear reserved, sober, and dour, while the Mexicans seem outgoing, emotional, and hearty. The first is frugal and the second lavish.[304] Few close relationships exist between Mexicans and Mennonites. Most importantly from the Old Colonists' point of view, the Mennonite and Roman Catholic religious differences remain, in spite of ecumenical influences.

Mennonites in Mexico seemed to regard their culture as superior to that of the larger Mexican society around them. While other minorities also tend to consider their cultures as superior to those of the dominant societies where they live, this attitude did not exist to the same degree towards Canadian society. The feelings of superiority towards Mexicans may derive from ethnocentric preferences. A blend of Spanish and Native American cultures forms contemporary Mexican society, while that of Canada closely resembles the Northern European culture from which the Mennonites themselves originated. Mennonites in Mexico sometimes have lacked a positive understanding and appreciation of the culture and history of Mexico. This situation is reminiscent of the attitudes of Mennonites towards Ukranians and Russians in Czarist Russia. Possibly the Mennonites have found it easier to maintain boundaries with the Mexican world by viewing that world as culturally inferior, thereby reducing pressure to join Mexican society. Mennonite condescension and feelings of superiority have not gone unnoticed by the Mexicans. Yet, from the Old Colonist point of view, the social distance has served as a welcome barrier between the groups.

While Mexicans likely would have intermarried with the newcomers, the Old Colonists rejected intermarriage. This refusal caused resentment among the Mexicans. The more liberal General Conference Mennonite church, which some Old Colonists joined, welcomed Mexicans into their group, and some intermarriage has occurred.[305]

Mennonites sometimes have hired Mexicans. Yet, in the Durango area, due to work shortages, fewer Mexicans work for Mennonites than twenty years ago and more Mennonites work for Mexicans.[306] Apple packers on the Manitoba colony employ both Mennonite and Mexican labour. Mennonite businessmen also hire Mexicans for their literacy and bookkeeping abilities, skills sometimes in short supply among the Mennonites.[307]

Manual labour outside the colonies, including in Mexican orchards and other businesses, also has provided work for Mennonites. This situation presently exists particularly in the Cuauhtémoc area. At one time, working outside the colony would have served as grounds for excommunication, but many colonies no longer fight against this.[308]

The seemingly never ending land deals, in large part made necessary by the Mennonites' population growth, have brought considerable contact with Mexicans during the past eighty years. In the wake of the Mexican Revolution, millions of landless peasants expected that they would receive land. The post-revolutionary reforms allowed the peasants to settle on *ejidos*. These rural communities, often located on former large *haciendas*, provided millions of acres of land for the peasants to use, although not to own. Peasants, or *agraristas*, often squatted on land and claimed it as theirs, relying on the Mexican government to support their claim. Sometimes the *agraristas* claimed and won land that the Mennonites had purchased. This became a large problem in the Cuauhtèmoc

area in the 1920s. Then, in Durango in 1935, *agraristas* occupied some of the 2,600 hectares bought there by the Durango colony. In that case, President Lazaro Cárdenas supported the Mennonites and they did not lose the land. In 1962, *agraristas* again sought a breakup of the Durango colony. But that time the state governor discovered that many Mexicans already rented land to the Mennonites, which hurt the credibility of the *agraristas'* claim. It appeared that many wanted the extra land so they could rent it to the Mennonites to gain more income. The governor turned down the Mexicans' request.[309] More recent land disputes occurred at La Batea, Santa Rita, La Honda, and in other colonies. As a result, the Mennonites sometimes have lost land to the *agraristas*.[310]

In recent years, after the Mexican government granted land titles to *ejidatarios*, it became possibly for Mennonites to legally buy and rent *ejido* land. In time, this may mean more mixing with the Mexicans as Mennonite and Mexican land becomes less segregated.

Contact also takes place with Mexicans when Mennonites shop in the nearby Mexican communities, such as Cuauhtémoc and Nuevo Ideal. These and other centres largely depend on Mennonite customers for their existence.[311] Businesses in nearby Mexican communities offer Mennonite products for sale there. Some businesses display German signs and names, and some Mexicans who know a little Low German like to show it off.

The four-lane highway through the Manitoba colony has done much to break the isolation of the Mennonite villages in that area.[312] The busy paved road traverses the colony, following a straight line between Cuauhtémoc and Ciudad Col. Obregón (Rubio), the two largest cities in the immediate area. That portion of the highway that falls within the colony carries a large volume of Mennonite and non-Mennonite traffic. The proliferation of Mennonite businesses along the highway results in considerable Mennonite-Mexican interaction. Some hire Mexicans and Mexicans also do business there. The highway also continues north past Ciudad Col. Obregón as a two-lane highway, towards the American border.[313]

Some believe that Mexican society corrupted the Mennonites. Old Colonists and other Mennonites once possessed a nearly flawless reputation as a trustworthy people, whose word served as their bond. Commonly, Mennonites felt superior to the Mexicans in the area of morality. Already in the 1940s, Fretz reported a deterioration in Mennonite morals, although their moral standards remained considerably above those of Mexican society.[314] Since that time, some observers believe that Mennonite standards of behaviour fell further. Blame for the perceived decline in Mennonite morals often falls on the effect of Mexican influences. Rightly or wrongly, observers blame Mennonite moral shortcomings on the Mexican system that they say demands crookedness. The dire poverty experienced by some Mennonites also may have driven them to act in uncharacteristic ways. While some Mennonites have lowered their moral standards, without doubt many if not the majority of Mexican Mennonites continue to follow high moral standards in their dealings with each other and the outside world. Overall, the Old Colony group still maintains a reputation, both within Mexico and Canada, for trustworthiness.

One Mennonite characteristic that remains strong among many Old Colonists is their work ethic. Much like in other places and times, Mennonites in

Mexico earned a reputation as hard-working people. Mexicans noticed their fair skinned neighbours dedication to the work ethic. "Muy trabajador," which means "very hard working" in Spanish, became the standard description offered by Mexicans of the Mennonites. Some Mexicans seem puzzled about why the Mennonites work as hard as they do.

Crime in Mexico frequently has affected the Mennonites. While some offenders came from within the group, a situation also found in Mennonite communities elsewhere, crime originating in the Mexican environment usually formed a much larger concern. Murders account for at least fifteen Mennonite deaths in the Cuauhtémoc area over the years.[315] While Mexicans took advantage of the Mennonite reputation for pacifism to steal from the Mennonites, armed Mexican guards killed numerous robbers in the Mennonite colonies.[316] Sometimes the Mennonites also resorted to armed defence, which, although not condoned, likely reduced the number of intrusions by Mexicans. This and the presence of Mexican troops in the past raised questions about the consistency of the Mennonite teachings and actions on nonresistance. A response more consistent with Mennonite teachings occurred in the 1920s, when two bandits plundered a house and raped the wife and daughters in front of the father and sons. When someone asked the Mennonite males why they didn't fight, they replied: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."[317]

Mennonites sporadically have used the Mexican law and order system. Sometimes, as was the case in Durango in the 1930s and 1940s, they asked for protection from Mexican crime. But often they tried to deal with internal colony problems themselves. In handling problems of law and order within the colonies, often the Mennonites called the police only as a last resort. In recent times in the Cuauhtémoc area colonies, several cases occurred where people, who seemingly caused the death of another, did not face the justice system. In one incident, it appeared that a young driver killed one girl and injured another. Another death occurred when a boy allegedly stabbed another to death.[318] Obviously, these types of incidents do not happen only among traditional Mennonites. But unlike contemporary North American society, the Old Colonists still prefer to deal with matters within their own group. Sometimes this leaves the impression that the Mennonites seek to protect their own.

Highway robbery continued to present a serious problem in Mexico in the 1990s. As they had done for many decades, *banditos* stopped vehicles and robbed the occupants. Armed robberies also occurred at Mennonite businesses. And Mennonite farmers commonly lost cattle to thieves. Robberies of homes frequently resulted in terrifying situations when the thieves arrived with the occupants at home. By 1985, the situation deteriorated to the point where some villages in the Manitoba colony used night watchmen. The high number of vehicle thefts prompted the posting of extra policemen, although suspicion existed about the complicity of the police in some crime. A number of kidnappings for ransom also occurred in the 1990s. And possibly random shootings took place in both the Cuauhtémoc and Durango areas. Some other areas suffered less from crime. Buenos Aires and El Cuervo experienced little trouble with Mexican neighbours, other than occasional theft, and most Mexicans there lived as good neighbours.[319]

Mexican armed forces sometimes enter the lives of the Mennonites. That

occurred when the Mennonites received protection at Durango in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1996, when the army came to La Batea, the Mennonites seemed to have become suspects. Soldiers dug shallow trenches across the colony roads in numerous places to prevent drug traffickers from landing aeroplanes on the streets. The residents seemed unaware that drugs presented a problem there. They passively accepted the army presence, and shortly after the soldiers left, someone filled in the trenches.[320]

Over the decades, Mexican journalists often have written about the Mennonites in their midst. Sometimes periodicals treat the Mennonites unsympathetically. Cuauhtémoc and Chihuahua newspapers and national magazines criticized the Mennonites for wealth inequities, failure to participate in *Seguro Social* (social security), and opposition to immunization.[321] Their descriptions often lacked accuracy. In 1957, *Excelsior* attacked the Mennonites claiming that Canada, and Russia before that, had thrown out the fanatical group. It compared the special treatment and property of the Mennonites with the forgotten Tarahumara Indians whose land they occupied.[322] One newspaper in 1967 said the Mennonites practiced polygamy, "limited only by the economic capacity of the Mennonite man."[323] On the other hand, periodicals also have treated the Mennonites sympathetically.

Various things done by the Mennonites have benefitted relations with the Mexicans. They sometimes voluntarily gave land to the *agraristas*, and in 1985 the Manitoba colony donated land near Rubio to the Mexicans for use as a housing project and a school. Mennonites allowed Mexicans to glean fields after the harvest and to cross Mennonite land with their herds of sheep. Sometimes government officials asked the Mennonites for help with Mexican disasters, which they did not know about, as most did not follow the news. They donated generously to help with the earthquake in Mexico City in 1985, and aided the poverty-stricken Tarahumara Indians of Chihuahua.[324]

The Mennonites also have tried to nurture good relationships with local and other governments. Colony residents maintained colony roads, gave money to local towns for improvements, and helped pay for roads and power lines that they did not use or want. Local governments reciprocated in various ways.[325]

In the past, the colonies collected property taxes on "land, wagons, and animals sold or killed for home use" for payment to the Mexican state.[326] These taxes remained low, but since 1990, Mexico attempted to implement an income tax system based on individual income.[327] Still in 1996, most Mennonites, including some of the well-off, did not pay income taxes. It seemed that the Mexican state did not yet enforce the implementation of the system among many individuals, possibly particularly not among the self-employed, including farmers. Mennonites did pay the fifteen percent Mexican IVA tax, added to many goods at the point of sale.

When the Mennonites first arrived in Mexico, the government hoped they would mix with the Mexicans and act as an effective example for them. But that did not always happen.[328] Their aloofness played a part in Mexico refusing entry to large numbers of Russian Mennonites.[329] By the mid-1940s though, governmental attitudes toward the Mennonites again turned positive. President Avila Camacho of Mexico wanted a Mennonite settlement in every Mexican state due to their value as free demonstration farms.[330] At much the same time, Fretz saw

things differently and recommended that other Mennonites should offer agricultural aid to the Mexican Mennonites.[331] Mexicans often have not shared the opinion of some Canadian Mennonites that Old Colonist agriculture required modernization.

The non-proselytizing nature of the Old Colony group likely helped build harmonious relations with the various levels of government. This comment especially applies to the situation after the Mennonites arrived in Mexico. Had the Old Colonists tried to convert the Mexicans to their beliefs during the 1920s and 1930s, they likely would have become another target of the antireligious sentiment common in Mexico after the revolution. The Catholic church suffered much from negative feelings in Mexican society at that time. Old Colonists today also do not seek to attract Mexicans to their group, which still may aid with building harmonious relations. Some other Mennonite groups in Mexico do engage in evangelical efforts among Mexicans. Mexican society today appears more tolerant of religious proselytization than some decades ago.

During the decades since the Mennonites arrived in Mexico, various municipal, state, and federal politicians frequently have toured the colonies. Residents usually welcomed the visitors with hospitably. In May 1990, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari visited the Manitoba colony. And in the mid-1990s, Chihuahua state governor Barrios' picture often appeared in the papers in connection with the Mennonite colonies.[332] In April of 2002, President Vicente Fox visited at La Honda, where he received a warm reception from a large crowd of Mennonites.[333] At Durango, the municipal governor has enjoyed close ties with some members of the Durango colony. Many other examples could attest to the cordial relations between the Mennonites and government officials. Over the decades, both sides spoke many polite words about each other, and harmony usually characterized Mennonite relations with all levels of government in Mexico.

Mennonites have valued their special relationship to the government, given to them by the *Privilegium*. An apparent myth said that the *Privilegium* only applied for fifty years, until 1972. Confusion existed about whether the *Privilegium* would then expire, whether review of the Presidential decrees would take place after fifty years, or whether either of these possibilities would occur. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a great furor existed, with much hand wringing and speculation about what would happen. Outside observers possibly worried more than did the Old Colonists themselves.[334] The year 1972 came and went, and the *Privilegium* survived. The Mennonites took great care not to endanger the *Privilegium.* Many believed that the agreement did not allow Mennonites to go into business or industry and that they must remain as farmers.[335] Increasing economic diversification does not seem to have affected the *Privilegium* though. Mennonites also worried about endangering the *Privilegium* by appearing ungrateful and upsetting the government if large numbers of their people left Mexico. Yet, numerous large scale movements from Mexico took place with no apparent harmful effects to the agreement. Some also believed that the Mexican authorities would only apply the *Privilegium* to the original settlements.[336] That also did not occur. In spite of anxiety over its status, the prized *Privilegium* remains alive and well at eighty years of age, as far as anyone knows.

Contradictory opinions exist about whether the Mennonites are Mexican or not, as the *Privilegium* placed the Mennonites into a separate category.[337]

Even the government sometimes seems unsure about their status. Some suggest that those born of foreign parents need to apply for a Certificate of Mexican Nationality if they wish to become Mexican citizens.[338] Most Mennonites did nothing to ensure that they became Mexican citizens, but then, maybe they did not need to. For the most part, the Mennonites and Mexican officials ignored this issue. Both sides seem able to live with uncertainty in this area. And the conservative Mennonites may not see the uncertainty as a problem, since they prefer to think of themselves as not belonging to national states anyway.

Mexico does not allow dual citizenship. Since they did not think of themselves as Mexicans, most Mennonites tried to obtain Canadian papers when they wanted a passport. If citizenship became an issue, most preferred to take Canadian citizenship, if possible. In spite of the uncertainty, the 1990 census counted the Mennonites as Mexicans. The government department responsible for this described the Mennonites as "one hundred percent" Mexican.[339]

Mexico granted the Mennonites exemption from participation in the military. While the nation does not have a universal military draft, it does operate a military registration program and a one year part-time training program for males aged eighteen to forty years.[340] Men receive a *Tarjeta Militar*, a card that indicates the status of the bearer's military service. The system utilizes two levels of the military card. The first document issued, the *Pre-Cartilla*, serves until the man completes his military service and receives the *Carta Liberada*.[341] It appears that Mexico wanted the Mennonites to register under the system. Mennonites who registered received the *Carta Liberada* after one year without doing any military service. Yet relatively few registered, due to an apparent moral rejection of the idea of registering for military service, and the government did not enforce the law.[342] Some also considered the requirement to register as a violation of the *Privilegium*.[343] When President Salinas visited the Manitoba colony in May of 1990, the issue of the military cards came up. The Mennonites suggested that the government consider the fact that they had not taken government help for roads, schools, and other things as their contribution in lieu of military service. Failing this, they wanted access to a program of alternate service, but discussions with the government did not resolve the issue.[344] On the other hand, government has not forced the Mennonites to register. Explanations offered for non-enforcement of the registration requirement include: government did not get around to calling them, the *Privilegium* protected the Mennonites, and government viewed them as foreigners.[345] One Mexican lawyer commented, regarding these and other ambiguities of the Mennonite situation in Mexico: "in Mexico it was normal to have ambiguities and that he did not think it advisable to seek clarification."[346]

Serious consequences sometimes have resulted from the uncertainties about citizenship and military service matters. Without the military card, some men could not obtain Mexican passports, necessary for immigration to South America. In the past, a copy of the *Privilegium* served as a substitute for the *Tarjeta Militar*, for purposes of obtaining passports and Mexican citizenship papers, but that practice ended some time ago.[347] Also in some cases, land purchases could not proceed without a passport.[348]

In 1991, Mexico required all citizens over eighteen years of age to enroll for a new voters list. When area Mennonites did not participate, Casas Grandes

area authorities became upset. They even encouraged the ministers to encourage their people to register, but that still did not bring the desired co-operation.[349]

Seguro Social caused problems between the Mennonites and the Mexican government as early as 1956. That system provides medical coverage, accident insurance, and old age pensions. Benefits depend on the level of coverage chosen and on the amount of premiums paid.[350] Although many Mennonites seemed unaware of all the benefits available to them under the program, many rejected it out of a desire to remain separate from the state. The Mennonites had their *Waisenamt* and *Armenkasse* to meet their needs and opposed joining the government program. When the Mennonites threatened to leave Mexico if government forced the system on them, some Mexicans responded with joy.[351] Reports in 1957 said that, while waiting for settlement of the issue, some Mennonites did not work their fields and 20,000 might leave Mexico.[352] In the end, Mexico did not compel the Mennonites to participate in the program.

By the 1990s, many Mennonites no longer took a strong stand on *Seguro Social*, and even some leaders favoured the plan.[353] Premiums seemed relatively low, in comparison to the high costs of medical care. Some considered it valuable, particularly in light of the *Armenkasse's* shortcomings.[354] Although the program allowed self-employed persons and farmers to enroll, likely only a small percentage of the Mennonites participated. Many others went without medical care or strained their finances to pay medical bills. Mexico's universal social programs remain minimal, and sad cases abound where destitute individuals and families receive no aid from either the government or the colony. At any rate, government also largely left the Mennonites alone in these matters.

Mennonites, throughout the years, worried about possible Mexican interference in their schools. Already in 1927, Mexican authorities challenged the Mennonite school system.[355] The most serious problems came when government restrictions forced closure of the Mennonite schools in the 1930s, but President Cárdenas personally intervened to reopen the schools.[356] Outsiders, both Mexicans and Canadians, often spoke about the inadequacies of the Mennonite schools and about possible intervention by the Mexican government.[357] Some Canadians wondered whether they should "tell on" the colonies, apparently thinking that the Mexican authorities did not know the state of the Mennonite schools. Interference could result in a mass exodus from Mexico.[358] But in the 1990s, interference did not seem imminent.

A number of federal government programs have aided the Mennonite farmers. In 1986, Mennonites accepted an offer of a loan from *BANRURAL* for farm aid in Campeche.[359] *BANRURAL* served as the federal government's development bank, specializing in financing rural development activities.[360] The *CONASUPO* program provided government marketing for many of the crops grown, although farmers still could sell independently. In 1994, government introduced a program under which farmers could apply for rebates of thirty-five percent of the cost of diesel fuel.[361] *PRONASOL*, a program available in the 1990s, offered interest free loans to farmers.[362] Government also attempted to cushion the effects of NAFTA, since some crop prices, including those for oats, stood at a much higher level in Mexico than on the world market. Free trade could endanger the production of some crops.[363] The *PROCAMPO* program,

begun in 1993, is a fifteen-year program of subsidies based on acreage seeded to particular crops.[364] By 1996, most, but not all, Mennonites entered the program.[365] A ten-year program called *FINAPE*,[366] introduced in 1996, forgave a percentage of some farmers' debt. The prevailing interest rates stood at thirty percent or more for a number of years, causing difficulties for many farmers.[367] Government also offered grants for purchasing equipment of various types. Mennonites used the various programs, although not to their maximum capacity. In light of the overall poverty of Mexico, the commitment of the Mexican government to the farming sector, including the Mennonite farming sector, seems remarkable.

Negative interactions also have occurred between the Mennonites and the Mexican government. At times, the government has forced its will on the Mennonites. As an example, construction of electric power lines took place on Durango colony in 1996 and 1997, against the will of the Old Colony leaders. The municipal governor said that he wanted the colony to develop, and electricity would make more industry possible.[368] Already soon after arriving in Mexico, Mennonites encountered bribery, graft, and corruption in dealings with the government.[369] Paying money under the table continues to make things go smoother in Mexico.[370] The undefined or ambiguous nature of many things in Mexico, which encourages corrupt practices, may account for some of this. Government officials often exercised their power with flexibility or discretion, particularly if they received a monetary incentive.

Complaints also often have arisen that the police do not treat the Mennonites as well as they do the Mexicans. Complaints against the police include accusations of their involvement in violence against the Mennonites and of attempting to obtain money from them.[371] A noticeable reduction in police corruption occurred in the 1990s.

In spite of problems, unease, and predictions of impending disaster for the Mennonites since the 1920s, the Mexican environment has allowed them to maintain the separateness they desired.[372] The distance between the Mennonite and Mexican culture, religion, and language aided with this. At times, the Mennonites also benefited from having ultimate recourse to the president.[373] On numerous occasions, the president and the federal government took the Mennonites' side, protecting them from violations of the *Privilegium.*

Assimilation, or accommodation, to the Mexican environment has not represented the greatest threat to the Old Colonists.[374] While not untouched by their time in Mexico, they still remain distinct from the Mexicans. The old ways and beliefs still survive, particularly in the most remote colonies. Old Colony leaders in the 1920s chose well when they selected Mexico as their new home and the *Privilegium* as the guarantee of their freedom. Unfortunately though, for the future of their vision, Mexico lay too close to Canada. While the Mexican threat proved benign, ongoing and new connections with Canada created serious problems.

CHAPTER 5
EVANGELIZATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Those looking at the source of problems encountered by the Old Colony group in Mexico, have blamed the theocratic leadership, economic problems, population explosion, and the Latin American environment. Overall blame for all the other problems often has fallen on the leaders. However, this analysis lacks completeness or fairness in some respects. The Old Colony leadership has designed, established, and fought to preserve their separate colonies. They have carried out, in a reasonably skilful way, their mandate to place non-economic considerations first and yet survive. The Mexican physical and economic environment has shaped much of the Mennonite economy, and while problems have existed, they have remained largely outside the group's control. Given Old Colony beliefs, they could not avoid the population explosion. The Mexican milieu, while not perfect, proved hospitable to the vision of these people, and more so than that of most nations. Given the impossibility of the Old Colony group living their chosen way of life in Canada, the overriding and nonnegotiable importance of living that life in closed isolated groups, and the limitations imposed by the environment and their philosophy, they have managed quite well for much of the time in Mexico.

Two factors, both connected to Canada, have affected the Old Colonists and endangered their vision of an isolated life in Mexico. Other Mennonite groups and individuals have come to represent one threat. The second has derived from continuing contact with Canada in the form of temporary and permanent movement to Canada.

While the Mexicans have respected the Old Colonists' privacy, their own blood brothers have not done the same. Those who belonged to other Mennonite groups became one of the most serious challenges to the Old Colonists' order and survival. The other Mennonites focussed primarily on the older, larger colonies in the Cuauhtémoc area. Over the years, Old Colonists and other Mennonites expanded their holdings around the original colonies. This makes it possible to drive long distances through this "mennogopolis" and not leave Mennonite land. Yet today, no Old Colony church remains on the Swift Current colony, and the Old Colony church elsewhere finds itself under a long term siege.

Likely because of their smaller size and geographical isolation, most colonies outside the Cuauhtémoc area remain relatively free of the effects of the outsiders. Pressures continue to mount though, for example as at Durango, against the authority of the Old Colony leadership. Over the past decades, the presence of outside churches has played a major role in the mounting challenges against the traditional Old Colony church.

This situation in Mexico resembles what happened to the Old Colonists' ancestors in Russia and Canada. Motivation for leaving Russia came partly from the inability of the most conservative Mennonites to maintain their chosen ways in the domineering, aggressive presence of other Mennonite groups. And on the Manitoba West Reserve, other Mennonite groups provided alternative churches

and communities for banned Old Colony people, helping destroy the Old Colony group's isolation and sense of community there.[375] In Mennonite history, more liberal groups often followed the more conservative in their migrations, and repeatedly threatened the conservatives' communities.[376]

The Old Colonists possess a long tradition of not accepting other Mennonite groups. Already in Poland, Flemish Mennonites in the Danzig area, the Old Colonists' ancestors, did not accept the legitimacy of other Mennonites. According to the anthropologist James Urry, the Flemish group looked on the Frisian Mennonites with disdain for not as strictly upholding "the proper way."[377]

Old Colonists believe they are true Christians. While Old Colonists likely would not presume to judge whether other Mennonites or Christians will receive salvation, in the Old Colonists' view, other Mennonites belong to the world.[378] For their part, other Mennonites often fail to understand the Old Colonists' uncompromising positions. Already when they left Canada, more liberal Mennonites viewed the Old Colonists as narrow-minded and misguided and thought it unrealistic to "run away from a difficult situation in the hope that they might find better conditions elsewhere."[379] Canadian Mennonite groups frequently have looked down on the Old Colonists, believing them incapable of making good decisions.[380] Ironically, some other Mennonites' lack of tolerance of the Old Colony's choices makes them appear narrow-minded.

While each group has considered the other as lost, more liberal Mennonites have acted as the aggressors, with the Old Colonists as their unwilling targets. Canadian and American critics have said little good about the Old Colonists, and widely circulated reports about them include few positives but numerous criticisms. The Canadians long have felt that they have a right to meddle in their brothers' affairs, and that truth stands on their side.[381] For example, an MCC Canada press release blames those resisting the new influences for difficulties that ensued: "Colonies are being torn apart by those who want to keep old religious ways."[382]

Certainly, many who tried to bring change to the Old Colonists and those who suffered excommunication have viewed the situation in a different light than did the Old Colonists. The Old Colony leadership's actions in resisting many changes and their attempts to enforce their will among the people have led to great frustration among those who have not agreed with them. Many opponents view the leaders as unreasonable men.

Some observers have recognized the efforts of the outsiders as disruptive. But overall, writers of Old Colony history failed to give these interventions the importance they deserve as a determinant of Old Colony history. Some also promoted the argument that the Old Colony philosophy and its manifestations in Mexico suffered from fatal flaws. They praised and encouraged efforts to help the Old Colonists become more like the rest of the world.

Contemporary Old Colony leaders, whose voice often remains unheard, believe that without the outside interference they might have held back the changes and their closed colonies could have continued to prosper to a much greater extent. In their opinion, outsiders have done great damage.[383] Had the other churches not offered alternatives, their system of enforcing compliance and conformity would have continued to work, and they would not have lost many of their people. The Old Colonists who fled the Cuauhtémoc area know

why they left, but also lack an audience. Some outsiders recognize the effects of their actions and sometimes even feel remorse, but not enough to withdraw permanently. While they would like to get along with the Old Colonists, they want to set the terms.[384]

Three primary theological differences, all justifications for the evangelizing presence of the outsiders, exist between the two groups. First, while all Mennonite groups once considered physical separation from the world as essential, most now view this as no longer possible, necessary, or desirable. The second difference concerns the certainty of spiritual salvation. When others speak of "the assurance of personal salvation," to Old Colonists "this sounds like proud and boastful talk."[385] Old Colonist theology stresses the hope that God will give them salvation, while rejecting the evangelistic language that proclaims certain salvation. This difference has served as the primary justification for the outsiders coming to Mexico. They judged the Old Colony group as needing spiritual salvation, characterized them as pagans, and directed evangelical campaigns at them.[386] Most Old Colonists failed to accept the outsiders' beliefs. The third theological difference arises because the Old Colonists do not evangelize or attempt to attract converts to their group. Instead, Old Colonists stress discipleship and living out the teachings of Christ in their lives. Through their lives and witness, they hope to influence others to follow the teachings of Christ.

These three Old Colony positions have meant that some outsiders considered them lost and in need of salvation. The Old Colonists' beliefs leave them in a somewhat isolated position within the Mennonite world. Based on their reading of the New Testament, most other Mennonite and contemporary evangelical Christian groups do not agree with the Old Colonists. Certainly, some non-evangelical Christians from various denominations would agree with aspects of the Old Colony position.

Outsiders also have found fault with various other aspects of Old Colony spiritual life. Various characteristics of their church organizations and practices in worship services contrast sharply with the choices made by other groups. Neither does the male dominated church and leadership structure fit well with the contemporary western values accepted by the more liberal churches. The Old Colonists' method of teaching their children spiritual values also frequently comes under criticism. They do not utilize Sunday Schools, and children do not attend church until they reach their teens. Yet, school age children receive daily religious instruction while attending school. Critics also fault the Old Colonist church for offering no youth activities.

Much of the rest of the world does not conform to the Canadian or American Mennonites' religious model either. Yet they have not attempted to change most other people with the fervour directed at the Old Colonists. The evangelical Mennonite churches have concentrated on the Old Colonists of Mexico largely because they feel a responsibility to offer spiritual guidance to their "lost brothers" in Latin America.

Other motives also explain the presence of evangelical Mennonites in the proximity of the Mexican colonies. Perceived shortcomings in nonreligious areas, including education, leadership, culture, population control, and business acumen attracted the attention of more liberal Mennonites. Sometimes these issues received more attention than did the spiritual matters. Efforts to

change the non-spiritual aspects of the Old Colony life may have proven more disruptive than the attempts to modify religious beliefs. The Old Colonists could have accepted some evangelical characteristics without changing crucial aspects of their colony life or endangering their isolation. However, to accept the outside ideas on education, culture, and business would quickly bring an end to the separate colony lifestyle.

Not only Canadian Mennonites possess a history of combining evangelism with efforts to change other aspects of a culture. This trend already formed one characteristic of the mission work of other Canadian denominations, including the Presbyterians and Methodists, in the late-nineteenth century. "The evangelical emphasis on snatching the 'heathen' from the hell-fire of sinfulness was being replaced by an approach that emphasized long-term evangelisation through education and social service."[387] Still today, in conjunction with their efforts to evangelize North American aboriginals, numerous churches concentrate on bringing change in non-spiritual matters.

As in Russia and Canada before, education has become one of the main disputed areas in the Mexican colonies. Both parties long have recognized its crucial importance in maintaining the Old Colony lifestyle. For their part, the tenacious leaders have refused to change educational methods and curriculum. The line between religious and other issues also has become blurred. In 1981, George Reimer, a Canadian worker in Mexico, said: "I'm often convinced that ignorance is bliss, but I'm not convinced that it's Christian."[388]

The outsiders, not recognizing the Old Colony leadership's authority as legitimate, have challenged the leaders openly. They have opposed the use of excommunication in the colonies. Critics of the Mexican Old Colony have claimed that using the ban to enforce rules about rubber tires, cars, and electric power compels people to follow man-made laws and not the laws of God. These critics have not accepted the validity of the connection between these Old Colony laws and the group's vision of living a separate life from the world, which the Old Colonists have considered as essential to follow God's will.

Not all other Mennonites have threatened the Old Colonists' future in Mexico. The Sommerfelder who moved to Mexico at much the same time as the original Old Colonists have respected the Old Colonists' right to privacy. While not sharing the Old Colony prohibitions on cars and rubber tires on tractors, the Sommerfelder do not engage in active proselytization among the Old Colonists. Intermarriage accounts for much of the limited movement from Old Colony to Sommerfelder ranks.[389]

Mennonites from many groups, besides the original Old Colonists and Sommerfelder, presently live in Mexico. Quite possibly, in no other place or time have the Mennonite churches concentrated so many efforts on a group the size of the conservative Mennonites of Mexico. Already in 1977, an estimate of the size of the Mennonite mission force working with the Old Colony people in North and South America speculated their number "could be as high as one hundred and the total yearly budget could be a million dollars."[390] Since then, many efforts only increased.

By the mid-1990s, General Conference, Kleine Gemeinde, Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC), Evangelical Mennonite Missions Conference (EMMC), Reinländer, Sommerfelder, Mennonitische Gemeinschaft, Gemeinde

Gottes, and the Mennonite umbrella body Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) all worked among the Old Colonists. In addition to these Mennonite conferences or organizations, in the past Mennonite Brethren and Church of God in Christ (Holdeman) Mennonites also operated in the area of the Mexican colonies. In recent years, often led by MCC, the Amish from the United States also became involved in work with the Old Colonists. While they do not commonly refer to themselves as Mennonites, the Amish have common roots with Mennonites in the Radical Reformation.

Of all the Mennonite groups and organizations that arrived in Mexico, the General Conference, the Kleine Gemeinde, and MCC caused the most disruption to Old Colonists and their plans to live in isolated communities.[391] The first two groups initially arrived in Mexico for reasons other than evangelizing or helping the Old Colony.

The General Conference, one of the more liberal Mennonite groups, entered the Cuauhtémoc area following the arrival in Mexico in the 1920s of thirty-five to forty Mennonite families from Russia who could not gain entry to Canada or the United States.[392] Although they did not found a settlement and did not have a *Privilegium*, most of the refugees from Russia came to the Cuauhtémoc area.[393] Partly because the Old Colonists would not accept them into their church, in 1938 they formed the Hoffnungsau Gemeinde and joined the U. S. based General Conference in 1939. This group remained small for a long time, having only about fifty adherents in the mid-1940s.[394] Most members of the original group eventually moved to Canada or the United States. However, the influence of the General Conference grew considerably. The Mennonite Church of Mexico, made up of three General Conference congregations, organized in 1963. In June of 1991, they founded the Conference of Mennonites in Mexico.[395]

The General Conference work with the Old Colony people, directed from outside Mexico, began in 1950.[396] The General Conference grew into a large presence in the colonies in the Cuauhtémoc area, and by the 1990s the church operated churches and schools at Blumenau in Manitoba colony, Steinreich in Nord Colony, and Burwalde in Swift Current colony.

Even when the schools encountered resistance, the General Conference persevered in its efforts. The General Conference soon took over a school near Santa Clara, which originally operated with MCC involvement. That school program later relocated to Cuauhtémoc and then to Quinta Lupita near Cuauhtémoc.[397] The student population included many children of the excommunicated, and attendance at the school also became grounds for excommunication. Numerous attempts by the Old Colony to close the school failed.[398] Eventually, the church and school moved to Blumenau in the heart of the Manitoba colony after a businessman, Abe Olfert, bought land there and then sold it to the non-Old Colony people.[399] This placed the General Conference presence in the heart of Old Colony territory.

The Steinreich school, in another Old Colony bastion, the Nord Colony, began after some local residents asked the General Conference to help them establish a residential school. Establishment of a church also took place there in the 1960s. And in 1987 an adult education centre, or Bible school, moved from Kilometre 17 to Steinreich.[400] In 1976, the General Conference founded a school and church at Burwalde, on the Swift Current colony.[401] In December of 1996, a

large new church addition officially opened.

William Janzen in 1977 observed: "The policy of the General Conference mission work at Cuauhtémoc is basically one of providing an alternative church for those who want to leave the Old Colony church."[402] Janzen recognized that the Conference church not only provided an alternative, but that it divided the people by accepting the excommunicated. The methods and some of the funding for the new churches came from outside, resulting in the people feeling dependent and childlike. Janzen made it clear that the two groups of Mennonites did not accept each other's points of view.

Numerous people have worked for the General Conference in Mexico over the decades. Many not only served as missionaries but also worked at meeting perceived needs in various areas. While some only stayed for a few years, others made work among the Old Colonists their life's work. Helen Ens spent from 1955 to July 1995 there, working as a teacher, a newspaper co-editor, and supervising a bookstore.[403] Philip Dyck began working for the General Conference Board of Missions in 1963 as an agricultural researcher. In 1964, Manitoba colony leaders told their followers not to have anything to do with his experimental work, but some cooperated anyway, renting him land for experimental projects.[404] In the 1990s, although retired, he remained involved with agriculture in the colonies. The Board of Christian service and later the Commission on Overseas Mission of the General Conference (Canada and United States) also supplied nurses and administrators for the government hospital in Cuauhtémoc and for a clinic established in 1965 at Nuevo Namiquipa, north of Cuauhtémoc.[405] The clinic closed in the later 1980s. Many of the workers who came to Mexico believed in the correctness of their actions, and their sincerity and dedication remains above reproach.

Likely the most disruptive effects of the General Conference presence in Mexico have not come from nursing services or agricultural experimentation efforts, but from the new churches and schools. Rather than limiting its efforts to trying to change Old Colony theology within the Old Colony church, the General Conference established alternative churches for Old Colonists to attend. This split the group by providing an option for disaffected Old Colony members. Old Colony discipline lost much of its force with the advent of this alternative. Similarly, General Conference schools, on or near Old Colony land, offered an alternative to the Old Colony group and helped to break down the protective walls constructed by the Old Colonists.

The second major threat to the Old Colony group, the Kleine Gemeinde, came to Mexico without intending to interfere with the Old Colonists.[406] The newcomers arrived from Manitoba between 1947 and 1952, in their own flight from the Canadian world.[407] However, of all the possible sites in Mexico, they chose, as had the General Conference group, an area close to the Old Colony settlements. About 600 persons, described as active and progressive, bought 22,000 hectares of land near Santa Clara, where they founded their Quellenkolonie (Los Jagueyes).

Mexican Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites became a distinct group from the Kleine Gemeinde members who remained in Canada and the United States. Those who did not come to Mexico changed their name to Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC), a name that reflected their adoption of evangelical funda-

mentalist theology. The Mexican group continued to use the name Kleine Gemeinde.

The Kleine Gemeinde church has threatened the Old Colonists by accepting excommunicated Old Colony members into their group, thereby weakening Old Colony discipline. At first, they asked converts to move to their Quellenkolonie. But since the late 1970s, they founded churches in a number of Old Colony areas.

The ill-fated Yermo colony provided fertile ground for Kleine Gemeinde efforts. No Old Colony minister remained there, possibly because of the use of rubber tires and motor vehicles. The Kleine Gemeinde provided a teacher and a church presence, and won converts. This breakthrough into the Old Colony ranks let other Old Colony people see the Kleine Gemeinde educational system, which more of them then wanted.[408] While the Kleine Gemeinde schools did not adopt various innovations of the more modern Mexican system, they taught a broader range of material more effectively than did the Old Colony schools. One critic who appreciated neither system commented: "The main difference between Old Colony and Kleine Gemeinde education is that the former don't know that they know nothing but the latter know at least that much."[409]

By the early 1980s, the Kleine Gemeinde made large inroads in many colonies due to their education system, more relaxed rules, and the added appeal of still appearing relatively conservative.[410] Churches and a complete break from the Old Colony usually accompanied the founding of Kleine Gemeinde schools.[411] The Kleine Gemeinde presence spread to at least ten locations by the 1990s, including the colonies of Manitoba, Nord, Swift Current, La Honda, and Durango. The church rapidly won adherents at Durango in the mid-1990s.[412] In spite of their strong resentment towards the Kleine Gemeinde, Old Colonists proved unable to check their advance.[413]

MCC has presented the third major threat to the Old Colony system. The efforts of MCC in the colonies differed from those of the various churches in that MCC did not aim primarily for spiritual conversion. Instead, it sought to bring change in nonspiritual areas, including in economics, education, and health care. Although MCC has taken this position, some individual workers, themselves members of an outside church, have not followed these guidelines.

The involvement of MCC in Mexico dates back many decades. In 1946, P.C. Hiebert and William T. Snyder, representatives of MCC in Akron, Pennsylvania, visited Mexico to investigate the possibility of about 200 Russian Mennonite families settling in Mexico after World War II. When asked, the Old Colonists said they did not want the immigrants from Russia in their colonies. And, in the end, the refugees did not go to Mexico.[414]

During the same year, Winfield Fretz, a Mennonite college professor, visited the Mexican colonies on behalf of MCC. His widely distributed report on the colonies appeared in 1947.[415] Dr. C.W. Wiebe, a physician, Dr. A. D. Stoesz, an agriculturalist, and Dr. D. V. Wiebe, a farmer and assistant pastor, all accompanied Fretz on the trip to Mexico, on behalf of MCC. They painted a dismal picture of Mennonite life in Mexico.[416] The forward to Fretz' report, written by Harold S. Bender, long time premiere Mennonite theologian, said: "The author is concerned about the future of the Mennonites in Mexico, and rightly so."[417] Fretz himself wrote: "there remains a possibility of developing some inter-com-

munication between the Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico and those in the United States and Canada. . . . there are useful services which the Mennonites in these countries can render to their brethren in Mexico. It remains for the channels of intercommunication to be developed and contacts to be made. At any rate, Mennonites in North America should no longer continue to be ignorant of the life and needs of the large block of 12,000 of their brethren in Mexico."[418] Early on, these respected Mennonite academics and theologians established the practice of publicly describing the Old Colony Mennonites as suffering and in need of help. Unfortunately, as the years passed descriptions often took on a condescending and disrespectful tone.

A less widely distributed version of Fretz' report demonstrated considerably more bluntness. He wrote: "The Mennonites in Mexico are definitely in need of spiritual awakening and of cultural grounding. This is indicated in the areas of religion, education, and sanitation." Fretz continued: "The MCC in this program should remain in the background because of the suspicion on the part of the Old Colony leadership toward any outside agency that seeks to give aid in the direction of material or spiritual improvement. . . . much of the work that is established should be made to appear as an individual project rather than an organization sponsored project."[419] That report also recommended the assignment of nurses and a doctor to the Old Colony group, efforts in diet education through articles in the *Steinbach Post* and in pamphlets, and the supplying of seed grain for experimental purposes.

Early MCC involvement with the Mexican Mennonites proceeded much as Fretz envisioned, concentrating largely on practical matters. The organization quickly put into place a hospital as well as seed loan, well digging, and food relief programs.[420] Already in 1947, ten U. S. and Canadian MCC workers laboured in the Cuauhtémoc area, engaged mainly in health work. In 1950, MCC provided teachers for the first outside school near the Santa Clara colony. And for a time, until it closed in 1951, MCC nurses staffed a clinic at Santa Clara. By 1951, thirteen MCC unit members, mainly nurses, teachers, and agricultural workers, worked in the area of the colonies.[421] MCC directed its early efforts in Mexico from the United States.

After meeting resistance though, MCC personnel left Mexico in the early 1950s. Allegedly, Old Colony leaders and the Mexican government applied pressure for MCC to leave. A drought that lasted from 1950 to 1954 contributed to the expansion of the MCC program again in 1953 and 1954. In early 1954, a railroad car loaded with 60,000 pounds of flour, milled from wheat donated by Kansas Mennonites, arrived for the Mennonites of Mexico. Granting of short term loans and distribution of food and seed also took place.[422]

But MCC plans extended beyond just alleviating short term suffering among the Old Colonists. In 1956, Aaron Klassen, MCC Director at Cuauhtèmoc, wrote to the Canadian Ambassador in Mexico: "The educational, intellectual, social, etc. standards of our fellow Mennonites in Mexico give us great concern. It is our purpose to help them to a higher level."[423] The letter asked the Ambassador for help in obtaining immigrant visas for MCC workers in Mexico, which MCC needed in order to form a civil association. That association would administer institutional properties in Mexico that MCC wanted to acquire or build.

A common saying in the conservative colonies in the 1940s and 1950s was

"MCC is DDT." Clearly, MCC efforts to bring spiritual and cultural change among the conservative Mennonites met strong resistance.[424] In 1956, pressure from the Old Colonists helped force MCC out of Mexico.[425] Following that, the General Conference and others took over much of MCC's work. A dislike for MCC still existed in the 1990s among some Old Colonists, as MCC had become a generic term for all the meddling outside churches, and particularly for the General Conference church.[426] Some Old Colonists did not want to admit that MCC helped them in the earlier years, even though the records still exist, proving that MCC gave the aid.[427] While MCC did not formally return to the colonies until the 1980s, others kept up the work.[428]

When MCC reentered the Mexican colonies, its Canadian organization directed the work. In April of 1975, MCC Canada established the Kanadier Mennonite Colonization Committee (KMCC) to work with "Kanadier" Mennonites inside and outside Canada. The term "Kanadier" refers to Mennonites, including the Old Colonists of Mexico, who emigrated to Canada in the 1870s. In the German language, Kanadier means Canadian. The term reflects the fact that the Mennonites who arrived in Canada in the 1870s formed an early wave of migration to that country. In contrast, the "Russländer" Mennonites came to Canada in the 1920s and later. Unlike in some of the earlier MCC programs, many of the persons who later worked with the Old Colonists in Mexico belonged to the Kanadier group. KMCC representatives came from various conservative Mennonite churches, but not from the Mexican Old Colony.[429] By 1990, the Kanadier Mennonite Concerns Committee replaced the earlier committee. Establishment of these committees accompanied the return of MCC to the Mexican colonies, with the agenda of working change then directed from Canada.

On deciding to return to Mexico, MCC carefully chose staff and KMCC members. Aware of its bad name in Mexico and of the opposition to outsiders among the conservative Mennonites, MCC attempted to use nonthreatening methods to enter the colonies.

The primary early effort involved bringing a media presence, in the form of *Die Mennonitische Post*, into the colonies. *Die Mennonitische Post* succeeded the *Steinbach Post*, founded at Steinbach in 1913 as an independent paper, published by Jacob S. Friesen and then Derksen Printers. The *Steinbach Post* built a following in the conservative Mennonite constituency. In 1964, with a circulation of about 5,000, its circulation covered from Ft. Vermilion, Alberta to Paraguay, including Mexico.[430] Publication of the original *Post* stopped in 1966. In April of 1977, MCC began publishing the new paper.[431] The name *Post* brought credibility and acceptance in the conservative colonies. Many who didn't accept MCC welcomed the *Post*, since it provided a forum for the exchange of news and letters between far flung conservative Mennonites in the Americas. Its role as a provider of family and community news made the publication valuable and its presence unthreatening.

In the early 1980s, George Reimer came to Mexico from Canada to work for the *Post*, not for MCC. This likely opened some doors for him as many did not and still do not understand that MCC is the *Post*.[432] Who Reimer worked for seems clear though, since he sent back numerous reports to MCC in Canada. From that tentative beginning, MCC soon again expanded into a larger, more open presence.

For most of its history, Abe Warkentin edited the new *Post*. For a time Isbrand Hiebert served as editor, while Warkentin worked as Director of Kanadier Concerns. Another change of editors recently occurred with the hiring of Kennert Giesbrecht. The *Post* has received substantial funding and support from MCC, and *Post* workers, in reality, have worked as MCC workers.[433] MCC staff in Mexico also has looked after distribution of the newspaper in the colonies. Latin American subscribers have received preferential subscription rates. In 1994, possibly 23,000 persons read the *Post*. It had printed more than 14,000 letters from readers.[434]

While serving as a communications link between conservative Mennonites in the Americas, a primary motivation for the *Post's* publication has been to change some aspects of Old Colony life.[435] Illiteracy became one of the things specifically targeted. A 1992 brochure asking for financial support said: "the extreme conservatism and legalism of some groups have planted the seeds of illiteracy, the effects of which will be felt for generations to come. . . . One of the greatest tragedies in Mennonite history is occurring in many of the Old Colony villages where many children are often leaving their village schools functionally illiterate."[436]

The *Post's* interventions in Old Colony ways have extended far beyond combatting illiteracy. Numerous articles, directly and indirectly, have challenged the Old Colony's philosophy and actions. Some of the *Post's* content has violated Old Colony norms. For example, in 1996, it carried the story of Robinson Crusoe in installments, which, harmless as this may seem, violated Old Colony norms. Not surprisingly, the Old Colony leadership sometimes opposed the *Post*.[437] But it does seem surprising that their opposition was not stronger. In 1992, Abe Warkentin wrote: "Though the Mennonitische Post made a great impact on the Mennonites in Mexico and in reality was a greater threat to the system than the early 1940's and 1950's efforts because it gained entrance into so many homes, it never was strongly opposed."[438]

MCC and the *Post* introduced more local colony content in 1983 with the introduction of a supplement to the *Post*, the *Beilage*, published in Mexico and edited there by Helen Ens and George Reimer.[439] In 1986, the the *Menno-Zeitung* replaced the *Beilage*.[440] Reimer did most of the editing and managing of the new publication, first as an employee of MCC and then, from 1991, on his own. The paper only appeared sporadically after MCC's involvement with it ended until its demise in 1992.

MCC also wanted a children's publication. This led to publication of *Das Blatt* beginning in September 1989. In the 1990s, the paper had a circulation of 2,000 or more.[441]

Over the years, various voices from within MCC spoke out in favour of not leaving the Mexican Old Colony alone. One of the strongest voices heard was that of Abe Warkentin, editor of *Die Mennonitische Post* and former director of MCC Canada's Kanadier Concerns. He described the Old Colony experience in Latin America as the worst tragedy in Mennonite history, as a manmade disaster made from within the group, and blamed the bishops, whom he depicted as tyrants who ruled unchallenged with an iron fist, and illiteracy as not leaving any way out for the Old Colony.[442] While Warkentin and others possibly did not express their strongest opinions directly in the *Post*, they influenced and helped

implement the intervention in Old Colony life.

MCC leaders have demonstrated an unwillingness to accept the legitimacy of the Old Colony leaders' mandate to speak for and act on behalf of the Old Colony people. Along with other outsiders, MCC personnel frequently thought they knew how to improve the lives of the conservative Mennonites of Mexico. Some became extremely critical of the Old Colony ways, wanting to undo or destroy the system and not just make adjustments to it. In 1991 for example, Victor Fast, an Ontario MCC worker, advocated destroying the Old Colony system. In a report to the KMCC, he wrote: "It is Bankrupt. It has been built on premises which have more in common with the dark ages, of pre-reformation days than with the generally accepted, enlightened values of today. Repression, control, male dominance, powerlessness of the people, ignorance, these are all things people talk to me about over and over again as characteristic of that system."[443] Fast spoke of supporting the people in dismantling the system as quickly as possible, and asked whether they should massively confront the Old Colony leadership. He also spoke of possibly contacting the Mexican authorities and asking for their help to reform the school system, and, maybe with government help, challenging the idea of a separate Low-German community in the larger Spanish environment. This approach did not leave much of the Old Colony system free from attack.

By 1992, MCC Canada ambitiously hoped to expand its program in Mexico. Goals and plans for its Mexican program included: gaining a presence and building relationships in the colonies, having a physical base for operations, addressing literacy and educational needs in various ways, introducing a youth worker couple, encouraging coordinated spiritual renewal efforts with other Mennonite groups, and helping with economic development and land searches.[444]

The paper that laid out projections for Kanadier work in Mexico for 1992-1995 said: "The problems of the colony Mennonites in Mexico are no longer their problems. It would, first of all, be unconscionable not to seek to help those who are related by faith and blood. Secondly, Mexican Mennonite problems have been our problems for decades, ever since the first families began going to find summer work in Ontario in the 1950's. And thirdly, the Hilfskomitee . . . has invited MCCC to come to Mexico and continue helping with social needs such as the home for the handicapped."[445] In 1995, Peter Rempel, a former Old Colonist and chairman of the Hilfskomitee, an inter-Mennonite group in Mexico that has worked with various community projects, urged MCCC to become "considerably more direct with the leadership in Mexico."[446]

Warkentin's stance also remained strong in 1995 when he left his position as Director of Kanadier Concerns. He said: "We have pussyfooted around the conservative colony leadership in Mexico too long." Seeing it as an opportune time, since the colonies suffered from various crises, Warkentin proposed a joint meeting between MCCC and Mexican Mennonite leaders. Six things wanted from the leaders included: acknowledgement that the migration to Canada made Old Colony problems the legitimate concern of others, changes in schools including curriculum and teacher training, electrification for small businesses and cottage industries to allow occupational diversification, introduction of expertise on crops and farming, an understanding regarding excommunicated members in Canada, and regular future meetings. Had the Old Colony leaders agreed

to these points, the strength of their leadership and control in the colonies could have diminished dramatically. Warkentin went on to speak of a "bold new effort in Mexico. The groundwork and base has been laid; new thrusts in education and economic development await money and people."[447]

MCC work in Mexico obviously has deviated from the usual MCC policy of providing help when and in the manner requested by the target groups. While by 1996, the critical rhetoric coming from MCC leaders abated under the new Director of Kanadier Concerns, Anton Enns, the basic program still appeared aggressively interventionist.

Some individuals from MCC Canada have demonstrated sensitivity and understanding towards the Old Colony group. In 1977, after a trip to Mexico, William Janzen recognized that right might not be completely on the side of the "conference churches."[448] He appeared to understand the validity of the Old Colony commitment to living physically separately from the world, tracing the concept to the "Old Testament concept of a chosen people separate from the world, to the New Testament teachings about the church and to the several centuries of recent history when Mennonites as a religious-ethnic group were isolated from the societies in which they lived."[449] Janzen discussed the Old Colony positions on a number of issues, including living in isolation, missionary and outreach work, humility, education, and leadership, and recognized that the "Conference Mennonites" did not necessarily hold the only truth.

MCC representatives have made numerous trips to Mexico in the last several decades to study the situation there. They wrote numerous reports, and, first cautiously and then boldly, sent staff to live and work there. By 1996, progress seemed present in opening doors to some colony leaders. Distrust and a distance still existed though. Reports about the perceived reconciliation between the two sides and the Old Colonists' acceptance of the outsiders seemed exaggerated. Outsiders often thought Old Colonists accepted them, only to later discover the inaccuracy of their perception. More than one person, who thought they made inroads and gained acceptance with ministers and bishops, later had the leaders denounce them from the pulpit or otherwise speak or act against them. Some confuse politeness and hospitality on the part of the Old Colonists with agreement and acquiescence. Yet how Old Colony leaders view MCC projects largely depends on the people involved on both sides.

The approach of MCC towards the Old Colonists of Latin America appears to have undergone some evolution in the past several years. In 2002, MCC circulated "A vision statement for MCC's continuing relationship with Low German Mennonites in the Americas." In its guidelines for building relationships with the colonies, the paper speaks of seeking "a compassionate understanding of the diverse history, unique culture and current situations of the Low German Mennonites." MCC also says it "will develop and cultivate respectful relationships with colony leaders" and that it "will seek to be collaborative, addressing community needs which they have identified." The document even goes so far as saying "MCC believes that faithfulness to one's church is a significant virtue," although it also defends people's right to leave a church and suggests that MCC offers help to dissident members.[450] This statement makes it clear that MCC has not withdrawn from Mexico to await an invitation, which might never come, from the Old Colonists. But it may reflect increased sensitivity, respect, and

acceptance by MCC of the Old Colonists and their positions. Almost certainly though, it does not go far enough to satisfy devout Old Colony leaders and followers.

Old Colonists often have opposed MCC projects.[451] But desensitization also has occurred, as the efforts of MCC, GCs, and others date back more than fifty years. Old Colonists have received economic aid from the other Mennonites, sometimes at the request of the Old Colony people. Drought from 1948-1956 led to requests for aid from Mennonites in the United States and Canada.[452] In 1981, MCC Canada lent money to help families in danger of losing their land at Monclova.[453] La Batea received help during a severe drought in 1994.[454] And, in 1995, MCC planned to help meet emergency needs at Chavi and Nuevo Casas Grandes.[455] During the same year, MCC offered to help some colonies' *Armenkassen* (fund to help the needy).[456] In one case, where the colony did not want the money, MCC left $5,000 with them anyway.[457] In numerous other cases, other Mennonites gave various types of help to the Mexican Mennonites. Some Old Colony leaders feel positively about MCC's help.[458] However, in 1996, the senior Manitoba colony bishop, while admitting that his people had received aid from MCC, said it had not done much good, not in a major way.[459] While the help has proven valuable to individuals and colonies at times, MCC's overall aid remains relatively small in comparison to the total needs of the colonies.

Old Colonists long have tried to avoid involvement with other Mennonite groups. Already in 1958, Old Colonists preferred donating money to the Red Cross, rather than to MCC, to avoid involvement with MCC. They feared MCC would try to influence or missionize them. Old Colonists viewed other Mennonites as more of a threat than non-Mennonite groups, due to the similar heritage and consequent attraction for their members.[460] In spite of need, the Old Colony sometimes forbade its members to accept relief grain gifts from other Mennonite groups for fear of proselytization. In Mennonite history, harassment by government and the dominant society has proven much more straightforward than dealing with other Mennonites.[461]

MCC concentrated most of its efforts in Chihuahua state, where, in the 1990s they had two offices to deal with the Mexican Mennonites. The primary one operated on the Manitoba colony and the other in Nuevo Casas Grandes, serving the northern colonies.[462] On paper, a Mexican Mennonite owned the Manitoba colony office, since Mexican law did not permit MCC, a foreign agency, to own property in Mexico. From these offices, MCC workers made the rounds of many of the colonies, carrying out the plans of the Canadian KMCC.

Canadians Bill and Nora Janzen lived in the Cuauhtémoc area from 1992-1996, serving as the first Kanadier Concerns directors in Mexico. Their efforts to develop trust with the Old Colonists met with some success. Educational change and improvement were priorities. Bill and his successor, Abe Peters, organized teacher training sessions, although Bishop Loewen of the Manitoba Old Colony opposed the efforts.[463] MCC workers also helped establish Spanish classes in the Manitoba colony. In 1996, lessons took place at MCC headquarters and in nine or ten villages.

Rosabel Fast, also from Canada, lived in Mexico from 1992 to 1995, where she developed educational curriculum and worked with adult education. Old Colony schools did not use the readers she produced, although it appeared that

the Kleine Gemeinde, whom Fast also worked with, would use them. The possibility also existed that some Old Colony schools would use them in the future.

In 1995, Abe and Anne Peters of Manitoba began working in Mexico and took over the MCC work there once the Janzens left. Abe Peters had some previous involvement with the Mennonites in Mexico, when in 1993 he investigated ways of modernizing their milk industry.[464]

Also in 1995, MCC placed Daniel and Tina Penner and their eighteen and nineteen-year-old children, Denver and Erna, in Nuevo Casas Grandes. They worked with the area Mennonites. Dan's emphasis fell on community development work, including trying to start cooperatives in the colonies and tailor farm production to new market possibilities in the United States under NAFTA. A cooperative form of organization seemed advantageous, since co-ops could produce large quantities of marketable products. By 1996, a cooperative operated in Las Virginias colony, where the first project involved opening a grocery store. At first the church there told the people not to work with the cooperative but later the bishop did cooperate. The Penners also operated the MCC office, bookstore, and library. Likely due to their sensitivity towards and acceptance of the Old Colony people, the Penners enjoyed a good relationship with many of the people and leaders in the area colonies.[465]

MCC also did not ignore Durango colony, and many MCC workers visited there over the years. Abe Warkentin, after a 1992 visit, wrote to one of the colony members offering to explore land in Manitoba's Interlake area. He also expressed interest in: "studying the economic viability of your colony, working out a plan of action and helping you implement same."[466] As elsewhere, Old Colonists at Durango often opposed MCC's involvement.

MCC policy often has seemed ambivalent towards the Mennonites in Mexico. The variety of individuals who worked for the organization and differences between them accounts for part of this. Some supported the intrusions while others thought they went too far.[467] William Janzen accurately and critically pointed out that the basic approach used by the outsiders involved finding an opening by making contact with the rebellious members of the community. Splits resulted as the presence of the outsiders "forces everyone to choose sides — either to go into the new or remain with the old. . . . People who were once known as rebellious and who were excommunicated for certain actions, can now get away with them after all. That the new church can accept such people implies a basic disrespect for the Old Colony church."[468] Others represented the contrasting opinion, that MCC and other Mennonite groups had every right to force their way into the colonies.[469]

While most other Mennonite groups come to the Old Colonists for purposes of evangelism, MCC has claimed they want to help the conservative Mennonites with their various problems. Yet, in 1992, MCC representatives participated in meetings with "the various North American mission board representatives and non-conference groups who either have workers or an interest and concern for the spiritual welfare of the conservative colony Mennonites in Latin America."[470] Also, in 1992, MCC Canada's executive, "encouraged the mission boards to further explore the possibility of a joint mission effort of mission boards and MCCC."[471] KMCC, MB, EMMC, COM, EMC, and MCCC representatives met to discuss and begin coordinating their programs.

In the 1990s, MCC operated an aggressive, multi-pronged approach in the Mexican colonies. Part of this represented a response to the difficult conditions faced by the Mexican Mennonites. In a space of several years, they suffered from devaluation of the peso, exorbitant inflation, high interest rates, negative effects of free trade, and drought. MCC placed a lot of hope in economic development plans for the colonies. Representatives spoke of tripartite economic development involving MCC Canada, the Canadian-based Mennonite Foundation, and the Mennonite Credit Union in Mexico. They hoped to raise the $250,000 needed for the program in Canada.[472] Projects visualized included a feed mill near Durango, a cucumber and melon business near Casas Grandes, yogurt and ice cream production, greenhouses, and the conversion of corn fields to apple orchards.[473] In addition to its efforts to bring changes to the Mexican Mennonite economy, MCC worked on bringing changes in the areas of religion, education, and culture. They also appear to understand the dynamics of change in the colonies well, including the effect of internal splits. Early in the new millennium, it appears that MCC is attempting to adopt an approach more sensitive to the aspirations of the Old Colonists.

Another group, the Mennonite Brethren, and their Board of Missions and Services (BOMAS), came to Mexico in 1950 when they bought land near the Durango colony. Colony leaders and Mexican law opposed the Mennonite Brethren efforts. And opposition possibly forced a Bible school to close. A nurse also worked with medical needs. In 1973, the MBs moved from near the Durango colony onto the colony itself, opening a school and church there.[474] At least five missionaries worked in the area by 1979. They found a receptive audience among the excommunicated, some who were said to accept salvation. Displeased Old Colony leaders said: "the M.B.'s were not acting in accordance with God's Word in taking people into their fellowship who were in the process of being disciplined by the church (OC)."[475] In 1980, one observer noted that: "The missionaries at Nuevo Ideal seem to feel the opposition of the Old Colony church sharply."[476] Wishing to preserve the integrity of their church and community, the Old Colony did not give in willingly to the foreign influences.

Inroads by the Mennonite Brethren remained relatively small, partly due to the relative liberality of the MBs, and in the 1980s they gave their church and school over to the more conservative Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference. The EMMC church came to Mexico after some Mexican Mennonites, in Ontario to work, became involved with it.[477] The EMMC, formerly the Rudnerweider Mennonite Church, originated in 1937 because of an "evangelistic revival that split the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church in Manitoba."[478] Being Kanadier Mennonites, they felt closely related to other Kanadier Mennonites, including the Old Colony group, and felt a duty to evangelize other Kanadier Mennonites. EMMC churches in Mexico consisted mainly of excommunicated Old Colony people, banned from their former churches either before or after beginning to attend that church.[479] After decades of MB and EMMC efforts at Durango, their progress remained small compared to the progress the Kleine Gemeinde made there in the mid-1990s.[480] Some Old Colony leaders objected to what they thought were EMMC and Kleine Gemeinde tactics of using vehicles and rubber tires to attract members, as those attending these other groups were allowed to use these items.[481] In addition to their presence at Durango, the

EMMC founded a church and school at Campo 79 near Cuauhtémoc.

Other Mennonite groups also came to Mexico. In 1978, the Kentucky-based Mennonitische Gemeinschaft, also known as the Paul Landis Fellowship, started a mission and school on the Manitoba Colony. While they had roots in the Mexican Kleine Gemeinde and the Manitoba EMC, in the early 1980s most of their personnel came from Ontario.[482] The Canadian Evangelical Mission Conference (EMC) established a mission presence near Los Jagueyes colony and a school on the Nord Colony. The Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, or Holdeman, came to Mexico in 1927, from Oklahoma. Their work proved more successful among the Mexicans than the Mennonites, and their clinic at Campo 45 closed by the early 1980s.[483]

Amish from the United States also became involved with the Mexican colonies. They helped the struggling Yermo colony with a loan in the 1950s.[484] And in the 1990s, they loaned money to Buenos Aires colony to finance a daughter colony in Campeche. In 1995, eight Amish participated in an MCC-sponsored tour of the colonies, where the Mexican Mennonites welcomed them. The Amish encouraged them to teach Spanish in their schools, to upgrade their education system, and to take advantage of tourism possibilities by advertising for tourists and selling items to them.[485] Some Mennonites from Mexico in turn visited the Amish, along with MCC workers. Old Colonists appear fascinated by how the Amish have kept their traditions, while managing to earn a living in the modern world.[486] MCC seems to think that the Old Colonists can learn from the Amish. Possibly MCC also believes that the Amish can succeed where MCC has encountered firm resistance. While MCC's reputation in the colonies has suffered from its past aggressive approach, the Amish have come to Mexico without an agenda of introducing far reaching directed change in the traditional Mennonite communities. As a result, the Old Colonists do not view the Amish as a threat.

In addition to the sometimes confusing proliferation of Mennonite denominations on the colonies, non-Mennonite church groups also arrived there. The Canadian Gemeinde Gottes, which came into contact with Mennonite migrants from Mexico in the Aylmer, Ontario area, set up a church and school on the Swift Current colony and a church along the four-lane highway south of Rubio.[487] Americans founded the First Christian Pentecostal Church at Campo 6 ½ on the Manitoba colony, although a Mexican pastor operated it by 1996. Seventh Day Adventists, who had a clinic and church in Cuauhtémoc, also bought land in the Swift Current colony for a church and school. Mormon missionaries also came to the colonies, but without much success.[488]

The Old Colony lost many members to other groups when leaders initiated new migrations to escape otherwise inevitable change. Those who lacked the willingness or ability to participate in these migrations remained behind, abandoned by their former community. This made it easy for the other churches to come in, and they usually did so.

While the more evangelical groups, many of them liberal, predominate among the new church groups, the conservative Reinländer from Manitoba, Canada also came to the Swift Current and Santa Rita colonies.[489] In 1974, when the Old Colony leaders from the Swift Current colony left for Bolivia, largely over the issue of vehicles, some Old Colonists in the Swift Current colony asked

the Old Colony church from the Manitoba colony to come in. They refused, since they did not want to allow cars. The Swift Current people then turned to the Reinländer from Manitoba, Canada, who did establish a presence on the Mexican colony.[490]

After most Santa Rita Old Colony leaders moved to Bolivia in 1967, the Manitoba colony Old Colonists reorganized the church there. But the new leaders and their supporters also left for Bolivia in 1980, again leaving the colony without leadership. The former Old Colonists in Santa Rita then invited the Reinländer from Swift Current colony into their colony. The Reinländer also spread to Buena Vista in the Nuevo Casas Grandes area. The Reinländer appeared quite similar to the Old Colony group that remained left in the Cuauhtémoc area, largely because the Old Colonists in that area gave up many of their old ways.[491] In April of 2001, the Old Colony church reappeared at Santa Rita with the election of three ministers. The Reinländer withdrew from the colony, although it appeared that Reinländer ministers would minister within the Old Colony church.[492]

In other cases too, the Old Colony group has lost its people due to neglect or by leaving. In the case of Yermo, the Manitoba Old Colony leaders stopped looking after the Yermo people's spiritual needs, allowing the Kleine Gemeinde to step in. At Monclova, a mixed Sommerfelder and Old Colony community, the Old Colony did not care for its people, leaving them to the Sommerfelder.

In addition to the MCC-sponsored newspapers, other outsiders have used various media to influence and bring change to the Old Colonists. An independent newspaper, the *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, appeared in 1992 with Abram Siemens as the editor.[493] It saw distribution in the Casas Grandes, Durango, Zacatecas, Campeche, Tamaulipas, and Cuauhtémoc areas, as well as in the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta. Siemens, a Paraguayan Mennonite, university educated in Canada, strove to educate the people and used the newspaper, and the radio program that he hosted, as tools to change attitudes towards education.[494] Also a supporter of the evangelical approach, Siemens long has served as a force for change in the northern colonies.

Radio serves as a major medium used by outsiders to reach the conservative colonies, in spite of the Old Colony prohibition against the use of radios. While of questionable legality in Mexico in the past, religious broadcasting directed at the Old Colonists generally passed as cultural broadcasting. Many organizations, mostly Mennonite, have provided the conservative Mennonites with High German and Low German radio broadcasts since the early 1960s.[495] More recently, in the 1980s, Carsten Brandt had a radio program. George Reimer also initiated a twice weekly Low German and High German radio broadcast in the Cuauhtémoc area.[496] By 1989, Abram Siemens began broadcasting from Cuauhtémoc what became a six night a week German language program.[497] Other programs, with other hosts, also aired in the 1990s, filling the northern Mexican air waves with German programs in the mornings and evenings. Radio programming included advertising, announcements, music, and religious programming produced in Canada. Old Colonist prohibitions against radio use have not prevented the broadcasters from providing the programs. In spite of some interest in becoming involved in radio programming for the Mennonites in Mexico, MCC left radio broadcasting to the individual churches.

A number of bookstores also have operated in the Cuauhtémoc area. With the exception of one at Lowe Farm, supported by the Old Colony,[498] non-Old Colony people began them as part of their program of change. The stores frequently have provided a much larger range of reading and educational materials than allowed by the Old Colony. The General Conference operated a bookstore in Cuauhtémoc until 1982 when its stock went to *Die Mennonitische Post*, which also has sold books in Mexico.[499] In the 1990s, a Mennonite bookstore sold materials in Cuauhtémoc. Lending libraries, located in bookstores and at the MCC offices, also supplied books to Old Colonists.

George Reimer, who no longer works for MCC, could be described as the MCC worker who did not go home. He and several coworkers continue a strong crusade to educate and influence the conservative Mennonites of Mexico, selling books and educational materials at Strassbourg Platz in the Manitoba colony. They also have distributed these to other colonies.[500]

Other Mennonites also have used cassette audio tapes to influence and educate Old Colony Mennonites since the early 1980s.[501] While some leaders prohibited the use of tape players, many people used them. Bookstores and others offered for sale large selections of tapes with spiritual content. Those producing many of these tapes did not have an interest in preserving traditional Old Colony values. Less controversially, portions of the New Testament also became available in Low German on tape.

Some came to believe that the traditional Mennonite family-centred care did not meet the needs of some people. Consequently, non-Old Colony Mennonites created facilities for the aged and the handicapped in the Manitoba colony. A home for older people, the *Altenheim*, opened in 1986.[502] By 1996, after the construction of several additions, its capacity rose to about sixty people.[503] In 1982, a short-lived MCC program worked with handicapped persons. It failed, partly due to opposition from the Old Colony.[504] MCC also participated in talks that led to the establishment of a home for the handicapped. Not surprisingly, Old Colonists did not participate. On March 21, 1993, the *Hoffnungsheim*, a home for the handicapped, opened near the *Altenheim* on the Manitoba colony.[505] Old Colonists have supported the home in recent years.

The Mennonite *Hilfskomitee* (help committee) became involved with the efforts to build facilities in the Cuauhtémoc area. It served as a unifying force, effectively combatting some of the disunity and lack of cooperation that long plagued the area. In 1996, the committee even included some Old Colony representatives.[506] The new "unity" though generally moved in the direction preferred by the more liberal churches.

Persistence and variety have characterized the efforts of the Mennonites who sought to bring change to the Old Colonists in Mexico over the decades. A number of times, outsiders have found themselves expelled or forced from Mexico.[507] And their problems with obtaining permission to remain in Mexico continued throughout the years.[508] Repeatedly renewed visitors' visas allowed some to extend their stays in Mexico. For much of their time in Mexico, some individuals and organizations have not had a legal or official presence there.

Numerous dedicated volunteers have participated in the efforts of the outside groups since the 1940s. Yet, some who filled temporary voluntary service positions lacked sympathy for, or an understanding of, the Old Colony and

Mexican histories and cultures. While some developed trust with the Old Colony people, insensitive actions by a successor could quickly destroy the trust established. Staff turnover also hurt the credibility of outside churches. Most volunteers did not stay long. Few who went to Mexico from Canada or the United States publicly questioned their role in the colonies. Instead, they seemed sure of the correctness of their mission and of the error of the Old Colonists' ways.

The Old Colony leaders have tried to control land ownership by not allowing individual titles. But continuous pressures have taken large areas of the colonies, and in some cases the entire colonies, out of their control. When they lost a landowning member to one of the other churches, they also lost control of the land. The Old Colony group has resorted to legal measures and appeals to the Mexican authorities for protection. Numerous reports of other forms of resistance also exist. Yet, when the pressures became overwhelming, Old Colonists frequently moved on to other colonies.[509]

In spite of movement to the new alternative churches, some who left the Old Colony group continue to feel loyalty to their former church and community. Many left reluctantly, with feelings of sorrow and guilt. Even some who would not consider returning to that church again have staunchly defended some aspects of Old Colony society. Some, for various motives, have carefully guarded access to information about the Old Colonists and scrutinized and discouraged researchers from studying the group. Many, who no longer belong to the Old Colony church, remain Old Colonists in spirit, at least in some cultural matters.

The Old Colony leadership has thought of those who left as lost, as having gone the way of the world. From an outside perspective, the situation looks somewhat different. Probably the vast majority of those who leave the Old Colony join, or at least attend, another Mennonite church. Many seek out churches near the conservative end of the Mennonite spectrum. Leo Driedger describes this phenomenon as the Anabaptist Identification Ladder, an escape route protecting conservative Mennonites from assimilation.[510] Driedger writes that the Old Colonists may look on more urban Mennonites "as a group which provides alternatives for their deviants."[511] Whether or not the Mexican Old Colonists recognize or approve of the connection, in practise the "ladder" exists and works. It also presents a threat though, as it lures many from the Old Colony fold by offering them a comfortable and relatively familiar alternative.

One estimate in 1981 said that Old Colonists comprised about eighty percent of the 41,000 Kanadier Mennonites in Mexico. The rest belonged to other groups.[512] In the 1990s, the Old Colony still counted a large majority of the Mexican Mennonites among its followers, even in the Cuauhtémoc area.[513] However, many of the remaining Old Colonists no longer remained solidly part of their group. Their leaders no longer could enforce discipline to the extent that they wanted. Neither could they roll back unwelcome changes, without losing many more adherents.

Other churches have exerted many effects on the conservative Mennonites of Mexico. Their presence largely accounts for chronic disunity in numerous Old Colony settlements.[514] The outsiders also helped disrupt the dream the Old Colonists carried with them when they left Canada, causing many Old Colonists to flee yet farther. Disruptive forces also reduced the Old Colony leadership's

power and control. The two sides disagree about the desirability of these developments. Disagreement also exists about whether the increasingly capitalistic and individualistic economic system brought by the outside groups constitutes an improvement over the old system.[515] While many of the outsiders justified their interference in the colonies with their stated desire to spread the gospel, in practise they also tried, to a large extent at least, to remake Old Colony society into the image of Canadian Mennonite society. While some welcomed the interventions, doing so jeopardized the traditional Old Colony society. Much of what the other Mennonites introduced proved incompatible with the old vision of living in closed colonies separate from the world.

CHAPTER 6
THE CONTINUING CONNECTION TO CANADA

In recent decades, the former trickle of Mennonites moving to Canada has turned into a steady and growing stream. Some travel north to take advantage of seasonal work, while others seek to remain in Canada permanently. Reasons for the movement to Canada include Canada's favourable immigration policies, Canada's high standard of living, care offered by Mennonites in Canada, the destabilizing effect of outside churches in Mexico, and economic and population pressures in Mexico. Canada has offered many an escape from the mounting pressures in the Mexican colonies. Yet, the contact with Canada also has become a long term contributing factor to the breakdown of the Old Colony system in Mexico and a major determinant of Old Colony history in Mexico.

In 1969, Redekop estimated that about eighteen percent of each generation returned to Canada. By 1977, up to 1,500 Mexican Mennonites entered Canada per year, and between 1962 and 1982, up to 12,000 Old Colony people returned to Canada. By 1996, according to one estimate, "at least 35,000" Mennonites from Mexico lived in Canada.[516]

Most who moved back to Canada before 1950 remained there permanently. Sawatzky estimates that about twenty percent of those who migrated to Mexico returned to Canada by 1940.[517] Fewer early returnees left Durango colony than the Chihuahua colonies, partly because the poor in the northern colonies came to Mexico partially at community expense and had little stake in the venture. In contrast, Durango colony did not assist its members with the original move, and, on the average, their people seemed more committed to making things work in Mexico.[518] Some of the disgruntled left as early as 1923, and by 1927 two or three good sized groups left Chihuahua for Canada.

The Old Colonists also contemplated a mass return to Canada. In the mid-1930s, a delegation travelled to Canada to explore settlement opportunities. And, "In the fall of 1935, Bishops Isaak M. Dyck and Jacob Peters, with 13 ministers and 3 laymen, were consulting by mail with their former lawyers in Morden about a return to 'the old beloved fatherland Canada.'"[519] Yet they did not act as if their experiences in Mexico had defeated them or removed their determination. They asked for their own private schools and exemption from military service, and Bishop Jacob Abrams petitioned Ottawa, with six conditions for their return. They bargained, not as from a position of weakness, but as if they could set the terms of a new agreement.

Quebec, with settlement opportunities in the Abitibi region, looked like a promising destination for a mass return. But they failed to reach an agreement on educational concessions with the government of Quebec. Again in 1937, the Mennonites in Mexico attempted to return to Canada, but no mass exodus took place. Throughout that era, a trickle of people returned to Canada, although some encountered difficulties due to Canadian immigration laws.[520] Canadian Mennonites also tried to help with the return. In 1939 for example, Rev. David Toews, Chairman of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, submitted a list to the Canadian authorities of about thirty-five families who wanted to return to Canada.[521] Many returnees, after only a short stay in Mexico, read-

justed to life in Canada reasonably well. Some of them returned to former Old Colony communities in Canada.[522]

The La Crete and Buffalo Head Prairie area of northern Alberta became a popular destination in the 1930s and 1940s for those still dedicated to the Old Colony ideals. Isolation and the absence of public schools attracted many to that remote area.[523] Later, those who moved there had to choose between leaving or having their communities disintegrate, largely due to the presence of other less conservative Mennonite groups who followed them. Many Old Colonists then moved to British Honduras between 1958 and 1962,[524] and others to Bolivia in 1969 and 1970, "driven to this extreme action, in part at least, by the missionary activities of other Canadian Mennonites."[525]

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, some who had returned to Canada again left for Mexico. They did not trust their military exemption and also wanted to avoid the war issue in Canada.[526] The movement to Canada did not stop completely though even then.

Migration to Canada increased greatly in the 1950s, when many left for Canada in the drought years after 1950 in Mexico. By June of 1954, about 514 families returned from Mexico. Of these, about one hundred families returned to Manitoba and fifty to Saskatchewan. British Columbia became a particularly favoured destination. The refugees from Mexico encountered numerous difficulties, including with crossing the border into Canada.[527] In 1954, families from Mexico worked as migrant farm labourers at Yarrow, Abbotsford, and Burns Lake.[528] Others went to the Fort St. John area of British Colombia.[529] Many arrived at the Canadian border, poor, sick, and without proper documents. Members of the existing Mennonite community in the Fraser Valley and others became concerned about the immigrants. An immigration official described those going to Burns Lake as "a poverty stricken lot, and some of them are living under very poor and unsanitary conditions in that area." He also wrote: "any substantial movement of these people into the areas mentioned should be discouraged."[530] In 1954, the Cuauhtémoc area received heavy rains, ending the drought that had added to pressure for migration.[531] Later, "Local hostility and competition from other immigrants, mainly from India and Asia, made British Colombia less attractive to the Mexican Mennonites after 1956."[532]

Mennonites from Mexico also attempted to establish new permanent settlements elsewhere in Canada. A settlement founded at Matheson, Ontario in 1957, met with various difficulties and dissolved partly due to internal dissension.[533] And in the early 1960s, a settlement at Fort Francis, Ontario, failed to thrive.[534] A settlement founded in the remote Rainy River area of north western Ontario survived with help from the Mennonite Assistance Agency, created for that purpose.[535] This settlement represented the last attempt at group settlement in Canada for the Old Colonists.

Since the 1950s, the migration to Canada has included both seasonal and permanent movement, as opposed to the earlier predominantly permanent migration. Because of the seasonal migration, the travellers carried Canadian influences into the Mexican colonies. Most participating in this second phase of migration travelled to Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta. Few returned to Saskatchewan, largely due to its mechanized agriculture.

The migration to Ontario began in 1952 with a few families.[536] In 1954,

about fifty-five people from five families arrived in a three-ton truck, seeking to take advantage of Ontario's seasonal agricultural work. The first migrants came to the Port Rowan area, near Lake Erie in southern Ontario, where Russländer Mennonites employed them in row crop work.[537] By the 1960s, the destination area expanded to include Port Rowan, Port Burwell, Aylmer, Fairground, Walsingham, St. Thomas, Mt. Salem, Leamington, Wheatley, and Chatham and beyond.[538] Many worked seasonally in Canada, returning to Mexico for the winter.

During the late 1960s and 1970s, the migration to Ontario continued to grow, as Ontario recruited foreign harvest workers. From the mid-1950s to 1977, about 8,000 came to Ontario.[539] Beginning in 1974, Canadian temporary labour importation policies favoured adult Mexican Nationals with Mexican federal passports. Many Mennonites lacked this documentation, and Canada blocked entry to some.[540] In 1978, Canadian restrictions on immigration also reduced the numbers entering. Many Mexican Mennonite parents had failed to register many of their children by the age of two years as potential Canadian citizens. Until the Canadian government agreed to overlook this shortcoming, the numbers of new immigrants declined significantly.

In the 1990s, one estimate guessed that 250 new families per year moved into southern Ontario from the Mexican colonies. With an average of six children per family, this meant 2,000 persons per year arrived, not including the population expansion of those already there. The definition of "new families" included only those who had not lived in Canada during the last ten years. In addition, many others repeatedly spent their summers in Canada and their winters in Mexico.[541]

By December of 1990, possibly 17,000 to 20,000 Mexican Mennonites lived in Ontario.[542] The estimated total rose to 25,050 by 1996, although some Old Colony church officials thought the actual number stood somewhat higher.[543] A 1992 survey determined that, of those surveyed, 92.5 percent possessed status as Canadians.[544]

Most of the recent migrants originate in the Chihuahua colonies. MCC figures state that of new families seen in Ontario during the years from 1993 to 1996, 657 came from Chihuahua, 146 from Durango, forty-nine from Zacatecas, twenty from Tamaulipas, two from Coahuila, and two from Campeche.[545]

For many decades, Manitoba, already the home of many other Mennonites, served as one of the main destinations for the Mexican Mennonites. Mennonites long have constituted a substantial and powerful presence in that province. MCC Canada and many other Mennonite institutions located their offices in Winnipeg, and publication of *Die Mennonitische Post* and *Das Blatt* take place in Steinbach. Since the 1920s, southern Manitoba has provided a warm and welcoming home for many immigrants, since many there share the language and heritage of the Mexican Mennonites.

As with the movement from Mexico to Ontario, the migration to Manitoba has lacked planning or organization. Some have made efforts to bring about organized migrations. In 1977, MCC looked at plans for a large scale migration to northern Manitoba.[546] This initiative possibly developed because Mennonites from Mexico who had relocated to Seminole, Texas faced possible deportation from the United States at that time. Premier Edward Schreyer of Manitoba, who

thought of them as desirable immigrants, wrote to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau asking that the Canadian Government invite the Mennonites to Manitoba.[547] Also, in 1992, Abe Warkentin, KMCC Director, after a visit to Durango, wrote to one of the colonists offering to explore land in the Interlake area of Manitoba.[548] But nothing came of this.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, work in the sugar beet fields helped make Manitoba a popular destination. But later on, fewer Mexican Mennonites arrived in Manitoba and more went to Ontario. By the 1980s, immigration from Mexico to Manitoba again rose greatly. The total influx from 1986 to 1991 may have topped 1,700, even though the numbers dropped sharply in 1989. This drop likely occurred because of a lack of employment in Manitoba and an improved economic situation in Mexico. In 1988, only about one-quarter of those who came to Manitoba obtained well-paying employment. At that time, Manitoba suffered from a drought, which resulted in a work shortage and layoffs. More families then began to choose Alberta and Ontario as destinations. Although by 1989 economic and employment conditions in Manitoba again improved, levels of immigration remained lower than before. A rise in immigration, although not to the previously high level, again occurred by 1996, when Manitoba MCC workers saw sixty or more new families from Mexico.[549]

After the leaders and many of the people from the Swift Current colony left for Bolivia, many came to Canada in the mid-1980s. More recently, most coming to Manitoba originated in the Manitoba and Swift Current colonies. Few came from Tamaulipas or Campeche. And most who left Durango travelled to Ontario. Seasonal workers, in the 1990s, preferred to go to Ontario or Alberta instead of to Manitoba. But the latter province received a higher proportion of those who intended to remain in Canada permanently.[550]

Although Winkler, Manitoba long attracted many immigrants, high housing costs there pushed immigrants into surrounding areas by the 1990s. The Reinland School Division in the Altona area and the Morris McDonald School Division both were more rural and offered lower housing costs. As a result, their population of Mexican Mennonites may have surpassed that of Winkler.[551]

Alberta became the third major Canadian destination for the Mennonites from Mexico. Not many voyaged to southern Alberta early on because the federal government brought Aboriginals to work in the sugar beet industry there. But, by the 1970s, movement to that region grew. Alberta increasingly became a destination in the 1980s and 1990s as work shortages occurred elsewhere, although the Alberta labour market also proved unstable at times. By June 1993, MCC estimated that 500 families lived in the area, which possibly meant about 3,000 people. About 200 families had remained there for five years or more. It appeared that more than ninety percent of the Kanadier there held Canadian citizenship, with the rest sponsored by family members. From 1994 to 1996, MCC dealt with about 450 new families, and by 1996 about 1,200 families from Mexico lived in Alberta. This number included many small, young families. Most had settled in the Vauxhall, Taber, and Grassy Lake areas of southern Alberta, although some moved to scattered spots in Alberta. Placement in Saskatchewan of seven families from Alberta took place in 1996.[552]

The Mexican Mennonites in Alberta travelled directly from Mexico or indirectly via Manitoba or Ontario. In the early 1990s, the immigrants came mostly

from Nord Colony and Ontario.[553] In 1996, recent immigrants included many Reinländer from the Santa Rita colony, although some came from Zacatecas, the Casas Grandes area, and Durango.

In 1996, an estimate of the total number of Mexican Mennonites in Canada placed their number at 35,000. If 25,000 lived in Ontario, that left 10,000 for Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Colombia. These numbers appeared realistic. Most lived in Canada permanently, although some, along with new additions every year, moved back and forth to Mexico.

Mexican Mennonites, in all three of their primary destination provinces, have resisted blending with the Canadian milieu. Many seek out conservative churches, including the Canadian Old Colony church, which is not the same Old Colony church the immigrants knew in Mexico. The Old Colony church in Canada exercises considerably less control over the people than the churches in Mexico traditionally have.[554] The Canadian version of the church also offers Sunday School for the children.[555] Organized in 1936, the Canadian Old Colony church includes some who never moved to Mexico and some who returned to Canada. It has not accepted excommunicated members from Mexico until they settled matters with the church in Mexico. To do that, the excommunicated sometimes needed to return to Mexico and promise their church there that they would remain in Mexico, even if they intended not to do so. Efforts made by the Canadian church to build a relationship with the Old Colony church in Mexico failed to bring any official connection by 1996.[556] Various observers note that relations between the Canadian and Mexican churches have improved considerably recently, with increased cooperation seen.

Old Colony ministers came to Ontario from Saskatchewan and Manitoba in the 1950s, to minister to the immigrants from Mexico. Their first ministerial election in Ontario took place in 1960.[557] By 1995, eight congregations included 2,536 members and a total of 5,824 persons.[558] Thousands more also have had contact with the Canadian Old Colony church. The number of members has increased substantially since 1995.

Various other Mennonite groups appealed to the Old Colonists from Mexico. Six churches constituted the EMMC presence in Ontario by 1996. The EMC also founded several churches in that province. The Reinland Mennonite Fellowship had three churches. And the New Reinländer, a conservative group that split from the Canadian Old Colony in 1984, operated three churches. Other churches included two Christian Gospel Mennonite, one Sommerfelder, an Old Sommerfelder, and a Conservative Mennonite Fellowship group. The Gemeinde Gottes also had a church in the area. The more liberal General Conference and Mennonite Brethren groups tried working with the Mennonites from Mexico, but did not attract many in the early days.[559]

By the early 1990s, of the several thousand Mexican Mennonites in Winkler, Manitoba, only a few hundred belonged to churches there. Those who did join mainly attended the conservative Reinländer, Old Colony, and Zion Mennonite churches. In Alberta, the La Crete Old Colony began a church in Vauxhall. Other churches attended included the Sommerfelder, Kleine Gemeinde, EMC, General Conference, and Mennonite Brethren. The Interlake Mennonite Fellowship also founded a school and church in the Grassy Lake area some years ago.[560]

Other Mennonites frequently complain about the lack of church attendance among the immigrants from Mexico. According to one estimate, in Ontario in 1996, one-third attended church regularly, one-third went some of the time, and one-third did not attend at all.[561] Quite likely, the promise made at their baptism, not to leave the Old Colony church, influences some not to attend other churches. Some of the excommunicated may not attend because they believe that they cannot enter heaven or attend church as long as the excommunication remains in place.[562] Differences in permitted behaviours present another barrier to church attendance. Most Canadian Mennonite churches use musical instruments and the women cut their hair and do not wear head coverings, violating Old Colony norms.[563] Critical attitudes and prejudice among some Canadian Mennonites towards their brethren from Mexico also may account for the new arrivals' resistance to attending church in Canada. Possibly the largest reason though simply is that many do not want to go to church, since large numbers also do not attend church in Mexico.

Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta all have seen summer gatherings of the Mennonites from Latin America. Called *Kanadiertreffen*, the first took place in Manitoba in 1989.[564] These have served as an opportunity for the immigrants to meet as a group.

Even though the immigrants left the conservative Mexican colonies behind, they have refused to completely embrace Canadian life. They have insisted on maintaining their separate culture, to a point. Immigrant parents have demonstrated concern about negative and assimilating effects of the public schools. And the banning of prayers and religious instruction in schools also has caused objections to the public schools.[565] The greatest development of alternatives has taken place in Ontario.

Although their churches differ in some matters of theology, Old Colony and several conservative evangelical churches in Ontario have sought to provide separate educational opportunities for the Mennonites from Mexico. Beginning in the 1970s, the Old Colony and EMMC conducted Saturday German school in their churches. For years, they also discussed opening private schools, made quite easy by Ontario law. In 1988, the Old Colony church at Dresden started a home schooling program, and by 1996 six Old Colony schools in southern Ontario offered kindergarten to grade twelve. Although most teachers lacked formal qualifications, the schools needed to meet government standards. They received no government funding, relying on tuition fees for their funds. For the most part, they used the Christian Light Education curriculum, prepared by conservative Virginia Mennonites. The EMC also founded a school at Mount Salem in about 1976, and the Conservative Mennonite Conference began a school at Calton in 1984. In Alberta, the Mennonites from Mexico started one private school by 1994.[566] Whether or not they remain in the Old Colony church, many of the new arrivals wish to retain control over their children's educational experiences.

Severe attendance and academic retardation problems caused difficulties in the schools attended by the Mennonites from Mexico in all three provinces.[567] In Ontario, truancy officials went to the fields to find absent children. In December, once the field work finished, large numbers arrived at school, only to leave for Mexico in January.[568] Many students did not continue beyond grade eight,

and some parents obtained work permits so children could leave school before the legal age. A 1992 Ontario survey indicated that about one-third of the school age children had not attended school in Canada. One-third of the parents did "not believe in secondary school education," and another one-fifth were "unsure of the value of high school."[569]

Ontario's public school system catered to the newcomers. It attracted them by hiring a Low German speaking attendance counsellor, using a seasonal harvest leave program, and offering numerous vocational programs designed to keep the Mennonites in school after grade eight. The programs claimed some successes, and overall progress seemed present.[570]

In Manitoba, school personnel attempted to make education more friendly. Many teachers, Mennonites themselves, speak Low German and could speak this to the children and parents.[571] And liaison workers replaced attendance officers to work with the parents of the children to help them understand the education program. Parents often did not support the school system, fearing that education would contaminate their lives.[572] Teen-aged girls generally proved willing to attend school, but absenteeism problems abounded with teen-aged boys. Some already completed school in Mexico before the Canadian rules forced them to again attend school in Canada. Alberta schools, where MCC and the RCMP enforced the school attendance laws, also experienced attendance problems. As elsewhere, parents attitudes often added to the problems.

The work performed by the migrants in Canada has included tedious manual field work and other low paying jobs that many Canadians refused to do. Over the years, the work changed somewhat, with changing crops and increasing mechanization. Some Mennonites from Mexico have worked as tradesmen and factory workers, particularly in the numerous factories of southern Ontario and Manitoba. Even when they found steady work and adequate housing, adults often did not value that security and stability. These values seemed foreign to many. On the other hand, many of those who permanently moved to Canada wanted to own their own farms or other businesses. And many achieved their goals, soon doing well. Opposition to working on Sundays or religious holidays sometimes caused problems for the Mennonites. Some lost jobs over this issue, while others gave in and worked when asked to.[573]

Low pay and poor working conditions once plagued the field workers from Mexico. Farm workers often lacked the protection of federal or provincial labour codes. Minimum wage laws only began to apply to Ontario farm workers in 1975. Some other foreign seasonal workers received greater protection in the areas of housing, pay, and general treatment than did the Mennonites.[574]

By the 1990s, wages seemed quite good, particularly if various members of large families could obtain work. In 1996, a father, mother, and five children aged fifteen and older, in Canada for the fifth summer, worked for seven or eight dollars an hour. Working about fifty-five hours a week, they could earn $10,000 a month.[575]

Child labour often became an issue, since children as young as six years of age worked long days in the fields. Child labour laws did not apply to agriculture. In 1973, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, Robert Andras, spoke about the exploitation of children where only the father received payment.[576] Some or all of the children's pay usually went to their father until the minors

reached twenty years of age or married.[577] A 1979 Immigration report said that farmers preferred hiring family units: "A cucumber picking machine, for example, holds six people and less problems are encountered when everyone on the machine is from one family. The extra children walk behind the machine to pick up the falling vegetables."[578]

Language, education, and literacy problems long have existed among the Mennonites from Mexico. The contrast between the Mexican milieu and that of Canada has accentuated these difficulties for the new arrivals. For several decades, helping agencies in Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan have offered a large variety of programs to needy adults.[579] Especially Ontario developed numerous programs designed to teach adults English. In spite of good aptitude in various manual occupations, language difficulties sometimes made trade certification difficult.[580] Women often learned the least English, since they spent more time at home and less in the surrounding environment.[581]

Some Mexican Mennonites who live in southern Manitoba learned almost no English, as often the men worked for Mennonite employers and the women stayed home. Clearly, since some even advertised in Mexico for workers, employers valued the Mexican Mennonites' work skills and did not consider lack of English language ability as a barrier to employment. Many of the better jobs though required a knowledge of English. While both men and women took part in various English classes offered, many viewed education as not good. Some also thought themselves incapable of learning.[582] In Alberta, some Mennonites from Mexico participated in English as Second Language programs, although a funding cut took place in 1996.[583]

Many immigrants lived in inadequate housing. Particularly in Ontario, some lived year round in poor housing, including in bunkhouses designed for seasonal use, refurbished tobacco kilns, old school buses, and barns. Frequently, more than one family occupied single family dwellings. Some moved into "rent-geared-to-income units" in Aylmer, where some dwellings included up to six bedrooms to accommodate large families. Menno Lodge, a nonprofit organization that worked with MCC, helped provide housing for many.[584]

In Manitoba, the availability of affordable housing possibly became more important than employment as a determinant of where the immigrants chose to live. High housing prices in Winkler in 1996 deterred people from moving there. The nearby Altona and Morris areas offered more affordable housing, causing many to move there.[585]

Critics of the Mennonites from Mexico have focussed on social problems among the new arrivals. Some portray the new arrivals as deliberately dependent on Canadian financial support systems. A common position depicts all Mexican Mennonites as heavy users of Employment Insurance. This stereotyping overlooks the fact that Employment Insurance operates as an insurance program, which will not pay benefits unless applicants first have worked substantial periods of time. Since many immigrants work at seasonal jobs, they often do qualify for Employment Insurance. Relatively few Mexican Mennonites have depended on welfare, except for some who could not work due to health problems or did not work long enough to collect Employment Insurance. While many immigrants initially rely on support programs for part of the year, in time, most work at full-time employment.

Canadians, including other Mennonites, sometimes have resented the Mexican Mennonites' use of social programs. Sawatzky described the Mexican Mennonite as a peasant who viewed social programs as generous and paternalistic, and "If a bit of cunning should be involved in obtaining the maximum personal advantage from it, this too is a peasant trait."[586] Contrary to the stereotype of abuse, in 1975 Martens found that the Mennonites from Mexico considered taking welfare as disgraceful and that most would "take any kind of work rather than apply for welfare assistance."[587] Employers in various parts of Canada who have experience with the Old Colonists also view the newcomers as honest and desired workers.

Poverty has become a common trait of this group's members, whose plight some have compared to the migrant workers in John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath."[588] The Mennonites' destitution received a lot of media attention in Ontario in the 1990s. The situation was not new though. Already in 1973, a Department of Manpower and Immigration report criticized farmers who hired Mennonite labourers "for providing 'intolerable and inhumane' working conditions."[589] Some Ontario Mennonite farmers fall among those accused of exploiting the immigrants.[590]

Some observers have argued that the immigrants do not suffer more from social problems than do people in the larger society.[591] However, numbers for 1994 from Ontario's Elgin County indicated that, while Mennonites comprised nine percent of the county's population, they accounted for about twenty-five percent of Children's Aid cases that required foster care.[592] A counsellor blamed this partly on the use of corporal punishment, called for as a method of discipline by their religious beliefs. Incidents of sexual abuse and incest also occurred. Spousal abuse also occurred. An estimated ten percent of families received counselling for adjustment issues.[593] Critics of the Old Colony often fail to point out that these and other social problems also occur in practically all other segments of society.

Many who work with the Mexican Mennonites have commented on their problems of adjustment to Canada. Some comments demonstrate the presence of extreme and unfair sentiments towards the new arrivals. Someone roughly quoted a Morden, Manitoba RCMP Corporal as saying: "I am a Christian. The Bible speaks about heathens. These people from Mexico are again heathen."[594] He estimated that the Mexican Mennonites accounted for seventy to seventy-five percent of RCMP problems and calls. Less dramatically but still controversially, one social worker remarked, "These people are still children in a lot of ways."[595] The Superintendent of the Garden Valley School Division, Elmer Bartel, in 1991 critically described a difference in values between Canada and Mexico. He suggested that Mexican macho attitudes had rubbed off on the Mexican Mennonites and said, "rubber tires are taboo but drinking and infidelity are not dealt with . . . when they come here they find the direct opposite: conservative approach to machinery is not an issue but excessive drinking and immorality and sexual abuse are."[596] The involvement of Mennonites from Mexico in drug smuggling also damaged their image in Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada. Unfortunately, descriptions of the Old Colonists often fail to mention the large number who live honestly, true to their beliefs and traditions.

Many have viewed the patriarchal Mexican Mennonite church and family

systems as dysfunctional. Life in Canada brings pressure to alter relationships between men and women. The resulting changes in traditional gender roles may threaten some men.[597] Abuse also often seems connected with drinking. Some Old Colonists, including some teenagers and women, suffer from alcoholism.[598] Most Mennonite families who arrive from Mexico do function fairly well. Abe Fehr, who worked with the new arrivals in southern Alberta in the 1990s, estimated that only five percent or fewer of the arrivals in Alberta presented problems.

Dysfunctional actions committed by Mennonites from Mexico sometimes have become the subject of newspaper articles. Yet the Old Colony leaders and communities in Mexico and Canada unequivocally condemn spousal abuse, sexual abuse, and incest. Church and community norms do not condone these practices. Neither do they support child abuse, as least not by their definition of child abuse. They quite widely do accept corporal punishment of children as a valid means of discipline. On occasion, the punishment of their children has brought the conservative Mennonites or former Mennonites in contact with the Canadian authorities. Complaints of abuse, other than those related to disciplining of children, often occur in families judged as dysfunctional by both Canadian and Old Colony standards. While abuse occurs in all cultures, observers seem more interested when it occurs in minority cultures such as that of the conservative Mennonites.

In 1975, Martens thought that the immigrants suffered their most severe adjustment problems in matters of health. She wrote: "Traditional attitudes towards doctors and dentists, birth control, immunization, prenatal care, child raising, and nutrition still prevail."[599] A 1979 Department of Immigration report, possibly inaccurately, spoke of frequent intermarriage within the group. It also claimed that, "Many families have several children with cataracts, co-ordination problems, and the appearance of dull normal intelligence. . . . their ability to learn is limited and they apparently respond poorly to occupational training."[600] Other observers who worked with the new arrivals did not concur with this unflattering description.

Various people have noticed a lack of self-esteem among the Mexican Mennonites in Canada. This may partly result from growing up in a society that condemns pride as sinful. Their minority presence in the dominant Canadian society also likely contributes to Old Colonist feelings of inferiority. In many respects, they stand out from the Canadian world around them. A lack of acceptance as equals by some other Mennonites also does not help raise the newcomers' self esteem. And once in Canada, unlike in Mexico, they lack the support and security of their closed society.[601]

Community feelings in Canada often have run against the Mennonites. One Ontario school official stated: "We whites treat the Mexican Mennonites very well. . . . In another generation, they might be more like everyone else, although I don't think they will get rid of the fact that they are Mennonite."[602] Some opposed the special services provided to the immigrants in a language other than English.[603] And someone, possibly with a sense of humour, changed the Aylmer, Ontario population sign to read: "Population 6,499 Mexicans, 1 Canadian." Other Mennonites also sometimes have resented the new arrivals. Martens noted that they, "with their variety of social problems seem to threaten the

Russländers' reputation as quiet, law-abiding, and self-sufficient people. Perhaps for this reason some . . . do not appear too sympathetic."[604] The children have stood in the front line of contact with Canadian society, facing social pressure to change many things, including their traditional clothing.[605] At the same time, their parents often have attempted to hold their offspring in the old ways. Living between the two worlds, with their conflicting values and expectations, can cause long-lasting adjustment problems for many Mennonites from Mexico, adults and children alike.

In addition to the immigrants from Mexico, Mennonites have arrived in Canada from other Latin American countries. Many, and probably most of them, first moved to those countries from Mexico. No accurate count of their numbers exists. These immigrants face issues similar to those confronted by the new arrivals from Mexico.

Numerous reasons account for the movement from the Mexican colonies to Canada after World War II. Most of these qualify either as a push or pull factor – a push from Mexico or a pull from Canada. Certainly most of the movement would not have taken place had tens of thousands not held Canadian citizenship or successfully managed to pursue a claim to citizenship. Yet, the open border itself does not qualify as a pull factor. Instead, Canada's immigration and citizenship policies only regulated the flow created by other factors. Discussion of these policies will follow later on.

Economic difficulties in Mexico have served as the primary push factor. Landlessness has contributed greatly to poverty in the colonies. While movement to Canada has helped relieve land shortages, migration to other colonies and finding alternate employment to farming also have eased the financial distress in Mexico. In some respects, the movement from the Mexican colonies resembles the urbanization of Canada's once predominant farm population during the past decades. The limited potential of a farm economy to support large populations partly explain both phenomena. Yet, many Old Colonists remain reluctant to embrace life away from the colonies.

Repeated droughts have added to the economic problems and the migration. A report in 1995 said: "In many colonies . . . as many as half the families are packing up and heading north amid what are being called the worst conditions for farming since the Mennonites first set foot on this land in 1922."[606] In the two years until 1996, about twenty to twenty-five families had gone to Canada from the small community of El Capulin.[607] Even some well established farmers considered leaving as conditions worsened.

The Mexican currency, the peso, also repeatedly lost much of its purchasing power in the last several decades, adding to the financial difficulties suffered by the Mennonites. A devalued peso made difficult the repayment of loans, frequently due in American dollars. As a result, some formerly well-off families joined the movement to Canada. Some who trusted the *Waisenamt* or Mexican banks with their money also lost heavily.[608] Additionally, NAFTA hurt some Mennonites in Mexico. The trade agreement reduced incomes by lowering crop prices to world market levels and removing government subsidies on input costs. The long term effects of NAFTA on the Mennonites appear more complex.

Chronic poverty in Mexico ranks high among the motivations for movement to Canada.[609] Even many of those who find off farm employment remain

poor. Notorious for its low wages, the Mexican minimum wage stood at less than four Canadian dollars per day in the mid-1990s.[610] Once people see the living conditions in Canada, dissatisfaction grows with Mexico's economic environment. The colony leaders do not deserve much of the blame for poverty in the colonies placed on them by some observers. The elected leaders, both religious and secular, also lack control over most economic factors.

Not only the poor have moved to Canada, seasonally or permanently. Kelly Hedges wrongly concluded that, "only poor Old Colonists migrate seasonally to Canada."[611] This statement lacks accuracy. Some migrants with land and reasonable financial prospects have taken advantage of the opportunity to earn money in Canada to improve their situation in Mexico. One family, which worked in Ontario in 1996, owned 300 acres of good land and a large dairy herd in Mexico. Possessing Canadian dollars made their lives in Mexico easier. Persons who did not appear destitute already participated in the migration earlier on.[612] A 1992 survey indicated that, of the survey population living in Canada, fourteen percent still owned a farm or house in Mexico.[613] Often the migrants handled their time in Canada efficiently, living as cheaply as possible, minimizing government deductions from their pay, and leaving when the work ended. Canadian regulations exempted those who worked in Canada for only a short time from paying Canadian income taxes.[614] In 1996, one Durango resident said that almost all of the new buildings built on the colony belonged to people who returned from Canada with money.[615] Not only the destitute have gone to Canada. The migrants include many of the more ambitious who view Canada as a source of income that can help them survive or even prosper in Mexico.

Dissatisfaction with the conservative churches and colonies in Mexico also has pushed many to leave for Canada.[616] Some object to the colony rules and want greater control over their lives. One writer described the movement of some of the relatively affluent people as related to the "antediluvian colony rules."[617] In the past, many came to Canada because their church excommunicated them, and others suffered excommunication because they came to Canada. When they returned to their colony in Mexico, they often repented for their "transgressions" with the *Lehrdienst.* Elder Dyck, of the Manitoba colony, described those who returned to Canada as "now sitting calmly in the lap of the world . . . can send their children to the public schools, come back to us as skilled car drivers, and what would be punishable in the congregation, they can all use."[618] In recent decades, the prohibitions against the movement weakened considerably.[619] In 1996, one bishop, whose own son lived in Canada, somewhat reluctantly approved of spending time in Canada. Excommunication for migrating to Canada became rare by the 1990s.

In addition to the push factors in Mexico, numerous pull factors have originated in Canada. Canada's higher wages, prosperity, and wealth attracted many over the years. Even the relatively low wages paid for manual field work allow large families to earn substantial amounts of money during the agricultural season. The wages also attract young adults, single or married, who arrive in Canada searching for work. Often penniless, they bring energy, optimism, and determination to succeed.

Canada's social programs also have attracted Old Colonists and other conservative Mennonites to Canada. The post World War II decades brought ex-

panding social programs in Canada, while Mexico did not develop an effective social safety net. In Canada, large families collected substantial amounts of family allowance, although to do so required longer stays in Canada and school attendance.[620] Families could legally collect Canadian family allowance during winters spent in Mexico, since temporary absences of less than one year allowed them to receive the money.[621] While these and other payments received in Canada may not appear large to middle class Canadians, even modest sums of money can make a substantial difference to those who formerly lived in poverty in Mexico.

Canada's medicare programs also served as a powerful attraction. In 1996, one poverty-stricken man, with a wife and six children less than twelve years of age, planned to move to Canada. The husband and the children held Canadian citizenship, but the wife did not. He had lost several fingers due to infections, apparently caused by chemicals used in apple production. Although other fingers became seriously infected, he kept on working in the Mexican apple orchards with his heavily bandaged hands. To make things worse, his employer cut off his pay. The man had not repaid money borrowed from his employer to pay for medical treatment for his wife. For this family, Canada appeared as a refuge where they could obtain desperately needed relief from their life of worsening poverty and disease in Mexico.[622]

The Old Age security programs offered by Canada also have acted as a magnet for some Mexican Mennonites. Mexico lacks an equivalent universal program to that of Canada, leaving many older persons in poverty. Some people, described as "old and worn out" moved to Canada in search of an easier life.[623]

Other Mennonites in Canada have created one of the largest attractions for the Mennonites of Mexico. Various sympathetic denominations and organizations established a "net of care" for the immigrants. MCC long served as the primary organization involved with the Mexican Mennonites in Canada.[624] That organization and its programs have helped provide a soft landing for tens of thousands of immigrants.

The Kanadier Mennonite Colonization Committee, established by MCC in 1975, its predecessor the Mexico Concerns Committee, and its successor the Kanadier Mennonite Concerns Committee directed MCC's work with the Kanadier in Mexico and Canada.[625] Conservative Mennonite groups in Canada participated extensively in the national and provincial MCC committees that worked with the Mennonites from Mexico. The final word on most aspects of their programs remained with MCC though, which also represented the more liberal groups.

While MCC policies stated that the organization did not encourage the Mennonites from Mexico to relocate to Canada, their services became one of the reasons for the immigration. MCC workers paternalistically assumed, sometimes correctly, that the immigrants could not care for their various needs in Canada. MCC programs did much to meet the newcomers' needs.

Several motivations drove the Canadian Mennonites in their efforts to work with the Mennonites from Mexico. Consistent with their reputation as a caring people, they sought to alleviate the suffering of the new arrivals. At the same time, some of those welcoming the Mexican Mennonites to Canada also encour-

aged the new arrivals to accept religious and social changes. Much of the same agenda that Canadian Mennonites exported to the Mexican colonies also surfaced in the programs in Canada. Working with the needy provided the opportunity to influence the new arrivals. Additionally, a desire to minimize the damage done by the Mexican Mennonites to the Mennonite name in Canada served as a motivation for involvement. Canadian Mennonites, who generally functioned as positive and productive members of Canadian society, found their good reputation threatened by the unconventional migrants who shared the Mennonite name.[626] By dealing with the immigrants' adjustment problems, the interveners likely successfully minimized damage to the Mennonite image in Canada. Ironically, policies designed to ease the problems created by the Mexican Mennonites for the other Mennonites also added to the size of the movement to Canada.

Although MCC Canada once held responsibility for work with the immigrants, provincial MCC organizations later took over this work. MCC Canada, and particularly William Janzen of the Ottawa office, continued as an active advocate for the Mennonites from Mexico with the Canadian government.[627] Possibly the most important work performed in Ottawa involved easing the way into Canada for the immigrants. Without MCC efforts, thousands may not have entered or remained in Canada. In 1987, MCC estimated that they dealt with 8,000 cases of regaining "Canadian legal status" over the previous twelve years.[628]

MCC has actively helped the immigrants obtain Canadian documents, allowing them to stay in Canada. The organization's policies, about whether they should help those still in Mexico with documentation, often seemed contradictory. With Canadian government encouragement, MCC personnel helped documentation agents in Mexico with their work.[629] Conscious of the "pull" effect this could exert, MCC spoke of efforts made to counter this, by supporting the Mexican colonies through its presence there. MCC also did not want to help seasonal workers migrate, but willingly helped those wanting to move to Canada permanently. The issue of whether and how MCC should involve itself in documentation work became controversial, even within MCC. Some questioned MCC's involvement in this area.[630] In the opinion of an MCC worker in Mexico, the documentation work in Canada "encouraged people to think in terms of leaving Mexico rather than working hard to address the situation there."[631] When MCC workers encouraged the Canadian government to provide better services to the Mennonites in Mexico, this also might have increased immigration. In 1976, plans called for an MCC representative to "resume discussions with the officials and to press further for the provision of better services, including the possibility of setting up a Consulate office near the colonies."[632]

For many years, MCC has worked with the Mennonites from Mexico in all three provinces. In Ontario, MCC originally became involved when they brought relief aid to immigrants who settled in the Kapuskasing, New Liskard, and Rainy River areas.[633] The earliest program directed at helping migrant workers came from the EMMC church in December 1965. Staff persons David and Helen Friesen worked with the needy. In 1973, the Aylmer Information and Self-Help Centre opened, staffed by the Friesens and others and partially financed by MCC Ontario. By 1975, the centre helped many. But because of EMMC involvement, Old Colony and Sommerfelder leaders did not support the work. These leaders

viewed the EMMC mission work as a threat to their "traditional 'way of life.'"[634] The challenge also extended to the Old Colony's spiritual beliefs and religious practices.

The Ontario Mennonite Immigrant Assistance Committee (OMIAC) became the advisory committee to MCC for the work with the Mexican Mennonites in Ontario. Various churches, including the Canadian Old Colony, EMMC, Sommerfelder, and EMC groups, participated. In 1977, MCC hired David Friesen, largely to work with immigration documentation work.[635] In the program proposal, William Janzen stated: "the self-help emphasis should be so strong that some of the workers might have worked themselves out of a job in two years."[636] The two years soon passed though, and in 1982 Janzen wrote: "I would predict that if MCC withdrew from documentation work in Ontario, the situation would soon be very messy, fraught with illegalities. . . . It would be a terrible situation!"[637] By then, MCC acted as one of the major players in the scene. In 1980, George Rempel succeeded David Friesen. Rempel, a former Old Colony teacher from Mexico, remained active in the southern Ontario program until 1990.[638] Victor Fast began work as the program development coordinator in 1988.[639]

A major expansion of MCC services to the immigrants in Ontario took place around 1987.[640] In addition to programs at Aylmer and Leamington, MCC offered services at Chatham, Langton, Virgil, Frogmore, St. Jacobs, and Seaforth. By 1996, MCC provided most assistance services at three locations: Aylmer, Chatham, and Leamington.

Programs offered counselling and help with documentation, housing, education, job skills development, health issues, and social services.[641] From 1977 to 1995, OMIAC personnel dealt with possibly 9,000 applications for citizenship or landed immigrant status. They also handled about 16,000 other documentation issues, 5,000 medical matters, and 4,000 dealings with social service agencies. In addition, about 8,000 students took advantage of English as a Second Language programs.[642] After initially relying on the various programs, usually families did well by the time they lived in Canada for five years. Many then no longer needed help.[643] Large numbers blended into Canadian life, making substantial economic contributions.

In Manitoba, before MCC involvement, various individuals worked on documentation matters for the Mennonites from Mexico. Klassen Travel Service also did some of this work.[644] However the demand for immigration work grew strongly during the 1980s, as the number of immigrants without proper documentation increased.

MCC Manitoba began providing services to the immigrants in 1986 through MCC Family Services in Winkler, where Bruce Wiebe worked as the program coordinator from 1986 to 1993. The introduction of the MCC work coincided with a large growth in the movement from Mexico to Manitoba. Consequently, by 1991, 16,000 people used the MCC services.[645] Assistance concentrated primarily on matters of documentation, employment, family finances, and gaining access to social programs.[646] MCC briefly expanded some services to Altona in the late 1980s.[647] Funding ran out for the full program in Winkler by 1994, and reduction of services took place. For a time at least, services continued on a part-time basis only.[648]

In Alberta, by 1970 if not earlier, Rev. Jacob H. Reimer of Coaldale helped

people with documentation work.[649] Faced with rising immigration, MCC Alberta organized a Kanadier Concerns Committee in 1991. Voluntary service staff members Abe and Kathy Fehr, themselves Mennonites from Mexico, began working in Lethbridge in 1992. For many years, they offered a wide range of services, including help with documentation, orientation, employment placement, and education, to the immigrants. Although the families from Mexico who arrived in the area before the introduction of MCC programs managed without that help, MCC workers performed many useful services since they became involved.[650]

Using the various newspapers that reached the colonies, MCC workers told people in Mexico that they should not come to Canada without having their documents in order. Potential migrants also received warnings about employment, housing, and other economic difficulties they might encounter in Canada.[651] MCC tried to bring order to the movement and prevent difficulties for all concerned.

Without doubt though, MCC's programs greatly increased the movement from Mexico to Canada. In addition to MCC's services, which attracted some Mexican Mennonites to Canada, MCC workers advocated more generous immigration policies and smoothed relations between the immigrants and government officials. Without the intervention of MCC, the generous extension of the time period for registering as Canadian citizens in 1977, and other helpful things, might not have occurred. Quite likely, if not for the involvement of MCC, thousands, and possibly tens of thousands, of those who permanently moved to Canada would not have done so.

To a point, MCC involvement with the Mennonites from Mexico in Canada has formed part of the same program of spiritual conversion and cultural reform carried out in the Mexican colonies by the Canadian Mennonites. Some of the same organizations and individuals worked on both programs. The involvement of conservative Mennonite groups in delivering services to the Mennonites from Mexico helped legitimize MCC's work. The organization carefully chose the staff members to deal with the Old Colonists. Almost without exception, those hired spoke Low German, and in some cases, they came from an Old Colony background. However, none remained active members of the Mexican Old Colony church while they worked for MCC.

It would be too cynical to suggest that the only or primary reason for the MCC program in Canada was to bring cultural and religious change to the Mexican colonies. Without doubt, Canadian Mennonites felt genuine concern for the welfare of those who arrived in Canada. And much worthwhile work with the immigrants resulted. Motivation for providing the help programs also came from the Canadian Mennonites' desire to protect their good reputation in Canada. However, some Canadian Mennonites have known that change in the Mexican colonies would result as a side effect of their work in Canada. Even if the migrant workers returned to Mexico, they carried the seeds of discontent and change back with them to the closed colonies.

The multiplicity of push and pull factors that have contributed to the movement to Canada demonstrates that responsibility for this phenomena does not belong only with the Mexican Old Colony community and the Mexican economy. A variety of other reasons exist. High among these reasons ranks the role played by Canadian Mennonite churches.

CHAPTER 7
THE OPEN DOOR TO CANADA

Throughout the decades, the Canadian border remained surprisingly open, making movement to Canada an option for the refugees from Mexico. Yet, many could not enter or remain in Canada without first manoeuvring through a maze of legislative and bureaucratic obstacles. The laws and regulations permitting or prohibiting the Mennonites from entering or reentering Canada appeared complex and not always rational. They also changed frequently.

Prior to 1947, since Canadian citizenship did not yet exist, those born in Canada qualified as British subjects. Under the Naturalization Act of 1914, a person born outside of Canada became a British subject, and in effect a Canadian citizen, if the father was Canadian and the parents were married at the time of the birth.[652] Although this opened the door to Canada for many Mennonites born in Mexico, the greatest obstacle to entering Canada arose because Canada did not recognize the validity of Mennonite church marriages. Unless a civil marriage ceremony took place before the birth, the child lost its claim to Canadian citizenship. Canadian authorities justified this ruling by pointing out that Mexico itself did not recognize the Mennonite church weddings. This however overlooked the fact that Mexican law did consider these children as legitimate if the parents participated in a civil ceremony, even after the birth of the child. The Canadian government chose to follow the precedent of the Mexican law only so far as it removed the claim to citizenship. It appears that the Mennonites remained unaware of potential problems for a time. They believed in the legitimacy of their church marriages, since the *Privilegium* granted them freedom of religion and of managing their own colonies.

The validity of Mennonite church weddings became an issue already in 1936. At that time, the Acting British Consul-General in Mexico City recommended that the Mennonite children should "be recognized as British subjects."[653] However, in 1937, the Deputy Minister of Justice indicated that Canada would follow Mexican law, in as far as it did not recognize the Mennonite church marriages.[654] In the minister's opinion, children born in Mexico of not legally married Canadian parents did not qualify as British subjects. By 1936, among the Durango colonists alone, eighty-nine couples had married in Mexico, and their offspring numbered 280 persons.[655] The Canadian decision not to recognize the church marriages removed the potential citizenship claims of tens of thousands. This would have serious ramifications for generations to come.

Under the new law that became effective on January 1, 1947, no one born outside Canada automatically received Canadian citizenship. Registration of persons born abroad to Canadian parents needed to take place by the time the child reached two years of age. In order to receive Canadian citizenship, the person also needed to apply for retention of citizenship between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-four or reside in Canada on their twenty-fourth birthday. Although the requirement that the parents participate in a civil marriage ceremony did not apply to those born after January 1, 1947, other complications arose. If the father and mother had not legally married, but if the mother held Canadian citizenship, the child could put forward a claim as a "natural born

Canadian." If the parents had legally married and both parents or only the father held Canadian citizenship, the child also could qualify as a "natural born Canadian."[656] Yet, if the parents had legally married, but only the mother held Canadian citizenship, the child lacked status as a "natural born Canadian." The child still could become a "granted Canadian." But this had implications for the child's future children, since the children of the "natural born Canadian" would have a claim to Canadian citizenship, while the children of the "granted Canadian" would have no claim.[657] This created a situation where, if the parents were legally married but only the mother held Canadian citizenship, the parents needed to deny that they had married in order for their children to qualify as "natural born Canadians." These and other complex rules resulted in irrational situations of eligibility and ineligibility for Canadian citizenship.

Canadian officials also seemingly forgot that in the 1930s they decided that Canada would not recognize the validity of Mennonite church marriages. Canada then issued hundreds of Canadian citizenship papers to Mexican Mennonites, born before 1947, whose parents only participated in church ceremonies. Later, in 1961, the Canadian Embassy in Mexico discovered that they had misinterpreted the Act. Canada then decided to recall citizenship papers issued in error.[658] As a result, recovery of many Canadian citizenship certificates took place. Still in recent years, the lack of Mexican marriage certificates caused grief for many who sought entry to Canada.

Later, both the Canadian government and MCC claimed that Canadian officials did not know until the 1960s that the Mexican government did not consider Mennonite church marriage certificates as valid.[659] Then, in 1978, government officials remembered that Canada had known of the invalidity of the marriage certificates in the 1930s, when a 1937 Ministry of Justice judgement ruled that children from such marriages were considered as illegitimate.[660] Cancellation of numerous citizenship papers took place as the government became aware of them. Sometimes that occurred more than twenty years after the issuance of the papers.[661] MCC objected strongly to the cancellations, but the government policy did not change. In 1989, a man, a citizen since 1956, had his citizenship recalled when an investigation into his wife's application for citizenship showed his birth predated his parents' civil marriage. Ken Monteith, Member of Parliament for Elgin, brought similar cases to the attention of the Minister of State, Gerry Weiner.[662] Weiner replied to Monteith, "I cannot waive the requirements of the Citizenship Act on their behalf."[663] In a 1990 Ontario case, a grandfather had obtained Canadian citizenship in about 1953. His children also obtained citizenship. Not until the government processed his grandchildren's applications did it discover that their great-grandparents' marriage ceremony lacked civil status. Even though some family members had lived in Canada for a long time, all their citizenship certificates lacked validity.[664]

The threat of losing Canadian citizenship still hangs over many Mennonites from Mexico. This issue, and the grief resulting from it, could have ended at any time had the Canadian government accepted Mennonite church marriages as valid. The arbitrary barriers to citizenship, recalls of citizenship certificates, splitting of families, deportations, and various uncertainties that resulted from the government's position seem difficult to justify.

Another problem arose because of the 1947 Act's requirement that parents

register their children born abroad by two years of age. Needless to say, numerous Mexican Mennonites did not register their children. A clause allowed for a delayed registration period "as the government might approve."[665] After a tightening of immigration laws and some deportations in the 1970s, appeals took place. Only after much grief occurred did government allow delayed registrations to take place. These resulted in perhaps 20,000 obtaining Canadian citizenship, greatly adding to the migration to Canada. This decision proved crucial and set the pattern for later immigration policy.[666] Yet, uncertainty remained. William Janzen pointed out the fragile nature of the citizenship and immigration process when he wrote: "The people do not have 'rights' to these things. Thus it is very important to maintain good relations with the officials and to present the cases well!"[667]

The law again changed in 1977. Those born after that date qualify as "natural born Canadians" if one parent held Canadian citizenship, providing that the child applies for retention of citizenship before the age of twenty-eight. If the birth of one of the parents actually took place in Canada, the children do not need to register for retention of citizenship. Elimination of the requirements to register births within two years and to reside in Canada by the age of twenty-four years also took place.[668] Additionally, the 1977 law allowed the children born in wedlock after 1947 of a Canadian mother and non-Canadian father to become Canadian citizens. If born out of wedlock to a Canadian father and a non-Canadian mother, or if born out of wedlock before 1947, even if both parents were Canadian, they still had no claim to citizenship.[669]

The 1977 law also required that, if persons lost their claim to citizenship, for example if they did not register for Canadian citizenship before their twenty-fourth birthday, they needed to establish landed immigrant status and reside in Canada for one year before resumption of citizenship could take place. Becoming a landed immigrant became "an almost insurmountable problem" for the Mennonites, since to do so they needed to qualify under the point system. After MCC objected, Canada waived some immigration requirements beginning in 1981, although those entering still needed a sponsor in Canada.[670]

Thousands who could not enter Canada by right, as citizens, have entered as immigrants. The difference between falling into one category or the other usually simply happened because those in one group had the proper paperwork and those in the other did not. Members of both groups equally descended from the same group that left Canada in the 1920s.

In the 1990s, immigrants entered Canada under various categories. The first, the point system, evaluated elements such as language, employment, and education. Almost no Mexican Mennonite qualified for entry under the point system, since it favoured immigrants with higher educations and formal skills.[671] Another category, the entrepreneur class, also excluded virtually all Mexican Mennonites. This class required the applicant to bring a substantial amount of money to invest in Canada. Neither did the humanitarian and compassionate class often apply, unless if an isolated family member remained stranded in Mexico after the rest of the family moved to Canada. Mennonites from Mexico also did not qualify as refugees. Some Mennonites used the spousal category to enter Canada. If one spouse qualified as a "natural born Canadian," that person then could sponsor their spouse and children as landed immigrants. Immigrants also

used the family category, which allowed those in Canada to sponsor family members. The strict definition of family used by Canada proved limiting though. Even siblings could not sponsor their siblings.

While many have arrived at the Canadian border without a valid claim for citizenship or landed immigrant status, immigration officials usually allowed them to enter anyway. These people crossed the border as tourists or visitors, even if they admitted their intentions of working or remaining in Canada.[672]

Although Canada expected prospective immigrants to apply for admission from outside the country, many Mexican Mennonites waited to begin the paper work until they arrived in Canada. The MCC offices in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta helped many with this. Having the work done in Mexico meant paying a fee to an agent there, while MCC in Canada did the work free of charge, except for the government fees. This, along with the other services offered by MCC in Canada, encouraged Mexican Mennonites to come to Canada. People in both Canada and Mexico recognized the role MCC played in the migration. This resulted in some hostility towards MCC and its workers from those who, for various reasons, preferred to see the people remain in Mexico.[673]

Just having the help of MCC workers did not mean that the immigrants' problems ended. Those lacking Canadian citizenship paid high fees to the Canadian authorities in their effort to obtain citizenship. In 1996, the fee for an adult to obtain landed immigrant status stood at $1,475.00. Numerous other fees also applied.[674] A report in 1995 said that, "farmers are selling virtually everything to collect the expensive processing fees for passports and citizenship papers."[675]

In the 1990s, the process to become a Canadian citizen took considerable time. Once admitted to Canada as immigrants, the new arrivals needed to wait for a three-year period before applying for citizenship. Processing of their applications then could take numerous months. Paperwork delays caused problems for some who waited until they came to Canada to apply for landed immigrant status, since they often could not receive work permits in the interim.[676] Many worked illegally anyway.

Many followed the rules and obtained Canadian papers before leaving Mexico. In January 1989, the Canadian consul participated in a ceremony at Gnadenfeld, Mexico where 125 persons promised allegiance to the Queen.[677] And in the Cuauhtémoc area in 1993, the Canadian Embassy Vice Consul in Mexico officiated when about forty persons became Canadian citizens.[678]

In the 1990s, the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City handled immigration applications made from within Mexico. Although more than one thousand miles separate Mexico City from some colonies, dealing with the office in the Mexican capital was easier than earlier on. From 1968 to about 1975, Canada handled Mexican immigration matters from Kingston, Jamaica.[679] Reports that Canada would place immigration representatives in northern Mexico to serve the Mennonites did not materialize.

Some Canadian government departments that dealt with the Mexican Mennonite immigrants claimed they did not keep separate records for the group.[680] Yet in 1976, Canada launched a "low key" investigation into their immigration. A Regional Intelligence Officer wrote: "The decision on a low-key approach was indicated, based on the possible political ramifications in dealing with one socio-

cultural group."[681] Also, a 1980 memorandum from the Director General, Immigration Ontario Region asked: "In order for us to effectively monitor the Mexican Mennonite situation, we request that you forward a statistical report to us by 31 December 1980." The same memo referred to "the highly sensitive nature of cases involving Mexican Mennonites."[682] Archival records also indicate that citizenship and immigration officials have given the Mexican Mennonites special attention as a distinct group.

By necessity, the Canadian government became involved with the return of the Mennonites. Already at the time of the educational crisis in Mexico in the 1930s, when it looked as if a mass return to Canada might take place, the British Consulate in Mexico and the Canadian government participated in discussions about this.[683]

Canadian authorities have not encouraged the Mexican Mennonites to move to Canada and often viewed the movement with unease and trepidation. Misinformation played a role in this. Over the years, officials applied various stereotypes, including many of a negative nature, to the Mennonites. In 1951, for example, the Secretary of State for External Affairs described the migrating Mennonites as "'simon pure' religionists," and as "honest, simple, naive – frequently to the point of complete stupidity, the latter difficulty being enhanced by the tendency to inbreeding over the generations."[684]

Health problems, both real and imagined, which the Mennonites might bring to Canada, often caused concern for officials. Particularly trachoma became a recurring concern.[685] In 1937, orders went out to have all returning Mennonites detained and checked for trachoma.[686] Then, in June of 1938, the *Regina Leader Post* reported on plans for about 7,500 Mennonites to come to Canada. Over the next two years, Mennonites reportedly would travel from Mexico in sealed cars, under guard, to the Peace River country of northern Alberta. The report said that sixty percent of them suffered from trachoma. Also according to the report, Canada welcomed them, offering each family 160 acres of land for the price of ten dollars.[687] By August, stories said that anywhere from 7,000 to 15,000 Mennonites, eighty percent of whom carried trachoma, would soon arrive in the sealed railroad cars. The story reached the Director of Health of the Department of National Health and Welfare. He commented, "That story is some weeks old and the Mennonites have not arrived. If they have been kept in the sealed cars all this time, time will have solved all the problems so far as their settlement is concerned."[688] The story about the diseased Mennonites "aroused a series of protests from the West, particularly Alberta."[689] In August 1938, a federal health official wrote, "Officials of the Department have discussed the question of the prevalence of trachoma among those few Mennonites who from time to time arrive at the Canadian border and have been advised that there has not been a single case of trachoma notified among them."[690] Yet, officials in later decades still used trachoma among the Mennonites who arrived in the 1930s as a reason for not wanting them to immigrate to Canada.[691] In 1952, officials watched for foot and mouth disease among Mennonite arrivals.[692] And in 1956, fears arose that they might bring typhoid fever with them.[693] Many reports of diseases among the Mennonites from Mexico remained unsubstantiated.

Additional difficulties resulted because some Old Colonists who went to Mexico were born in Russia. In 1936, Canada indicated that anyone not born in

Canada, in this case those born in Russia, did not have the right of readmission to Canada. By leaving Canada, to live in another country, the Mennonites gave up their right to live in Canada,[694] Those who wanted to return needed to prove their birth took place in Canada. For many, even for those born in Canada, that presented a problem. A 1952 memo to the Deputy Minister of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration stated, "The present applications for resumption of Canadian citizenship status could only be considered if the parents of the persons concerned were born in Canada and it is doubtful if evidence of the parents birth here, acceptable to the Department, could be readily obtained in view of the sect's refusal to register births in accordance with the Civil Law of the Western Provinces while in this country."[695]

At times, Canadian officials did not look favourably upon applications for resumption of citizenship. In 1952, the Deputy Minister of the Department of the Secretary of State, Laval Fortier, wrote, "While the Canadian Citizenship Act does give the Minister authority to sanction the acceptance of a Declaration of Resumption after twenty-two years of age, we cannot overlook the fact that Mennonite migrations arise out of the unwillingness on their part to accept the responsibilities of citizenship. Consequently, this Department does not look with favour on the exercise of this Ministerial discretion."[696] Other officials sometimes disagreed with the Canadian laws allowing Mennonites back into Canada. In 1966, correspondence from the Canadian Embassy in Mexico said: "We cannot believe that it was the intention of those who drew up the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947 that German speaking Mennonites living in Mexico should maintain Canadian citizenship from generation to generation in order to have a passport of convenience. . . . In any event it is clear that Mexican Mennonites are Canadian in the legal sense only and in no other way."[697] Officials made repeated references to the Mennonites having left Canada and their undesirability as immigrants.[698] At no point did Canadian officials accept the view of some Mennonites that Canada should bear responsibility for unfairly forcing the Old Colonists from Canada in the 1920s.

Officials in Canada sometimes kept abreast of the situation in the Mexican colonies. Their sources forewarned them about coming movements resulting from drought and other problems in the colonies. For example, in 1952, they expected 500 destitute families who would migrate to Canada in trucks due to crop failures in Chihuahua.[699]

Given the Mennonites' prohibition against owning and driving motor vehicles, many could not drive themselves to Canada. As a result, others transported them for pay. Many rather astounding accounts exist about these trips. In 1966, for example, a Manitoba resident crossed the border at Emerson, Manitoba with twenty-eight passengers in a pickup truck. Canadian immigration officials watched them pile back into the truck after issuing them visitors' permits. The driver had loaned those who did not have money $300 to allow them to enter the United States from Mexico. That year, he made about seven trips from Mexico to Manitoba and Ontario, bringing about 133 persons. While fined for carrying paying passengers in a vehicle not licenced for this and for not having a permit, Canadian officials took no action for immigration violations.[700]

By the 1970s, officials became concerned about the large trade in transporting persons from Mexico.[701] A 1979 Immigration department report com-

mented on the large number of "visitors" entering: "It is simply not realistic to assume that large families with a subsistence livelihood can afford to holiday for months at a time, depleting what few assets they have." The report went on to say: "It is our contention that we are witnessing a highly organized and sophisticated movement designed to bring forward increasing numbers of Mennonites from Mexico and possibly Texas."[702]

Some drivers who transported Mexican Mennonites required their passengers, sometimes dozens of them, to walk across the border. The drivers presumably attempted to disguise the entry of the immigrants and hide their personal involvement. Only the poorest of border guards could not recognize that they dealt with Mennonites from Mexico. The man's bib overalls, the woman's long dark dress and head covering, the similarly dressed six or eight children, and the inability of all to speak English or French gave them away. Many Mennonites crossed at the border station between Detroit and Windsor, which developed a reputation as one of the easiest places to cross.[703] Border controls sometimes seemed unusually lax. In 1995, for example, a fifteen-year-old runaway girl, took the family vehicle and drove alone from Mexico to Canada, crossing both the United States and Canadian borders successfully.[704]

Although drivers still hauled Mennonites from Mexico for pay in the 1990s, by then many migrants owned their own vehicles.[705] Even most who went to Canada from Durango in the mid-1990s drove their own vehicles, often vans. They put these away on their farms or left them with Mexicans when they returned to Mexico. Some bold persons even drove them on the colony. Given the advancing state of community breakdown, possibly they no longer faced discipline from their leaders for this infraction.

Much of the Mexican Mennonite immigration to Canada violated the rules set by the Canadian government. In 1979, eleven families, or 126 persons, who waited in Canada for approval of their application to immigrate attracted the attention of officials. A government memorandum at the time said: "A major argument against favourable treatment of this group is a concern that it would generate a much larger movement to Canada and would seem to reward persons who have avoided processing outside of Canada as required by the Act and Regulations." The eleven families only formed the tip of the iceberg. The memo continued: "We are aware of 121 families comprising 534 persons who have entered Canada in similar circumstances and are presently on visitor status."[706] A 1979 Immigration Department report claimed that the Mennonites seldom used the visa office in Mexico City, mainly because they found it easier to come to Canada as visitors, "find unauthorized employment, and disappear indefinitely. By doing this, he has foregone the requirements of an IMM. 2151, medical examination, a possible interview, a limited time factor and a possible refusal."[707] The same report said: "As it appears that the trend is approaching alarming proportions, the need for a clear national policy is evident."[708]

Already in the 1960s, the R.C.M.P. investigated the movement of Mexican Mennonites to Ontario.[709] And in 1975 and 1976, an Intelligence Officer of the Department of Manpower and Immigration Intelligence Division in Winnipeg conducted a prolonged investigation into the illegal migration. Clandestine methods utilized included relying on information from sources within the Mennonite community. Characteristics of the profile developed of Mexican

Mennonite included: agricultural worker, low educational level, large family, religious orthodoxy, and language patterns. The final identifying characteristic was: "Suffers from hereditary physical defects, ie. hair-lip and other physical debilitations related to malnutrition." The investigator also suspected that, "the Bible institutes, prevalent in southern Manitoba, may well be facilitating the reception of illegal Mexican Mennonites."[710] Estimated illegal immigrants in the Winkler area possibly totalled 200, with another 300 to 500 in the Steinbach area. Correspondence from Department of Manpower and Immigration files demonstrates that government possessed a long term awareness of illegal Mennonite migration methods and patterns.

As readers can judge for themselves, some of the characterizations used by Canadian authorities and others over the years appear grossly unfair to the Mennonites from Mexico. Many of the descriptions are extreme caricatures and would appear humorous if they did not contribute to the suffering of human beings. Those who accepted and perpetuated these descriptions obviously knew little about the true nature of the conservative Mennonites and their communities. Reports frequently overlooked the predominant intelligence, quickness to learn, work ethic, and trustworthiness present among the immigrants. Once given a chance to prove themselves, countless Mexican Mennonite immigrants became valued members of the Canadian community. Yet, the negative image of the Mennonites likely continued to contribute to the cool welcome many received from Canada.

In spite of the seeming openness of its border, Canada refused entry to many who came north from the Mexican colonies.[711] The records describe Mennonite families with up to eight children, poorly dressed and with little money, turned back at the Canadian border. Some did not give up easily and tried entering at various border points.[712] In one case, officials turned back a large family. They already had sold their land and belongings in Mexico.[713] Some officers lacked knowledge about the Mexican Mennonites and treated them with impatience and disdain at the border.[714]

American and Canadian authorities sometimes communicated about the illegal immigration. As a result, Canadian officials sometimes waited for those who crossed the American border from Mexico border days before. In one case, United States officials at the Mexican border seized a Mennonite man's citizenship papers. Later, they forwarded them to Canadian officials, and the papers arrived before their owner did. At the Canadian border, the officer questioned the man about his citizenship documents. The Mennonite offered various stories, obviously all untrue, about where he had left his papers. Finally, the official produced the man's papers, received from the Americans.[715] On this occasion and others, officials appeared to view dealing with the Mennonites as a form of sport or entertainment. Unfortunately, incidents such as this one contributed to the erosion of the Mennonite reputation for honesty and trustworthiness that has taken place.

Canada has forced some Mennonites from Mexico to leave the country. In one year, officials ordered more than 100 families to leave Ontario. Many left for only a few days and then reentered, applying for immigrant status.[716] If someone left voluntarily after receiving a "Notice to leave the country," they could reenter later on. But if formal deportation took place, reentry to Canada could become

difficult.[717] In December of 1974, Canada deported a family of fourteen. Possible heavy-handed tactics by Canadian officials aroused interest and controversy in that case.[718] Medical inadmissibility, for physical, mental, or emotional reasons, sometimes caused Canada to refuse entry or permission to remain.[719] In Saskatchewan, a thirty-three-year-old Mexican Mennonite underwent deportation three times primarily because he had served time in jail in Canada for minor criminal offenses. He resisted returning to Durango because he feared that he would be asked whether he had driven a car or played the mouth organ. Then, when he answered honestly, his church would excommunicate him.[720] Countless sad and life altering events, most which remain unreported and undocumented, have resulted from failed attempts to immigrate from Mexico to Canada.

Many Mennonite immigrants from Mexico have complied with the requirements laid down by the Canadian government. Local immigration "experts," themselves residents of the Mexican colonies, long played an important part in this. For a fee, these persons offered advice and looked after the necessary paperwork. Advisors have covered the spectrum from extremely helpful to incompetent. In 1966, a Canadian Embassy official in Mexico indicated that no one in Durango performed this service but that Chihuahua had four "self-appointed" amateur documentation specialists. The official described one, whom they jokingly nicknamed "the Canadian Consul," in extremely derogatory terms.[721] Still in the 1990s, some of the specialists could not read the correspondence from Canadian officials, handicapping their efforts to help. But many of the local specialists skilfully handled large volumes of work and performed a valuable service to those wanting to go to Canada. Already in the 1970s, one estimated that he had helped with 1,700 Canadian passports in two years.[722] In 1996, about four persons on the Manitoba colony handled documents. Durango and El Capulin each had one resident "expert."[723] In many cases, because of their advanced literacy and paperwork skills, these persons made valuable contributions to their people and community.

Applicants for Canadian documents usually have had to supply copies of their Mexican birth certificates, marriage certificates, and sometimes their parents' marriage certificates. In some cases, falsification of birth and marriage certificates took place to keep pace with the changing Canadian regulations. Bribery of local Mexicans officials, a common and widely accepted practice in Mexico, sometimes facilitated this.

Mexican marriage certificates have proven particularly problematic for Canadian authorities. Although their number remains unknown, reports say that Mexican officials often issued certificates for nonexistent civil marriages. The later addition of an entry to a partially filled or empty page in the Mexican marriage registry book could make the false entry appear genuine.[724] At other times, officials issued certificates, without even bothering to make an entry in the record book. In 1983, Mexico introduced a relatively tamper-proof numbered system of vital statistics registration. However, the possibility of falsifying documents for older births and marriages still exists.

In 1978, the Canadian authorities knew of persons entering Canada with other persons' documents. Officials referred to this as the "Fake Family" method, where various people formed temporary "families" that fit the false documents.[725] There also are stories of persons using the Canadian papers of deceased per-

sons.

Canadian officials long have known that Mennonites from Mexico sometimes used false documents. In 1966, the Canadian Embassy in Mexico wrote: "We were also able to confirm that for an adequate payment it was possible to secure any Mexican document required drawn up according to order . . . Even though we know many of these documents are false, they are valid Mexican documents and there seems to be no alternative but to accept them."[726] When documents are questioned, Canada asks its embassy in Mexico to investigate the situation back in Mexico. This can take several years, and cause long delays in the applications. The presence of some dishonest members has jeopardized the reputation of all Mexican Mennonites.

Not all, or likely even most, Mexican Mennonites have relied on falsified documents to enter Canada. Honest errors or discrepancies in names or dates on Mexican documents also caused problems. Since many Mexican clerks could not spell the unfamiliar Mennonite names, Johann became Juan, Heinrich became Enrique, Gerhard became Jorge or Gerardo, and Franz became Francisco or Pancho.[727] Misspelling of last names also often took place. Errors with names or dates on documents have led to delays or to the rejection of applications for papers.[728]

Mexico does not allow dual citizenship, while Canada does. Some Mexican Mennonites have hidden their Canadian citizenship from the Mexican authorities, which made their presence in Mexico illegal. Some find it advantageous to, "show their Canadian papers when they want to enter Canada and their Mexican papers when they want to enter there."[729]

The dealings of Mexican Mennonites with the Canadian authorities have fallen into two categories: citizenship and immigration. Those who possessed Canadian citizenship, or a claim to it, could enter Canada as a matter of right, while those who lacked this status fell into the category of immigrants. For the most part, Canada has greeted members of both groups with open arms. Canadian Mennonites have helped open the doors to Canada wider, doors that already stood ajar because of a generous Canadian immigration policy. In contrast to the discriminatory policies that drove Canadian Mennonites from Canada in the 1920s, since World War II Canada's immigration policies have undergone evolution eliminating discrimination on ethnic, linguistic, and religious grounds. Yet, in place of that older discrimination have arisen educational, vocational, and economic criteria that make entry difficult for many Old Colonists.

The movement to Canada has provided an alternative to the poverty and limitations of the Mexican colonies, particularly for those who lacked the resources to pursue other choices. The migrations also helped ease the economic difficulties on some Mexican colonies. Many who came to Canada moved back and forth repeatedly, bringing Canada and its influences back to the colonies. As a result, migration to Canada became one of the most disruptive forces to the Old Colony vision of a life apart in Mexico. Responsibility for this does not belong with the Canadian government, since their policies have not attempted to destabilize the Old Colony in Mexico. The question, of what other alternatives the Mexican Old Colonists might have found had they not found the doors to Canada open, also needs to be raised.

CHAPTER 8
CRISIS, DISINTEGRATION, AND SURVIVAL

For decades, overwhelmingly negative news reports have circulated in Canada and the United States about the Mexican Mennonite colonies. Too often, observers focussed on the failures and ignored the successes of the Old Colonists, presenting a biased and inaccurate picture of colony life in Mexico. Few communities, including those of Mennonites in Canada, could withstand critical scrutiny without some negative reports.

While news reports have failed to adequately tell about the successes of the Old Colonists in following the old ways, the colonies also have experienced many problems. For many residents, their ancestors' vision of harmonious religious communities no longer exists. Leadership, economics, population growth, the Mexican environment, the presence of other Mennonite churches, and continuing contact with Canada all played a part in endangering the future of the Old Colony communities.

The number and diversity of the colonies makes it difficult to determine the severity of the problems facing the Old Colonists. At one end of the spectrum stand the Cuauhtémoc area colonies, where many have found prosperity. Many former Old Colonists who remain in these colonies view the former physically and culturally isolated colony way of life as merely a quaint part of their history. They celebrate their history as a historical event, as in 1997 at the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations, in a brief time-out from commercial pursuits.[730] By the 1990s, this group had gained considerable economic and cultural influence in that area.

At the other extreme stand colonies like La Batea, where the clear mountain air remains unbroken by power lines. Instead creaking windmills turn, and horses and buggies still stir up the dust on the roads. In most respects, life there resembles that once lived in the older colonies in the 1920s. To these people, Old Colony history is not something that happened a long time ago. Nor have they tried to leave the old ways behind. Instead, they still live much as their ancestors did, and hope their children and grandchildren will continue to live much as they do. While disruptive forces also challenge these communities, most of the time the colonists can successfully resist, particularly if the rains come and other Mennonites do not interfere.

Colonies like Durango fall between these extremes. There, people adhere to some old ideals but also accept some changes advocated by Mennonites from outside. This stage, somewhere between unquestioningly following the old ways and wholeheartedly accepting the new, causes great pain for all concerned. The communities appear divided and unhealthy. Inexorable movement seems to lead towards the model seen in the Cuauhtémoc area.

A painful crisis has plagued the Mexican Old Colony group for more than thirty years. Much of the suffering resulted from divisions over whether they should continue to live in isolated enclaves or join the larger Mennonite world. While conservatives in the Cuauhtémoc area lost numerous battles and likely the war, many there still try to follow the old ways, to one degree or another. Elsewhere, the escalating war continues to cause great distress among those who see their entire way of life threatened. They fear that, in time, their communities

also will lose their distinctive character and separate nature.

The Old Colonists have fought tenaciously, possibly more so than many expected. They hold strong beliefs and must rank as one of the most persistent peoples on earth. In the communities that have undergone the most change, those who remain can no longer follow their forefathers' vision, since the barriers that once protected them from the world crumbled. As in Canada, some there still carry the Old Colonist name, but no longer live the former lifestyle. Although many of the most conservative members migrated to more isolated colonies, some also remain, even if those who left no longer recognize them as brothers. The *Lehrdienst* members who remain behind, while beleaguered, have not given up the fight.

Forceful and decisive leaders have guided the Old Colonists in Mexico, and in Canada before that. Without strong leadership, successful establishment of the colonies would not have happened; nor would the colonies have survived. Leaders vowed to their predecessors and communities that they would uphold the old ways, and they still believe they should disregard man's changeable wisdom and adhere to the unchanging wisdom revealed by God to them and their ancestors. Their firm convictions have helped them battle against and resist the outside forces.

Largely due to dissent in the communities, in recent times the burdens on the ministers have become so great that election as a minister often brings sorrow, not joy, to the elected. Becoming a minister means accepting the responsibility of directing the colony and its future. It sometimes also brings separation from the rest of the community. Some resisted ordination, fleeing for a while, "hoping the church would change its mind."[731] Still, people dutifully serve as front line leaders in the battle to maintain the old ways. All too often leadership means fighting against those tearing down the walls, rather than concentrating on meeting the other challenges of life. The situation resembles that of a country at war, which neglects all else while it concentrates on surviving the challenge from outside. Devoting time and energy to fighting against challenges to their boundaries makes dealing with population pressures and economic hardships more difficult. The leadership and people also likely have not fulfilled the potential of their vision, in large part due to the challenges from outside.

That the Old Colony leaders not only follow some traditions of their Flemish Mennonite forefathers but also the will of many of today's ordinary people still seems evident in the more conservative colonies. Many there despair at the changes that threaten their chosen way of life. Ordinary people fear that what they believe in and stand for will go under. And they feel threatened by the outsiders and sometimes even by their own offspring, when they seem to lose control.

Possibly, if the leadership, or the system, deserves criticism, it should be faulted for not being firmer and harder. Often, the leadership has proven weak in preventing outside influences from entering the colonies. Old Colonists, since the 1920s, made it clear to other Mennonites who came to Mexico that they did not want them or their influences in the colonies. Yet, they did not succeed in keeping the outsiders at a distance. The Old Colonists tried to keep some other Mennonites out of Mexico, by protesting vehemently and asking the Mexican authorities for help in evicting the outsiders. However, their resistance

proved sporadic, disorganized, and ineffective. Instead of remaining to battle, large numbers of Old Colonists retreated to new locations. Unfortunately, many supporters could not follow.

Leaders also could have taken a much harder line with those who moved to Canada seasonally. Migrant workers brought many outside influences back with them, which disrupted colony life. However, the ministers did not prohibit them from returning. After all, those who returned were someone's child, sibling, parent, or friend.

The leaders left themselves vulnerable to charges of poor judgement, or of unnecessary stubbornness, when they could not justify their rules. Sometimes even the overarching justification of wanting to maintain their isolation, religion, and communities does not suffice to account for some decisions made. They sometimes have proven unwilling to listen and discuss alternatives with the people. While they can justify the decision not to allow rubber tires on a tractor, many argue that allowing rubber tires on the front would have the same effect while making field work much more practical. Similarly, why the combines at La Batea need to run on steel wheels seems puzzling, as not many of the colony's children would go to Fresnillo, the nearest city, more than fifty miles away, on a combine with rubber tires. Some rules about vehicles also lack credibility. One farmer at Las Virginias, where the colony allowed rubber tires but not motor vehicles, carefully followed the rules. He transported his family in a motorless Chevrolet Suburban pulled by an air-conditioned tractor with a cassette deck.[732]

Recently, some leaders have changed their approach, recognizing the risks of extreme positions. They know that mass excommunications can open the door for outside groups. Instead, they attempt to follow the narrow and dangerous path between giving in enough to stop rebellion and giving in so much that they lose the vision of their ancestors. At Las Virginias during 1996, the leadership appeared ready to excommunicate twenty to thirty persons. But they recognized doing so could open the way for outside groups to come in. Their holding off on the excommunications opened the possibility for dialogue to take place between the opposing factions.[733]

Excommunication has lost much of its power to control deviant behaviour, particularly where the banned can ignore the community's authority and join other Mennonite groups. Usually other Mennonite denominations provide a new spiritual home for those cast out from the Old Colony church. But sometimes a more liberal Old Colony group undermined the excommunication applied by another Old Colony community. This occurred in La Honda after the most conservative group left for Sabinal. The Cuauhtémoc Old Colony church came to La Honda, reorganized the remaining Old Colonists there, and lifted their excommunication.[734] In recent years, the influence of the Manitoba colony Old Colony church has expanded to other colonies. Modestly liberalized changes in leadership, education, and other matters may follow.

Excommunication has not served as an effective control measure considering the size of the challenge to the old ways. The mass excommunications in the Manitoba colony of the 1960s proved ineffective, possibly hurting the community more than helping it. In 1996, about seventy excommunicated men lived at Durango. Their offenses involved mainly rubber tires and vehicle ownership.[735] Obviously, the threat of discipline no longer controlled the behaviour of many

there. Residents of Durango likely will have to choose between accepting increased liberalization or leaving in a mass exodus to other, more conservative colonies.

Even where outside churches did not represent an immediate threat to provide an alternative to the excommunicated, Old Colony discipline often appeared soft and ineffective. The population of La Batea in 1996, for example, included four excommunicated men, all banned over rubber tires. Of these four, two made matters worse by buying pickup trucks, and it looked as if they did not want to come back to the church. The community expected one of the others to "make his peace" with the church, once he finished custom combining for his neighbours with his rubber tired combine. Readmission to the church likely would take place after he apologized, even though it seemed clear that he planned to again use the rubber tired combine during the next harvest. In effect, the "harsh" discipline appeared quite soft and non-threatening to offenders. Its softness possibly jeopardized the future of the community.

The Old Colony's disciplinary actions have not succeeded in retaining much of their former land for the use of the community. Particularly in the Cuauhtémoc area, the leadership failed to enforce the rule of only allowing Old Colonists to own land. As a result, other Mennonites now own much of the land there. Excommunication resulted in much land leaving Old Colony control, allowing other groups to gain footholds in the colonies. Had the leaders, along with excommunication, forced disobedient people off the land, they might have kept control of the land, and likely fewer excommunications would have taken place.

In the Swift Current colony, which no longer has an Old Colony church, the system changed possibly the most. Many persons there hold titles to their plots of land.[736] In the 1970s, no Mexicans lived in the colonies in the Cuauhtémoc area.[737] But by the 1990s, although their numbers remained small, some Mexicans lived there. In 1996, a Mexican Pentecostal pastor on the Manitoba colony guarded a church and other buildings there against trespassers.

The lack of community control over land resulted in artificially high land values in many colonies, due to competition among the Mennonites over scarce land. In 1996, unirrigated farm land in the Manitoba colony carried a value of $500 to $1,000 per acre, and irrigated land sold for about $2,000 per acre. Commercial land along the four-lane highway brought as much as $5,000 to $10,000 per acre.[738] In Durango colony, good land had a value of about $500 per acre in 1996.[739] Although these prices may not sound high in comparison to those in much of Canada and the United States, average Mexican wages and incomes fall far below those of the rest of North America. As a result, many who want to buy land cannot do so.

While those leaving for other colonies frequently sold land in the home colony, this often did not make land available for the poverty stricken landless. Only those with financial resources could afford to buy the land, which they often did. Also, wealthier colony members, who did not move, sometimes purchased land in the new colonies and then rented it to the settlers. They sometimes later sold the then developed land for large profits. At La Honda, after allowance for inflation, land speculation brought a profit of fifty times the original investment.[740]

The Old Colonists who remain in the Cuauhtémoc area, in many respects, fall somewhere between the new model of an increasingly competitive materialism and the older model of a less competitive and more egalitarian colony life. Material inequities have increased greatly in some colonies. While the Old Colonists do not live communally, they often placed spiritual survival before economic considerations. However, in the 1990s, some in the Cuauhtémoc area farmed 1,000 acres or more of land, using resources for one family that could support a dozen families. While many of these land owners no longer belonged to the Old Colony Church, many Old Colonists did not put community welfare first in this crucial area either. Given the population pressures and land shortages, the cause and effect between some accumulating surpluses and the destitution of others seems clear.

Concentration of wealth extends beyond the farming sector. In 1996, a knowledgeable person estimated that a number of Manitoba colony businessmen earned net annual incomes of $500,000 or more.[741] An unconfirmed report said the most wealthy Mennonite man in the area accumulated hundreds of millions of dollars. The list of wealthy entrepreneurs includes many non-Old Colony Mennonites. Some Kleine Gemeinde and General Conference people particularly have a reputation for materialism. Barred windows, high fences, and guard dogs commonly protect the extravagant Mennonite homes along the highway in the Manitoba colony. Yet, not far away, the poor live in small hovels. Mennonite and other communities elsewhere in North America also include rich and poor members. But, likely because of the limited scope of Mexican social programs, the contrast between those who have and those who have not appears especially stark in Mexico.

The Old Colony has failed to provide a future in a colony situation, whether in Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America, for many of its people. Too often, everyone has needed to look out for themselves. Yet, the Mennonites of Mexico likely possess enough resources to provide a viable farm or other means or support for all, or nearly all, its members. The traditional programs designed to help one another, the *Armenkasse*, the *Waisenamt*, and the community land purchases of daughter colonies, failed to distribute the wealth sufficiently to allow everyone to continue to live in the colonies. Diversion of the leadership's efforts to the battle against outside influences may have played a part in the breakdown of the Old Colony survival systems.

Erosion of the traditional emphasis on farming as the primary occupation has occurred. Already in 1970, in the Manitoba colony, the nonagricultural sector comprised about twelve percent of the local economy.[742] By 1980, of approximately 6,200 Mennonite families in Mexico, about 1,000 depended primarily or completely on industry and trade.[743] Those who drive along the four-lane highway through the Manitoba colony today notice that businesses dominate the landscape. The thirty kilometre stretch, known as the Corredor Commercial Obregon, includes more than 200 businesses. Recently, the governments of Cuauhtémoc and the state have begun to work cooperatively with the Manitoba colony to plan development along the highway corridor.[744] Occupational diversification has become an instrumental part of life there. The presence of the other Mennonite groups largely accounts for the growing acceptance of a variety of occupations.[745]

Possibly the plight of the landless provides the most convincing argument for occupational diversification. Many have no choice but to look for alternatives to farming. For some this means going to the United States or Canada, while for others, it means finding wage employment on or off the colony. The movement of tens of thousands of the landless and poverty stricken to Canada and the United States partly hides the actual land shortage.

From their point of view, it is unfortunate that the Old Colonists, who highly value their offspring and want to pass on their values, have not found ways to retain a larger number of their people in the traditional ways. Financial circumstances have forced a high percentage of their community members into the "world." The population explosion and the accompanying land shortage have served as key determinants of Old Colony history in Mexico.

A lack of business acumen also sometimes has hurt the Old Colonists and the implementation of their vision to live as a separate people. They could have avoided the failure of some daughter colonies through engaging in more thorough investigations of soils and climate characteristics. Other colonies, including those in the Casas Grandes area, still survive but struggle severely economically. Possibly the Old Colony erred in founding those colonies in arid locales. Even Old Colony leaders admitted this in the 1990s, after years of severe drought and largely futile efforts to establish a comfortable lifestyle. Questionable land purchases continued though, as at Villa Ahumada, which the Manitoba colony bought in the 1990s for six million dollars. Although the plan called for thirty-two villages of up to forty families each, by 1996 only about twenty-one families lived there.[746] Severe drought and water shortages limited settlement. The leaders failed to verify the availability of water prior to purchasing the land. Before judging too harshly though, onlookers should remember that Mexican land reform policies and the need for geographic isolation severely limited the Mennonites' choice of land.

Some have criticized the Old Colony use of steel wheels, because this rule limited the potential for colony expansion. Tractors and other equipment on steel wheels cannot rapidly travel the long distances required to work distant fields. Even though Mennonites in recent years could purchase *ejido* land, the use of steel wheels limited taking advantage of that potential avenue for expansion of the land base. Critics also think the colonies should depend less on cheese for income. Instead, they should expand into producing other milk products.[747] Some of this criticism seems valid, particularly where innovations would not jeopardize the barriers to the outside world.

Numerous decisions were not "good business." These include the dedication to the agricultural life style, the use of steel wheels, the use of horses, and the avoidance of much modern technology. Leaders often felt they had little choice about their stand on these things, since allowing change would lead to a breakdown of the colony walls and then the community itself. However, a reexamination of some of the firm stands might prove beneficial. In the northern colonies, the lack of electricity to run irrigation pumps became a serious handicap, particularly since the price of diesel fuel rose under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The cost of operating diesel powered pumps became prohibitive.[748] In 1996, the El Capulin leadership still opposed electricity, even after three years of severe drought dried up their river, and over one-

half of the colony members, facing financial ruin, wanted electric power. Up to one-half of the land in the colony remained unseeded due to a lack of money to plant and irrigate the crops. Farmers who had built successful farms watched their resources erode. Many colony members, in defiance of the leadership, hoped that electrical lines from outside would arrive during 1997. Speculation existed, that if electricity came, the most conservative would leave for South America. The colony already owned land in Bolivia.[749] Since that time, Mexico has provided some relief from the high diesel prices by making it possible for farmers to buy fuel at a lower price. Measures such as that could ease pressure for the installation of electrical lines.

A similar story already had played itself out at nearby Buenos Aires colony. The community there accepted electricity, but only after the most conservative leaders and their followers left for South America.[750] This colony also faced financial ruin without electricity. The leaders who remained still held the line on rubber tires and vehicles, but negotiated a concession on electricity because of pressing necessity. The flight to South America of the most conservative took place without mass excommunications taking place. This also may happen with the electricity issue in other colonies. Recent avoidance of excommunications and the careful and limited concessions to economic necessity offer hope that the Old Colonists will learn to survive in a difficult environment.

Durango also experienced a battle over electricity in the late 1990s. Although they once paid to have power lines routed around the colony, in 1996 the municipal governor attended the ceremonial inauguration of the power project, which included symbolically setting the first concrete pole in place.[751] By April of 1997, power poles stood in four villages, in spite of opposition from the leaders and complaints about violation of the colony's right to control internal matters.[752] Divisions within the community broke its unity and made it possible for the project to proceed. It appeared that some leaders and many others would leave rather than accept electricity. For them, the arrival of electricity could act as the last straw, making the changes and divisions within the community unbearable. Since that time, electrification of the colony began.

Leaders of the communities that still resist change find themselves in a very difficult position. In some colonies, having electricity could mean the difference between economic ruin and survival. On the other hand, electricity means that televisions and various other technological links with the world will almost surely follow, unless they can find a way to limit its use.

While leaders have played a large part in Old Colony history, some things remained outside their control. The widespread drought of the 1990s brought increased economic problems and financial pressures to most colonies.[753] Even those who invested money in deep wells and efficient electric pumps worried as water levels in the wells dropped. In the Cuauhtémoc area, wells of about fifty feet originally sufficed. But by the 1990s, many reached depths of 300 feet, with some down as far as 400 and 500 feet.[754] Even though it appeared that users withdrew water at twice the rate at which the aquifer received replenishment, people spoke of increased irrigation as the way of the future. Electric powered pumps still made irrigation relatively economical in the Cuauhtémoc area. A drop in the aquifer's water level also took place in Durango, in spite of limited irrigation.

Largely because of water scarcities, El Capulin, Buenos Aires, and El Cuervo found themselves in a constant state of crisis. Costly wells there extended 1,000 feet into the ground. To draw water from the wells required expensive equipment and large quantities of prohibitively priced diesel fuel to drive the pumps.[755] Because of the receding water table, shallow wells stood dry, even in wet years, a situation that particularly hurt the poorer farmers. The horse powered well drilling rigs, capable of drilling shallow wells, had no hope of reaching the deep water.

NAFTA caused additional economic strain, as it ended the exclusivity of Mexico's internal market for agricultural goods and allowed cheaper imports to enter from the north. This adversely affected the prices Mexican farmers received for agricultural products.[756] The economy of the Mennonites suffered further damage from repeated devaluations of the peso, including in the 1990s. Although the greatest devaluations occurred earlier, in 1995 and 1996 the peso still lost about one-half of its value in relation to the dollar. High interest rates resulted from the fall of the peso, hurting many farmers who relied on borrowed money. Fortunately for the Mennonite farmers of Mexico, the peso has remained quite stable in relation to the American dollar during the last several years.

According to one estimate in 1996, only about forty percent of the residents of El Capulin earned enough income to manage.[757] Not far away in the Nuevo Casas Grandes area, poverty gave the Mexicans and the Mennonites something to share. Both groups found it difficult to survive in the Mexico of the 1990s. In the past many could say "es geht noch" (it still is bearable), but many no longer believed that. After decades of hard work, the poverty stricken and discouraged fled to Canada and the United States to escape the financial problems. The difficult economic times stood out most in the smaller, isolated colonies. There, even established farmers watched their dreams blow away with the dust. In some villages, few, if any, still appeared successful.

Colonies in the Cuauhtémoc area appeared more prosperous, in part because of their economic diversification. The growth of Mennonite owned manufacturing has aided considerably with this. Modernization, including the acceptance of electric power, rubber tires, and motor vehicles, also helped that area cope with the difficult times. Ironically, many of the things that the Old Colonists resisted helped the more liberal Mennonites survive. Seeing this tests the Old Colonists' commitment to the old ways, which they consider necessary for cultural and religious survival.

The methods employed to market cheese serve as one symptom of the economic difficulties that confront the colonies. Many Old Colonist men travel long distances to sell the cheese made by their factories. Mexicans in many parts of the country buy Mennonite cheese from bib-overall clad men and boys on streets and at roadside stands. Even though selling the cheese requires exposing their people to temptation and danger in the surrounding world, the Old Colonists venture out into Mexican society in order to help their community survive.

In some colonies, the educational system also contributes to economic problems. Without doubt, the low level of education and limited literacy of some Old Colonists has not equipped them well for life in the modern world. While, in the past, educational changes would have endangered community boundaries, in the Cuauhtémoc area colonies the barriers already largely disap-

peared by the 1990s. Until recently, the leaders continued to defend the old educational system, rejecting all significant change. In those more modern colonies, the Old Colony education system no longer prepared people for the world they lived in. In contrast, the same educational system, when used in the isolated colonies, still seemed appropriate and even essential for those colonies to preserve their chosen life styles. During recent years, some colonies recognized the shortcomings of their education systems and began introducing changes.

Without doubt, some recent graduates of the Old Colony school system cannot read or write well.[758] As in the case of the Old Colony man who installed a gas heater in an unsafe manner, the man's education did not suffice to meet the demands of the modern environment in which he lived.[759] Had he lived in a more isolated, unmodern colony, this likely would not have become an issue.

Educational change rarely comes rapidly to Old Colony settlements. Even some teachers have become frustrated and dissatisfied with the curriculum and restrictions placed on them by their leaders and communities. Some teachers tried using booklets with pictures, but the leaders considered that worldly and stopped the practice.[760] Outsiders also attempted to introduce changes to the school system, knowing that the *Lehrdienst* might not approve. For its part, MCC offered training to Old Colony teachers in the Cuauhtémoc area. Already in 1983, innovative monthly teacher meetings took place on the Manitoba colony to exchange ideas and train the teachers.[761] However, MCC workers in 1996 again described much the same phenomenon, viewing these meetings as a new hopeful development.[762] Not much had changed in the previous thirteen years. More recently, especially on the Manitoba colony, hope for controlled and appropriate educational change comes from contact with the American Amish. Old Colonists possibly can learn from the experiences of the Amish who quite successfully live traditional lives in the modern world.

Other symptoms of the Old Colony crisis in Mexico surface in social problems. In many respects, the problems encountered by the Old Colonists resemble those found in the larger North American society. The barriers erected to protect the colonies from the world do not keep out all influences and temptations. Teenaged boys' abuse of alcohol represents one of the more obvious issues for Old Colonists. While this problem has worsened in recent decades, it existed for a long time.[763] In the more liberal colonies, roaring pickups have replaced the evening and Sunday walking of the young people on the village street. This and alcohol sometimes become a deadly combination. Out of fear, some residents stay off the streets on Sunday evenings.[764] Fatal accidents have occurred. For some months, fathers in Buenos Aires followed their sons when they went drinking. By doing this, they reduced the problem.[765] The presence of ongoing parental and community concern provides hope.

Alcohol abuse among adult men also has caused concern. Old Colony leaders organized no alcoholism treatment programs, choosing to deal with alcohol problems mainly by speaking against them. In the Cuauhtémoc area, some other Mennonite groups organized an Alcoholics Anonymous program, which some Old Colony people attended.[766] The extent of the problem remains unknown, although its existence appears related to the crises that confront the Old Colonists.[767] In this matter, the Old Colony experience resembles that of other communities where social problems also increase as stress rises.

A Canadian television program, "The Fifth Estate," brought the Old Colonists to the attention of Canadians in 1992. Millions heard the term "Mennonite Mob" used to refer to Mexican Mennonite drug smugglers. The program caused consternation in the Mennonite community, particularly in Canada. According to the report, arrests of twenty-four Mennonites, with almost two million dollars in drugs, took place during a ten-month period at borders in New Mexico, Texas, and Canada. Reportedly, five Mennonite drug cells involved about 100 persons, and Mennonites handled about twenty percent of the marijuana crossing the border into Canada at Windsor. The suggestion also arose that the Mennonite church sheltered an accused drug smuggler, Cornelius Banman, who had jumped bail in the United States after his arrest on drug charges. The television program attracted sensationalised attention to the Mexican Mennonites and gave the impression that drug trafficking was a major problem among them.[768] Subsequent newspaper coverage also proved controversial.[769] *Winnipeg Free Press* articles came under criticism for identifying the drug smugglers as Mennonites, thereby leading to stereotyping, prejudice, and racism.[770] However the media, knowing a good story when they saw one, in 1997 still identified smugglers as Mennonites.[771] While Mennonite connections to drugs did not make the media headlines until 1992, police already knew about Mexican Mennonite involvement with the drug traffic in 1989.[772]

Border agents often did not bother checking the Mennonites when they travelled north. Officials assumed that the quaintly dressed people were "very law abiding, family oriented, and civic minded."[773] When the news of drug smuggling came out, some thought that Mennonites had exploited their good reputation to smuggle drugs.

Old Colonists' involvement in drug smuggling again demonstrates that the conservative Mennonites of Mexico have not remained isolated from the influences that affect other North American Mennonite communities. Since the stories about Mexican Mennonites and drugs first appeared, numerous other Mexican Mennonites faced arrest and time in jail for drug offences in Mexico, the United States, and Canada.[774] In the 1990s, rumours abounded in the Manitoba colony of drug dealings between Mennonites and Mexicans. Some Mennonites possibly worked with Mexican drug dealers, participating mainly by moving drugs across the international borders. Rumours also suggested that some grew marijuana and that Mennonite businesses laundered drug money. In May 1997, Canada Customs officials reportedly said that the "Mexican-Mennonite drug pipeline . . . is the largest source of marijuana being smuggled into Canada."[775] Since drugs from various sources enter Canada undetected, that claim is difficult to substantiate or disprove. Recent years have seen much less Canadian media attention focussed on Mexican Mennonites and their involvement with drugs.

Mennonites also encountered other problems with the law.[776] Changing enforcement practices in Mexico contributed to difficulties. For decades, lax Mexican vehicle registration and control procedures resulted in the presence of large numbers of vehicles that had entered the country illegally. Once Mexico increased enforcement procedures, owners of vehicles in some colonies encountered difficulties because their pickups and cars lacked proper documentation. Referred to as *schief*, or crooked, someone had brought them into Mexico illegally.[777] The number of illegal vehicles present in the colonies appeared to

lessen by the late 1990s, thanks to increased enforcement efforts. Another example of how legal problems in Mexico differ from the rest of North America comes from the payment of bribes. While Canadians consider it a crime to pay or receive a bribe, Mexican custom long has encouraged that practice. Those who do not agree with paying money to officials can find themselves in a difficult position.

Violence among Mexican Mennonites also sometimes became a problem. Most of these incidents did not reach the ears of the police or the press. Instead, parents and colony leaders often handled the situations quietly, particularly when they involved youths.[778] Not many years ago for example, after returning from Canada a young man brandished a hand gun in his colony. Even though colony members seemed extremely concerned, they hesitated to contact the police. Neighbours did not blame the parents for his aggressive behaviour either. Community members believed that his elders had done what they could, including beating the young man.[779]

In the past, suicides sometimes occurred among the Old Colonists. The incidence of these sad events appears to have increased during recent decades.[780] While the rate still did not appear elevated in comparison with North America overall, the increase by the late 1990s possibly provided another symptom of the various problems faced by Mexican Mennonites. Suicides appear to increase among persons, including Canadian and American farmers and North American aboriginals, who experience loss of control over their lives.

Decreased attendance at the traditional Old Colony church services also serves as a sign of difficulties. Frequently, fewer than half of the people attend the services, although some ministers attract a larger turnout than others. When communities experience divisions and controversies, attendance particularly suffers.[781] Not all who become disaffected with the old church embrace the new alternatives. Instead, they stay away from organized religion.

Jeffrey Lynn Eighmy examined the process of change in some Mexican Old Colony and Sommerfelder colonies. He concluded that when change comes, it comes quickly and on a large scale.[782] This occurs partly because, before accepting change, the people have the opportunity to evaluate the item or behaviour in question in the world around them. Therefore, they avoid the need to carry out much personal experimentation with innovations. Community opinion also heavily influences Old Colonists, which leads to often making changes in unison. Eighmy's findings certainly ring true when looking at issues such as rubber tires, vehicles, and electrical power. When change comes in these areas, it often arrives in a flood. Large numbers of Old Colonists enthusiastically accept innovations prohibited by their church a short time before. Unfortunately, that change frequently results in permanent fracturing of communities.

In 1985, on the Manitoba colony, possession of a motor vehicle still brought punishment with excommunication. In the community's view, those who owned motor vehicles travelled rapidly down the road of sin. Three years later, car ownership no longer brought the ban, although leaders still discouraged the practice.[783] By the late 1990s, many Old Colonists and other Mennonites in the area adopted the Mexican taste for fast, low-slung short box pickups, often late model Chevys, with wide tires and blacked out windows. It seems almost surreal to watch a conservative Mennonite woman in her traditional dress and black

head covering rumble away in her hot rod pickup. The Mennonites particularly value pickups and sometimes make financial sacrifices to obtain one.[784]

In 1996, in the four Cuauhtémoc area colonies, fewer than twenty-five Reinländer and Old Colony farmers still used horses for transportation. Three Old Colony elders still used them to drive to church when they did not have to go too far, and Bishop Franz Banman did not have a pickup or car.[785] They and the others who still used horses represented the remaining resistance to giving up the old ways and surrendering to the forces from outside.

Thousands of Old Colonists who refused to give in to the impinging forces from the outside world fled the coming changes. When the various pressures mounted sufficiently, they auctioned off many of their goods and moved on to another location where they hoped to find the freedom to faithfully follow the vision of their forefathers. In early 1996, many held auction sales at Buenos Aires as an estimated twenty-five families, or 120 persons, prepared to leave for Bolivia. Their exodus would raise the total of those who made the move since June 1994 to forty-six families or 217 persons.[786] The installation of electrical power lines likely represented one of the largest reasons for this movement. Over the past decades, similar scenes played themselves out in many other colonies.

Not all Old Colonists who have wanted to maintain the old order have found the means to do so. In 1996, various people who considered migrating to Bolivia or Argentina estimated they would need about $10,000 U. S. to make the move. They hoped to sell their small acreages, cows, and other goods to raise the required funds. In some of the poorer colonies, few residents had the money to buy the assets of those who wanted to leave. And the poorest of those who wanted to leave had virtually nothing to sell. The required $10,000 looked like a vast amount of money to these people. Unless someone helped them, many had little hope of finding the money to finance the move to South America. Some colonies, including La Batea, El Capulin, and Buenos Aires, had sunk so far into poverty that extended families and the community could not help much either.

Positive aspects also existed in the colonies in the late 1990s. Many residents of the Cuauhtémoc area colonies enjoyed relative prosperity. Many battles between the forces of change and those who sought to protect the old ways lay in the past. Those who remained had passed the greatest challenges of adjusting from the old to the new. In place of following the old vision of their parents and grandparents, they strove to create an extension of prosperous Canada and America in Mexico. Others, in some isolated colonies, still lived the dream of those who came from Canada in the 1920s, largely unaffected by the Mexican or the Canadian world.

But large numbers of Old Colonists and former Old Colonists felt overwhelmed by the problems that confronted them daily. They still struggled through the prolonged time of difficulty in their colonies, from which they could see no easy way out. Tens of thousands believed they had little choice, other than to continue to live in chronic poverty in colonies filled with turmoil or move to Canada or the United States. While outsiders often blamed the Old Colony leadership for this state of affairs, the true explanation appears more complex. The reasons included the influence of outside churches and the effects of the movement to Canada.

CONCLUSION- THE VISION LIVES ON

Four distinct and often mutually exclusive groups today claim the right to use the designation Old Colony Mennonite: the original Old Colonists who remained in Canada, the Old Colonists who remain in the liberalized Mexican colonies, the Old Colonists who live in the more isolated colonies of Mexico and other parts of Latin America, and those who left Mexico for Canada or various parts of the United States. Some members of the latter group have blended in with Old Colonists in Canada. Great differences exist between the various groups, making it difficult to make observations and statements that apply to all.

Only those Old Colonists in the third group, those who live in the isolated colonies, still find it possible to live the life their ancestors envisioned when they came to Mexico and transformed their vision into reality. Members of this group likely account for less than one-half of the total number of the Mexican Old Colony descendants. While these people continue to encounter many difficulties, the old vision still survives among them.

Some might question whether the loss of adherents should cause concern for the Old Colonists and other concerned parties. Instead of counting those who have left the traditional communities, possibly it is more important to stress the number who remain in the fold. After all, how many Mennonite groups in Canada and the United States can claim that they retained nearly one-half of their descendants during the past eighty years? While Mennonite surnames frequently are heard in North American society, many bearers of those names no longer adhere to the church and traditions of their forebears. In contrast, at least in terms of remaining true to the vision of their ancestors, the Old Colony Mennonites represent a success story. Yet, it remains important and of interest to examine the experiences of the Old Colony Mennonites of Mexico. More than do many groups, the Old Colonists want to pass on their vision and mourn the loss of their offspring. Conservative Mennonites and others can learn from the Old Colonists' experiences.

The issue of why more descendants of the early Old Colonist settlers in Mexico no longer live according to their ancestors' vision is complex and controversial. But in spite of the contentiousness of the matter, it remains important to attempt to understand what happened and continues to happen to the Old Colonists. The experiment carried out by this group, in designing and living in isolated, closed communities in Mexico, remains exceptional in modern history. This history deserves careful study, free from agendas that aim to change the group.

In the past, observers offered four reasons for the difficulties encountered by the Old Colonists. These include leadership shortcomings, economic failure, population explosion, and a multi-faceted threatening Mexican environment. Analysts closely related both economic failure and the population explosion to the leadership issue. They blamed much of the poverty and overpopulation on poor leadership. And the leaders also bore the brunt of the criticism for the original decision to move into the Mexican environment and subsequent moves within Latin America. Some outsiders looking to place blame for the problems characterized Old Colony leaders as inadequate, power hungry, and despotic.

While each of the four aforementioned factors played some role in the

history of the Old Colony in Mexico, two additional factors remained largely overlooked. Yet these two elements account for many of the problems experienced in the colonies. One reason for this omission stems from the fact that some observers who analysed the Old Colony and its problems were the same people and organizations who created these two factors.

Other Mennonite groups have acted as one of the most disruptive factors to Old Colony life in Mexico. Possibly more than any other influence, their presence transformed the largest Mennonite colonies there. Some Mennonites came to Mexico looking for a new home for themselves, and others arrived with the specific purpose of changing the Old Colonists spiritually, structurally, economically, educationally, and socially. For more than fifty years, various Mennonite organizations worked at breaking down the barriers erected by the Old Colonists between themselves and the world, including the larger Mennonite world. The newcomers did not attempt to change Old Colony spirituality within the framework of the existing Old Colony church, but by establishing rival church structures. Countless cultural changes accompanied the new religious packages. The provision of alternative church and community structures offered the Old Colony people options to the closed colony life and destroyed Old Colony boundaries, communities, unity, and discipline. Survival of the traditional Old Colony vision requires unity of purpose and action. Diversity works against this.

Walter Schmiedehaus, an accepted friend of the Old Colonists, recorded much of the group's history in Mexico. In 1988, as he neared the end of his life, he wrote: "Some 25 years ago church representatives of Canadian and American persuasion surfaced here (and whatever shortcomings they had, they more than compensated for them with presumption and a judgmental stance) and then the dam broke. . . . I thank God that their total disintegration shall be spared me. After all, I am 87 years of age and so my demise will be an act of mercy so that I shall not see the final collapse of my beloved people."[787] While Schmiedehaus did not name the churches, clearly, various Mennonite organizations from Canada and the United States brought the most change.

Some sentiment today dictates that no outside group has the right to interfere with the self determination of another group. This line of thought could fault the other Mennonites for their often unwelcome presence in the colonies. Another point of view might censure Old Colonists for their patriarchal, traditional system and rejection of modernity. While philosophical justifications exist for both positions, the disruptiveness of the outside intervention remains undisputable. Some individuals within the colonies have welcomed the opportunities and changes brought by the outside groups while others have strongly opposed them.

The second factor that has not received adequate recognition as a disruptive factor in Mexican Old Colony history is the effect of the migration to Canada. Most observers have viewed this movement only as a symptom of the problems in Mexico, rather than as a contributing factor to the disintegration of the Old Colony world there. Certainly, over the years Old Colonists brought back some positive influences and knowledge from Canada. But overall, had the Old Colonist migrants from Mexico remained in Canada, less damage would have occurred to the Mexican colonies. Most migrants repeatedly travelled back and forth, introducing Canada and the money earned there as a long term element

of the colonies' reality. Returnees from Canada brought numerous cultural changes and a different world outlook than the one taught by the Old Colonists.

Because of the various factors mentioned, Old Colony society in Mexico finds itself in a severely weakened state early in the new millennium. The large Cuauhtémoc area colonies likely will continue to move farther away from the design their founders had in mind. For many there, the Old Colony vision serves as a colourful part of their history, rather than an integral part of today's reality. Some other colonies have followed the trend of the Cuauhtémoc area, to varying degrees. Many have left the Old Colony vision behind, freeing themselves of the limitations imposed by their traditions. At the same time, those who left the old ways lost much of the former support and strength of their community.

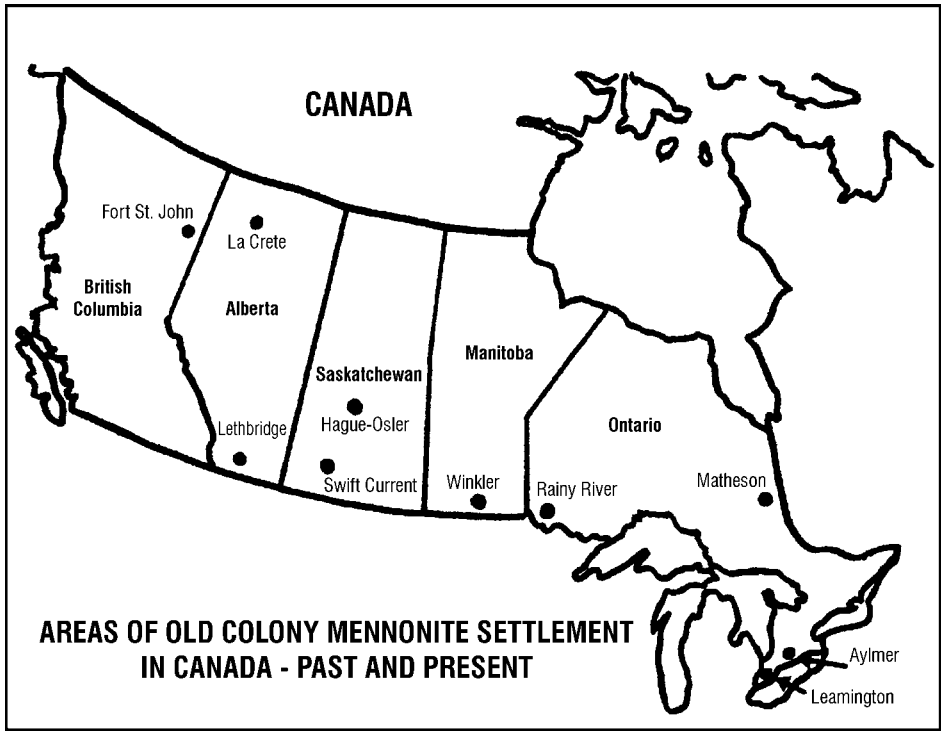
The future of other colonies remains uncertain. In the late 1990s, it seemed likely that Durango would continue to experience radical change, but not primarily because of the leadership, the economy, population pressure, or Mexican influences. While those factors made the colony vulnerable, disruption occurred largely because other Mennonite churches' actions split the community and because residents continued to carry Canadian influences back to Mexico. Other communities stand further from disintegration, although walls also appear weaker there.

However, the dream of those who immigrated to Mexico in the 1920s still remains alive. While Schmiedehaus' prediction of the demise of the traditional Old Colony communities in the Cuauhtémoc area largely already has come true, the Old Colonists did not die. Instead, they moved on. Even with the heavy losses to the outside churches and Canada, more Old Colony people than ever before live in conservative colonies, located in remote parts of Mexico and other Latin American countries. Their survival remains uncertain and no guarantees exist of permanent religious and cultural freedom. But as the Old Colony people say, "es geht noch."[788]

What will their future bring, living in the high plains, deserts, and jungles of Latin America? Will the expansion of world population, liberal democracy, globalization, and the larger Mennonite world increasingly close in on them? Any attempt to predict their future seems foolhardy, in light of the Old Colonists' history of proving observers wrong.

MAPS

Map Number 1
AREAS OF
OLD COLONY MENNONITE SETTLEMENT IN CANADA:
PAST AND PRESENT



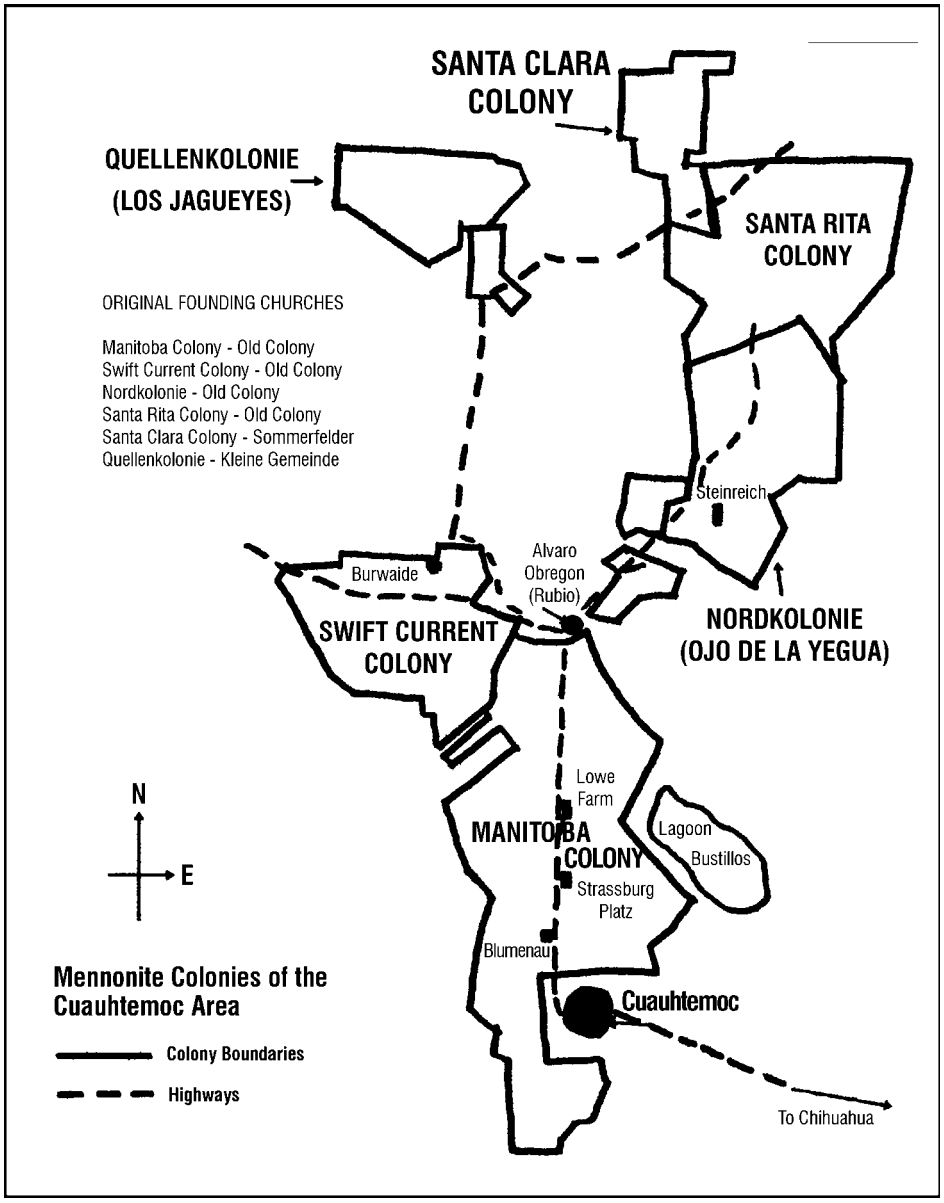
Map Number 2
MAP SHOWING THE LOCATIONS OF THE ORIGINAL COLONIES IN MEXICO

Map Number 3
MENNONITE COLONIES OF MEXICO

CODE TO COLONIES - with approximate founding dates.
(A partial listing of past and present Old Colony and other Mennonite settlements)

1 Manitoba - 1922
2 Swift Current - 1922
3 Nord (Ojo de la Yegua) - 1946
4 Santa Rita - 1962
5 Santa Clara - 1922
6 Quellenkolonie (Los Jagueyes) - 1947
7 Las Virginias - 1980
8 Buenos Aires - 1958
9 El Cuervo - 1979
10 Buena Vista - 1985
11 El Capulin - 1962
12 Sabinal - 1990
13 Villa Ahumanda - 1992
14 Monclova - 1974
15 Nueva Padilla - 1983
16 Villa de Casas - 1981
17 Gonzalez - 1951
18 Durango - 1924
19 Yermo - 1950
20 La Honda - 1964
21 La Batea - 1961
22 Yalnon - 1983
23 Chavi - 1986
24 Nuevo Progreso - 1987
25 El Temporal - 1995

Map Number 4
MENNONITE COLONIES OF THE CUAUHTEMOC AREA



ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The choice of these four factors comes from a reading of the literature about the Old Colony available in books and periodicals. This author's interpretation accounts partly for grouping the various factors into these categories.

2. Abe Fehr, interview by author, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 1996.

CHAPTER 1

3. Calvin Wall Redekop, "A New Look at Sect Development," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13, no. 3 (September 1974): 347. Their official name is Die Altkolonier Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde. The designation "Old Colony" appeared later on, but became part of their name. Various sources refer to this group by different names. Designations include: the Reinland Mennonite Church, Reinländer, the Reinländer Mennonitische Altkolonie, Fürstenländer, and Kanadier. They often refer to themselves as *Dietscha* and their language as *Dietsch*. Among other Mennonites, they call themselves *oolt Kolnia* (Old Colonists).

4. Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic or Protestant* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2001), 72; C. Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1984); Delbert F. Plett, "Is the future for Mennonites Evangelical?" *Preservings* 21 (December 2002): 42.

5. T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 11-14.

6. H.L. Sawatzky, *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 5 (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1990), 651. The Old Colony Mennonites have their primary roots in the Flemish congregations of Poland and Prussia.

7. Henry Schapansky, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia: Early History and First Settlers in the Context of the Mennonite Migrations* (Henry Schapansky, 2001): Chapter 1.

8. Leo Driedger, "A Sect in a Modern Society: A Case Study: The Old Colony Mennonites of Saskatchewan" (masters thesis, University of Chicago, 1955), 2-3.

9. Redekop, "A New Look at Sect Development," 350.

10. Cornelius J. Dyck, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. in chief Mircea Eliade, vol. 9 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987), 376; Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970*, 11; Rodolfo Groth, *Gold Indianer Mennoniten: Schicksale in der nordwestlichen Sierra Madre von Mexiko*, (Rodolfo Groth, 1960), 199; Schapansky, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia*, Chapter 2; Reuben Epp, *The Story of Low German & Plautdietsch: Tracing a Language Across the Globe* (Hillsboro, Kansas: The Reader's Press, 1993), 53-54; *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 4 (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), 38.

11. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8, B94,Schmiedehaus papers, file no. 13, "Tratados celebrados entre los distintos gobiernos y los Menonitas," (n.d.). This paper reviews the history of Mennonite privileges in Europe and North America beginning with concessions given by Agustin I in 1642.

12. Calvin Redekop, "Religion and Society A State within a Church," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 47, no. 4 (October 1973): 342. Others have pointed to different roots, including those in the monastic tradition, for the Old Colony desire to live separate from the world. See previous reference to Klaassen, Snyder, and Plett.

13. Driedger, "A Sect in a Modern Society," 4; Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970*, 11; Schapansky, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia*, Chapters 6 and 7.

14. C. Henry Smith, *The Story of the Mennonites* (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1941), 387.

15. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America: Is History Repeating Itself?" (paper, January 1982), 1.

16. John Friesen, *ME* 5, 195.

17. Driedger, "A Sect in a Modern Society", 6; James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia: 1789-1889* (Hyperion Press Limited, 1989), 162, 280; *ME* 5, 196;

Schapansky, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia*, Chapters 6 to 11.

18. Royden K. Loewen, *Family, Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850- 1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 16.

19. Calvin Wall Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 246; Jacob G. Guenter, *Men of Steele: Lifestyle of a Unique Sect: Saskatchewan Valley Mennonites and their Descendents* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Jacob G. Guenter, 1981), 2; Urry, *None but Saints*, 211.

20. Krahn, *ME* 4, 38-39.

21. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 6; Krahn, *ME* 4, 38-39; Guenter, *Men of Steele*, 4; Urry, *None But Saints*, 216. Urry offers an extensive discussion of the complex factors involved in the movement.

22. Aron Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta and their Assimilation" (Masters Thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1964), 7.

23. Guenter, *Men of Steele*, 3.

24. Abraham Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite History With Special Reference To The Conservative Mennonite Emigration From Canada To Mexico And South America After World War One" (Masters Thesis, Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba, August 1960), 26.

25. E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., 1955), 45.

26. Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, 48-49. Francis refers to the procedure involved as "devious."

27. Urry, *None But Saints*, 215. Sources do not agree on the number who emigrated. Estimates of the number of immigrants are as high as 17,000.

28. Sawatzky, *M E* 5, 651.

29. Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite History," 31. Establishment of the province of Manitoba took place in 1870. Control over many matters, including administration of crown lands and settlement, remained with the federal government.

30. Adina Reger and Delbert Plett, *Diese Steine: Die Russlandmennoniten* (Steinbach, Manitoba: Crossway Publications Inc., 2001): 153, 163.

31. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 10.

32. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* (Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, 1990), 294-298.

33. Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870- 1925* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 76.

34. Guenter, *Men of Steele*, 6.

35. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 9. The West Reserve Old Colony did not want to adopt the Reeve system, which the East Reserve did adopt.

36. Sawatzky, *M E* 5, 651.

37. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America: Is History Repeating Itself?" (paper, January 1982), 5.

38. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 14.

39. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 10.

40. E.K. Francis, "The Mennonite School Problem in Manitoba 1874- 1919," *MQR* 27, no. 3 (July 1953): 230.

41. William Janzen, *Limits on Liberty: The Experience of Mennonite, Hutterite, and Doukhobor Communities in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 91.

42. Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 104.

43. Francis, "The Mennonite School Problem in Manitoba," 205.

44. Ens, *Subjects or Citizens*, 133.

45. Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 96.

46. Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 105.

47. Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 295.

48. Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 105.

49. Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 107.

50. Mennonite Heritage Centre, Volume 4322, file no. 115R, 1982Y, William Janzen, "Reflections on the School Problems in Canada Which Prompted the Migration to Mexico", October 1982, 2.

51. Guenter, *Men of Steele*, 13.

52. Francis, "The Mennonite School Problem in Manitoba," 233.

53. Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 107-112. In 1923, A.W. Ball, the deputy minister, commented that government made no appreciable headway in moving the Old Colony children into the schools. He also noted the privation caused by the fines, and he seemed to favour compromise. Numerous other people tried to exert their influence to settle the situation as well.

54. J. Winfield Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico: An Introduction* (Akron, Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1945), 10.

55. Sawatzky, *ME* 5, 651; Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 180; Walter Schmiedehaus, *Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko.*Winnipeg (Manitoba: CMBC Publications; Steinbach, Manitoba: Die Mennonitische Post, 1982), 8; Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 13-14.

56. Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Government: Western Canada, 1870-1925" (Ph. D thesis, University of Ottawa, 1979), 328.

57. Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Government," 326.

58. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 160.

59. Isaak M. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde von Canada nach Mexico* (Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico: Imprenta Colonial, 1971), 127. Translation by author. Dyck felt that they had found in Mexico what they had lost in Canada. When warned against going to Mexico, they said that they didn't just depend on the government but on God.

60. J.G. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Mexico" (Unpublished report of trip to Mexico, 1986), 17.

61. Francis, "The Mennonite School Problem in Manitoba," 205. Francis outlines the government position in this regard.

62. Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite History," 132; Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Government," 343-344. In Saskatchewan, the groups had difficulty selling their land and deals that had been made fell through. There were feelings at the time that the government was behind the difficulties in selling the land.

63. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1971), 317.

64. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde*, 43-53.

65. Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Government," 357.

66. A. Vernon Thomas, "Shall the Mennonites be driven out of Canada?" *Steinbach Post*, January 22 and 29, 1919.

67. "A second look at the rejected conservatives," *Mennonite Reporter*, Centennial of Russian Mennonite Immigration Issue, 25 November 1974, 36.

68. "A second look at the rejected conservatives," 36.

69. Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite History," 160.

70. Schmiedehaus, Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko, 19-20.

71. Redekop, The Old Colony Mennonites, 251.

72. "Governor attends celebration," Mennonite Reporter 17, no. 18 (14 September 1987): 11. This article speaks of the sixtieth anniversary of Cuauhtémoc as celebrated in 1987. The city then would have been founded in 1927. Menno-Zeitung von Mexico 1, no. 12, (25 June 25 1987):1. San Antonio de los Arenales began as an ejido in 1918.

73. Jeffrey Lynn Eighmy, Mennonite Architecture: Diachronic Evidence for Rapid Diffusion in Rural Communities (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 27.

74. Francis, In Search of Utopia, 192. Estimates of the percentages of the Old Colony people who left each of the areas in Canada vary somewhat, but these numbers represent the mid-range of the estimates. One estimate made by the Old Colony in Mexico is that 7,000 persons made the move.

75. Krahn, ME 4, 41; Driedger, "A Sect in a Modern Society," 48, 105; George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach," part 18, Die Mennonitische Post 20, no. 1 (3 May 1996): 22.

76. Driedger, "A Sect in a Modern Society," 48.

77. Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 15, 22; Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada: 1920-1940 (MacMillan of Canada, 1982), 425.

78. Epp, Mennonites in Canada: 1920-1940, 118-119; Sawatzky, They Sought a Country, 40-50.

79. Sawatzky, They Sought a Country, 59-60.

80. Francis, In Search of Utopia, 188; Leo Driedger, Mennonite Identity in Conflict (Lewiston and Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 105.

81. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements, 16-17; Francis, In Search of Utopia, 192; Jubiläums Jahr Kalendar; "Aufnahme einer Auswanderergruppe im März 1922," Die Mennonitische Post 19, no.17, (5 January 1996): 22; Jakob B. H. Redekopp, "72 Jahre Mennoniten in Durango," Die Mennonitische Post 20, no. 5 (5 July 1996): 3; Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 18, 22.

82. H. Ens, ME 5, 536.

83. Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 18, 22.

84. Mennonite Heritage Centre, Volume 4322, File Number 104R- 1982Y, "Post World War II Mennonite Emigration from Canada to Latin America", a paper, (n.a, n.d.).

85. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonite Colonization and Agriculture in Mexico," Mennonite Life, July 1966, 135. The Kleine Gemeinde in Canada is now known as the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC). The Mexican Kleine Gemeinde has not changed its name.

86. Krahn, *ME* 4, 40; Sawatzky, *ME* 5, 582; Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements," 122.

87. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde*, 156, 161.

88. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 23.

89. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 148.

90. Schmiedehaus, *Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko*. 91-109.

91. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde*, 149.

92. William Janzen, Director of the Ottawa Office of MCC Canada, "The movement of Mennonites from Mexico back to Canada," a paper written for Mr. J. Vanderloo, Director General of the Manitoba Region of Employment and Immigration, 16 February 1981, amended 10 March 1981, vol. 3584, file OS-054, Mennonite Heritage Centre.

93. Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite History," 189; Epp, *Mennonites in Canada: 1920-1940*, 356.

94. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde*, 144.

95. Schmiedehaus, *Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko*. 120.

96. Sawatzky, *ME* 5, 580; Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde*, 100-101; Janzen, "The movement of Mennonites from Mexico back to Canada;" Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 19.

97. Schmiedehaus, *Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko*. See references throughout this book about Schmiedehaus' involvement.

98. "Sein Dienst an die Mennoniten ist beendet", *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 3, no. 21 (9 July 1990): 1. Schmiedehaus spent his last days living at the *Altenheim* in the Manitoba Colony and died in June of 1990 at the age of eighty-eight years.

99. Margaret Klassen, interview with author, Durango, Mexico, 19-20 December 1996.

CHAPTER 2

100. J. Winfield Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico: An Introduction* (Akron, Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1945).

101. Calvin Wall Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969).

102. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat: Deutsch-Mennonitische Kolonisierung in Mexiko, 1922-1984* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1986).

103. Calvin Redekop and John A. Hostetler, "The Plain People: An Interpretation," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 51 (October 1977): 272-273.

104. "Neuer Ältester gewählt," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 24 (18 April 1997): 16. In 1997 the Manitoba colony elected a third bishop, Franz Kroeker, as a helper for Franz Banman, who was ill. Some other colonies utilized two bishops at times, often when the first bishop became ill. Durango, Las Virginias, and Buenos Aires colonies had two bishops in 1996.

105. J.G. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Mexico," unpublished report of trip to Mexico (1986), 101.

106. Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November, 1996.

107. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 267-269.

108. Calvin Redekop, "The Old Colony: An Analysis of Group Survival," *MQR* 15, no. 3 (July 1966): 195.

109. Kelly Lynn Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua: Language, Literacy, and Identity among the Old Colony Mennonites in Northern Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996), 9.

110. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 299.

111. Bishop Bernhard Bueckert and Gerhard Klassen, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 2 December 1996.

112. Abe Dueck, Centre for MB Studies, "Church discipline in Mennonite history" (for Kanadier Concerns Committee Meeting, 14 May 1993), from Abe Warkentin files.

113. *The Living Bible*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971).

114. Bishop Franz Banman, interview by author, Manitoba Colony, Mexico, 24 December 1996; "Ausschluss wegen Gummireifen wird in Manitoba Kolonie aufgehoben," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 24 (18 April 1997): 1.

115. Jacob Friesen, interview with author, Durango colony, Mexico, 19 December 1996.

116. Bishop Franz Wall and Minister Isaak Fehr, interview by author, Buenos Aires colony, Mexico, 19 December 1996.

117. Donald B. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). There are similarities between the Mexican Old Colonists' stand on technological matters and that of the Old Order Amish. Donald B. Kraybill explored the sources of many of the Amish technological prohibitions. He found that below the surface lie logical and often sound reasons for the various rules. The prohibitions and the reasons for them are similar in many cases in the Amish and the Old Colony groups.

118. George Rempel, "Oonse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 22, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 9 (6 September 1996): 22.

119. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 300.

120. Bernd G. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln: Wie die Hutterer und Amischen leben* (Augsburg: Pattloch Verlag, Weltbild Verlag GmbH, 1996), 200.

121. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat*, 242.

122. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok, Woo es de Sach?," part 20, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 5 (5 July 1996): 22.

123. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok, Woo es de Sach?," part 25, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 13 (1 November 1996): 22.

124. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, 154. Kraybill makes this point in regards to the Amish. It also appears valid for the Old Colonists.

125. "2-Meter Band Radios (Sprechfunk) sind populär", *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 17 (17 March 1986): 1; "Die 2-Meter sollen registriert werden," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 3, no. 12, (1 February 1990): 1. The radios were purchased in the U.S. and were used illegally, with only one radio in the area registered. In early 1990, most of the approximate 900 two meter radios in use in the villages remained unregistered. Registration campaigns, that had gone on for years, apparently met with very little success.

126. "Die Kolonien Berichten", *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 4, no. 15, (28 September 1991): 3.

127. "Telefondienst," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 3, no. 19, (30 May 1990): 6.

128. Jeffrey Lynn Eighmy, *Mennonite Architecture: Diachronic Evidence for Rapid Diffusion in Rural Communities* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 66.

129. Calvin Redekop, *Mennonite Society* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 118; And based on personal observation.

130. The original colonies all lie between approximately 2,000 and 2,300 metres (6,500 to 7,500 feet) above sea level on the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre Occidental mountains. The Cuauhtémoc area colonies are located in the Bustillos Basin, and Durango colony is in the Guatimapé valley. La Batea sits at about 2,600 meters (8,500 feet) in elevation. La Honda is located at about 2,300 metres (7,500 feet) above sea level.

131. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 112.

132. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 16.

133. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat*, 184; Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 245-246.

134. J. Winfield Fretz, "Mennonites in Mexico," *Mennonite Life*, April 1947, 26; "Kommt

unser Landbesitz-System in Spannung?," Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko 2, no. 3 (3 May 1988): 11. In the early days, the Manitoba Colony was organized under the names of early leaders: the *Rempel-Wall-Reinland Waisenamt* and the *Heide-Neufeld-Reinland Waisenamt*. Not having individual ownership has presented some problems. Colony leaders have not always wanted to sign the necessary papers that would have allowed those wanting loans to use the land for collateral.

135. "Kommt unser Landbesitz-System in Spannung?," Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko 2, no. 3 (3 May 1988): 11; And based on personal observations.

136. "Das Gesetz lautet . . . ," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 2 (30 July, 1984): 1 and 7. The *Certificados* were not made for pieces of land smaller than twenty hectares, but to obtain them, smaller landowners could join together to apply for them.

137. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

138. J.G. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Mexico," unpublished report of trip to Mexico (1986), 117.

139. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 285.

140. Lut Vandekeybus, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 26 December 1996. Similarities exist between church services in late twentieth century Flemish Belgium and the Old Colony. Men and women enter through separate entrances and sit on separate sides of the church. Mannerisms, including a reserved shyness, are also similar between the two groups. Some of these things may be survivals from the Old Colony Flemish roots.

141. Redekop, "The Old Colony: An Analysis of Group Survival," 196.

142. Some non-Old Colony Mennonites who arrived in Canada in the time period from the 1870s to World War I joined the Old Colony church. Also in Prussia, the ancestors of the Old Colonists accepted some persons from outside into the group.

143. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 8.

144. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat*, 171-173; Leonard Sawatzky, "Colony Leaders Must Realize That Present Trends Lead To Disaster," *The Canadian Mennonite* 14, no. 13, (29 March 1966): 20, 21, 23; Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 225. The long, narrow *Koerls* have caused serious water erosion in some areas where the land is not level. Generally the land has been laid out down the slope, rather than across the slope. Due to the narrowness of the pieces, it also is farmed in this direction, leading to erosion. Personal observation has shown that burning of stubble in the winter, in spite of its harmful effects, still commonly occurred in the 1990s. However predictions of impending doom have not materialized. In 1966, it was predicted that, if the next forty years went as the past forty had, the land would become worthless. Much like farmers elsewhere, Mennonite farmers in Mexico continue to learn conservation practices.

145. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonite Colonization and Agriculture in Mexico," *Mennonite Life*, July 1966, 137; William Janzen, Director of the Ottawa Office of MCC Canada, "The movement of Mennonites from Mexico back to Canada," a paper written for Mr. J. Vanderloo, Director General of the Manitoba Region of Employment and Immigration, February 16, 1981, amended March 10, 1981, page 5, from MCC Canada, Ottawa files. In Europe and even in some parts of North America, Mennonites once commonly made cheese. Cheese making was reintroduced to the Old Colonists of Mexico in about 1933 by Peter G. Friesen, a young Mennonite who had worked for the Mormons in the Nuevo Casas Grandes area and had learnt about cheese making from them. Cheese making on a commercial scale spread throughout the colonies. Butter making was also tried, but there was not a good market for butter in Mexico, as the Mexicans were not accustomed to using it. By 1947, there were fourteen cheese factories in the Old Colony villages in Chihuahua.

146. Personal interviews, December 1996.

147. Annual cheese production in 1996 was about 950 tonnes from about 10,000 tonnes of milk. The highest paid milk producer received about 150,000 pesos of milk per year while the average person received about 30,000 pesos.

148. George Rempel, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 12 December 1996.

149. "Aus aller Welt: Kontrolle über Käsefabriken in Mexiko wird schärfer," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 11 (7 October 1994): 15. In 1994 plans were underway to inspect all the cheese factories in the colonies. While Mexican law called for pasteurization of the cheese, by 1996 much remained unpasteurized. No cases have been heard of where the cheese presented a health hazard due to a lack of pasteurization, but the Mexican health authorities have made efforts to have the cheese factories meet health standards. More recently, two new modern milk pasteurization and cheese plants were built in Cuauhtémoc.

150. The government has introduced incentives for efficient use of water, such as drip irrigation in apple orchards.

151. Based on observations and interviews, December 1996.

152. "Ogilvie Company Co-operates With Agricultural Program," *The Canadian Mennonite* 8, no. 24 (10 June 1960): 1; "Mexico Mennonites Live In World Oat Paradise," *The Canadian Mennonite* 10, no. 7, (16 February 1962): 3. In 1960, the United States milling company, Ogilvie Oats Company, supplied Willard Stucky, agricultural researcher of the Board of Christian Service, with one hundred varieties of oats. A Quaker Oats representative called the area an "oat paradise," and it was described as probably the "heaviest concentration of oats commensurate with land area of any place on the earth." In 1962, at least ninety-eight percent of Mexico's oats grew in the Cuauhtémoc area.

153. Eighmy, *Mennonite Architecture*, 54.

154. Philip Dyck, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 11 December 1996.

155. Isaac Ens, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996.

156. Peter Rempel, "1922-1992, Siebzig Jahre Mennoniten in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 16, no. 24 (16 April 1993): 1; Philip Dyck, interview by author, Manitoba colony, December 1996. In the Cuauhtémoc area, the 1940s were easier years than the previous decades, with good markets for grain. Three crop failures in the early 1950s caused a crisis. In the 1970s, rains improved, farmers used artificial fertilizers, and markets for grain and cheese were good. The 1980s were yet better. Irrigation of corn and government subsidies for corn helped make this time good in the Cuauhtémoc area. Other colonies did well also due to good weather, chemical fertilizer, and good markets.

157. "Ja, wenn nötig, wässert 'Pautos'," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 3, no. 1, (3 June 1989): 7; Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

158. Enrique Loubet, Jr., "Manitoba, la Aldea que no Votará," *Excelsior*, 24 April 1970, 18. Translation by author.

159. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 21.

160. Fretz, "Mennonites in Mexico," 26. In 1947, Fretz said that there were fourteen stores in the Chihuahua Old Colony villages.

161. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 195-196. Helen Ens, "Aus dem Mennonitenleben: Blumenthal, Mexico, das Dorf der grauen Häupter," *Die Mennonitische Post* 9, no.1 (3 May 1985): 3.

162. Sawatzky, Leonard, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America: Is History Repeating Itself?" (n.p, n.d.), 8.

163. *The Living Bible*.

164. Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Latin America," 2.

165. Reuben Epp, *The Story of Low German & Plautdietsch: Tracing a Language Across the Globe* (Hillsboro, Kansas: The Reader's Press, 1993), 53-54; *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 4 (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), 38; Henry Schapansky, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia: Early History and First Settlers in the Context of the Mennonite Migrations* (Henry Schapansky, 2001): Chapter 2.

166. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 306.

167. Bishop Franz Banman, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 24 December 1996.

168. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 15.

169. Harry Loewen and Al Reimer, "Origins and Literacy Development of Canadian-Mennonite Low German," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 59 (July 1985): 286. It has been suggested that: "Perhaps the ironic conclusion to be drawn is that a literary consciousness of Plautdietsch seems to develop inversely to the actual use of the language; that as it recedes within the larger context of a more sophisticated culture and life experience with their own language and literature it can at least be given a distanced aesthetic form and setting- like any other properly mounted museum exhibit representing a vanished past."

170. Carsten Brandt, *Sprache und Sprachgebrauch Der Mennoniten in Mexiko* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1992), 25-26.

171. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 270.

172. Numerous Spanish classes were offered by MCC in the Cuauhtémoc area in 1996.

173. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 228; And based on personal observations.

174. This is not always the case. The author attended a completely High German service in La Batea.

175. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 14.

176. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico,* 26.

177. Bishop Franz Banman, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 24 December 1996.

178. Walter Schmiedehaus, *Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko.*Winnipeg (Manitoba: CMBC Publications; Steinbach, Manitoba: Die Mennonitische Post, 1982), 131.

179. James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789-1889* (Hyperion Press Limited, 1989), 154.

180. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln,* 196.

181. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 168-169.

182. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 117.

183. Guenter, "Canadian Old Mennonite Settlements," 43.

184. It involves breaking words into syllables and first saying the first syllable, then repeating the first syllable and then the second syllable, then beginning with the first syllable and the second syllable again, followed by the third syllable again, and so on. They read like this in unison. The sound is much like a chant.

185. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln,* 193; Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico,* 27; Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 314-318.

186. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8, B94, Schmiedehaus Papers, Box 2, file 21, Walter Schmiedehaus to Dr. S. Schnippenkötter, German Embassy, Mexico City, letter dated 10 January 1955; Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8, B94, Schmiedehaus Papers, Box 2, file 21, Walter Schmiedehaus to Dr. Andreas W. Bauer, German Embassy, Mexico City, letter dated 28 March 1956.

187. Adina Reger and Delbert Plett, *Diese Steine: Die Russlandmennoniten* (Steinbach, Manitoba: Crossway Publications Inc., 2001).

188. Abram Siemens, "Schulreform in der Manitoba Kolonie in Mexiko?," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 21 (7 March 1997): 2.

189. Based on personal experiences.

190. Mervin Cornelsen, interview by author, Durango colony, December 1996.

191. Eighmy, *Mennonite Architecture,* 46.

192. Wilma Derksen, "Mennonites in Mexico suffer economic stress," *Mennonite Reporter* 24, no. 25 (26 December 1994): 3.

193. This is often said jokingly by outsiders.

194. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 21.

195. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 180-181.

196. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, "Merkmale Gegenwärtiger Deutsch-Mennonitischer Kolonisierung in Mexiko." *Jahrbuch für Ostdeutsche Volkskunde* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1993), 225.

197. Hedges, *Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua,*" 30-31. Among adults, visiting friends and relatives, is also the primary social activity. Sometimes opportunities arise to stop and visit briefly on a working day. Some evenings are spent visiting and Sunday afternoons are devoted largely to this activity. Sundays are days of rest, including mainly for the women, who use Saturdays for cleaning the house. They still are expected to prepare meals and clean up after the meals on Sundays.

198. Abe Janzen, telephone interview with author, 9 October 1996.

199. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements," 118.

200. Rich Preheim, "Up in the air," *Mennonite Weekly Review* 72, no. 48 (1 December 1994): 1 and 8.

201. "Baseball Verein in Kolonien in Mexiko gegründet," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 24 (18 April 1997): 16.

202. A resident of a colony confided this to the author. The man's name does not appear here for fear of embarrassing him.

203. Charles Burkhart, "The Church Music of the Old Order Amish and Old Colony Mennonites," *MQR* (January 1953): 34.

204. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln,* 192.

205. Based on personal observations.

206. Rodolfo Groth, *Gold Indianer Mennoniten: Schicksale in der nordwestlichen Sierra Madre von Mexiko* (Rodolfo Groth, 1960), 150.

207. Calvin Redekop, "The Old Colony: An Analysis of Group Survival," *MQR* 15, no. 3 (July 1966): 209.

208. From my observations, some Old Colonists make little effort to hide their disobedience to some of the rules. While many still seek to scrupulously follow their community's dictates, others do not.

209. Royden K Loewen, *Family, Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850- 1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 32. Loewen has said that among Mennonites in Russia, the family was the most important institution of everyday life.

210. Based on personal observation.

211. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol.122, file 3-32-4, part 1, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada, to The Canadian Ambassador, Mexico, 11 December 1951.

212. Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October 1996; Rosabelle Fast, telephone interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October, 1996. After about forty years working with the Mennonites in Mexico, Helen Ens had never heard anyone take issue with the women's lack of a vote. Rosabelle Fast, who spent several years working with the Mexican Mennonites also said that she heard no talk about women voting and no signs of women's liberation.

213. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements," 113; Rosabelle Fast, telephone interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October 1996.

214. Gordon Allen and Calvin W. Redekop, "Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico: Migration and Inbreeding," *Social Biology* 34, no. 3 & 4 (Fall- Winter 1987): 177.

215. M. A. Jaworski et al., "Genetic Conditions among Canadian Mennonites Evidence for a Founder Effect among the Old Colony (Chortitza) Mennonites," *Clinical and Investigative Medicine* 12, no. 2 (April 1989), 127; "Ideal for studying genetic disorders," *Mennonite Reporter* 19, no.1, (9 January 1989); M. A. Jaworski et al., "Inherited Diseases in North American Mennonites: Focus on Old Colony (Chortitza) Mennonites, 16, from MCC Canada, Ottawa. A study was carried out in Canada on the Old Colony group, using a definition of the Old Colony group that included all descendants of Choritza. It looked into diseases that descendants of Chortitza have a high incidence of, and found that the Old Colony group had the world's largest familial aggregations of insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, autoimmune diseases, and Tourette syndrome.

216. *ME* 5, 126. They have been described as "semi-communal" due to the lack of emphasis on capitalistic self-interest and private property.

217. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996. If a spouse dies and the surviving spouse remarries, one half of the property goes to the *Waisenamt* for the children of the first marriage, although it does not have to be paid immediately.

218. Bishop Bernhard Bueckert and Gerhard Klassen, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996; Jacob Unger, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 18 December 1996. In 1996, out of about 1,000 families in Durango, only about five families were receiving living expenses from the Armenkasse. Two widows received aid. The Kleine Gemeinde had also set up an *Armenkasse* at Durango but no one had used it as of 1996. The Kleine Gemeinde had no objection to participation in *Seguro Social.*

219. Based on personal observations.

220. "Ist der Bauer-Zahnarzt am Verschwinden?," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 23 (17 June 1985): 1; "Mennonitische Zahnaerzte festgenommen", *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 6 (30 September 1985): 1; "Klassen fuer Mennonitische Zahnaerzte beginnen," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 6 (30 September 1985): 4; "'Schule' fuer Mennonitische Zahnaerzte," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 1 (15 July 1985): 4; "Die Zukunft der Ärzte in den Dörfern ist gefährdet," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 12 (17 December 1992): 20.

In 1985, Cuauhtémoc had a surplus of trained dentists, who attacked the untrained Mennonite dentists, but Mexican officials supported the Mennonite dentists. At least partly to pacify the Cuauhtémoc College of Dentists, some Mennonite dentists were to attend classes in Cuauhtémoc. Earlier in the year, one dentist had his freezing equipment impounded by the

Mexican health authorities. In 1992, after requests from Cuauhtémoc doctors and dentists, a Mexican official looked at the situation and possible solutions, including testing of the local practitioners or limiting them to serve only "Deutsche". One fully trained medical doctor, Dr. Franz Penner, also works in the area.

221. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 288; Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 230; Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln*, 223. In the mid-1990s, the child mortality rate was said to be four times higher than in the United States. Higher child mortality rates commonly exist among North American aboriginal people and in developing countries.

222. "Beteilung an Impfen war besser: Namen der Kinder, die nicht geimpft wurden, werden der Munizipalität Regierung übergeben," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 2, no. 4 (5 August 1993): 1. In 1993, the names of those in this category were to be given to the government authorities for possible action.

223. Many persons, even young adults, have numerous fillings. Many have bright metal fillings outlining their front teeth. This makes for very flashy smiles. It almost appears that some value these as cosmetic fillings.

224. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 287-288. People commonly spit sunflower seeds on the kitchen or living room floor, possibly especially when company comes. Milk remained unpasteurized in the 1990s.

225. Based on personal observations. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 25. Already in the 1940s, Fretz estimated that at least seventy-five percent of the men smoked. Old Colonists in Campeche are encouraging their people not to smoke. Smoking also may be declining in some northern colonies.

226. Calvin Redekop, "The Relation of Research to the Sectarian Self-Image," from record of the proceedings of Conference on Mennonite Educational and Cultural Problems, Hillsboro, Kansas, June 8-9, 1961, 51.

227. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3585, file OS-065, George Reimer to Arthur, 15 December 1981. One family was said to have taken five "mentally weak" members of its family to Canada in the 1970's, leaving them there in public care. The parents returned to Mexico, where they died. This type of case remains unusual and does not happen often.

228. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4360, file 104 R 1983Y, George Reimer, "Work with the handicapped in Mexico: the opening shot and echoes," 23 July, 1983.

229. Bishop Bernhard Bueckert and Gerhard Klassen, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996.

230. "Gefahr auf Hochwegen in Kolonien," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 1 (7 January 1994): 1.

231. "Schreckliches Unglueck bei 12 'A'," *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 1, no. 10 (26 September 1983): 1-2; "People," *Mennonite Reporter* 13, no. 22 (31 October 1983): 23. In one of the more tragic events, on September 16, 1983, eight persons died on the Manitoba colony when a bus hit a tractor drawn wagon loaded with workers. One report said that the wagon lacked markers or lights. The accident happened at night.

232. "Ein Schlag endet drei Leben," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 8 (28 October 1985): 1. In October of 1985, lightning killed three brothers. In more than one other case, several people died from lightning strikes. Severe lightning storms commonly happen in northern Mexico endangering people and livestock.

233. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements," 107.

234. Schapansky, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia*, 138.

235. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln*, 224.

236. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 30.

237. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln*, 214.

238. George Rempel, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, December 1996.

CHAPTER 3

239. Calvin Redekop, "The Old Colony: An Analysis of Group Survival," *The Mennonite Quarterly* Review 15, no. 3 (July 1966): 191.

240. Carsten Brandt, Sprache und Sprachgebrauch Der Mennoniten in Mexiko (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1992), 13.

241. "Economic Woes Erode Lives of Kanadier Mennonites in Mexico," Mennonite Central

Committee News Service Release, 12 July 1996, Internet address: http://www.mennontecc.ca/mcc/pr/1986/07-12/5.html; "Traditional Way of Farming Unsustainable, Mexico Mennonite Colony Representatives Acknowledge," Mennonite Central Committee News Service Release, 6 December 1995, Internet address: http://www.mbnet.mb.ca/mcc/pr/1995/12-06/index.html.

242. "Level of Despair in Mexican Colonies Surprises Manitoba Visitors." *Mennonite Central Committee News Service Release*, 17 May 1995, Internet address: http://www.mbnet.mb.ca/pr/1995/05-17/index.html.

243. Calvin Wall Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 68; Bernd G. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln: Wie die Hutterer und Amischen leben* (Augsburg: Pattloch Verlag, Weltbild Verlag GmbH, 1996), 223. Redekop said the average was nine children.

244. Calvin Redekop, "Decision Making in a Sect," *Review of Religious Studies,* Fall 1960, 83.

245. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

246. "Mexico Immigration to Ontario Confirmed," *The Canadian Mennonite* 5, no. 23 (7 June 1957): 1.

247. "Gemeinde Statistik," *Mexikanische Menno-Zeitung* 1, no. 3 (6 January 1987): 14.

248. "Gemeinde Statistik," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko,* 2, nos.17 and 18 (23 January 1989): 10.

249. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1971), 160.

250. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat: Deutsch-Mennonitische Kolonisierung in Mexiko, 1922-1984* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1986), 115.

251. J. Winfield Fretz, "Mennonites in Mexico," *Mennonite Life*, April 1947, 26.

252. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 142.

253. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 141.

254. "Eine Neue Kolonie," *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 1, no. 6 (30 July 1983): 1.

255. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

256. Based on personal observations; Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 239; Gordon Allen and Calvin W. Redekop, "Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico: Migration and Inbreeding," *Social Biology* 34, no. 3 & 4 (Fall- Winter 1987): 177-178. A study of the Manitoba colony in 1967 demonstrated that thirty-seven per cent of Mexican born married men still lived in the village of their birth.

257. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America: Is History Repeating Itself?" (N.p, n.d.), 12.

258. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, "Merkmale Gegenwärtiger Deutsch-Mennonitischer Kolonisierung in Mexiko," *Jahrbuch für Ostdeutsche Volkskunde,* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1993), 226-227.

259. J. G. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Mexico," Unpublished report of trip to Mexico (1986), 16.

260. H. Ens, *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement,* vol. 5 (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1990), 638.

261. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 21, 22, and 23, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, nos. 7 and 8, 9, and 11 (2 August, 6 September, and 4 October 1996). Buenos Aires, and El Capulin were both settled largely by persons opposed to the modernization occurring in the Manitoba colony in the early 1960s. Manitoba colony had chosen a second elder, Bernhard Wiebe, by the early 1960s. He, several ministers, and a deacon led numerous committed persons to the new colonies. The elder and two of the ministers at Buenos Aires were brothers, all grandsons of Bishop Wiebe who had led the Old Colony from Russia to Canada. Rubber tires represented one large issue as did the continuing preaching of Abram Dyck, the brother of Bishop Isaak Dyck. Abram Dyck was seen as favouring the use of rubber tires.

262. Sawatzky, "Merkmale Gegenwärtiger," 206, 216; George Rempel, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 26 December 1996. At first the colony had 5,000 hectares, but added another 935 in 1981 and 3,700 in 1983. Electrical power became available in 1990 and about one-third of the about 140 wells used electric pumps while two-thirds used diesel.

263. "Landvermesser haben ihr Land in Nord-Manitoba noch nicht verlost," *Deutsch-*

Mexikanische Rundschau 1, no.12 (17 December 1992): 19.

264. "Zwei Kolonien kaufen Land," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 3, no. 23 (20 August 1990): 11; "Ein Tag in Sabinal," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 21 (19 May 1993): 1; "Eindrücke der Reise nach Durango und Zacatecas," *Deutsch-Mennonitische Rundschau* 1, no. 2 (16 July 1992): 2. At least for a time, a bus ran three times a week to Nuevo Casas Grandes. A train that once ran more regularly no longer ran, other than occasionally to mines in the nearby hills.

265. "Landhandel in Kolonie Buenavista, Mexiko, abgeschlossen," *Die Mennonitische Post* 8, no. 24 (19 April 1985): 3. The land was broken into 108 titles, which did not correspond to actual land ownership.

266. "Guten Tag, Pestañas," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 21 (19 May 1993): 14.

267. Abram Siemens, "Die El Valle Kolonie wächst," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no.12 (18 October 1996): 3.

268. Eddy Plett, "Die Oasis Kolonie in Chihuahua, Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 22 (15 March 1996): 1.

269. Dan Penner, interview by author, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Mexico, 27 December 1996.

270. Henry A. Fast, "Mennonite Pioneer Venture in Mexico," *Mennonite Life*, October 1962, 156-158. A large rancher, Jose Angel Mier, sold a large piece of land to the Mennonites, likely because of land reform. The land needed to be sold in smaller pieces, not larger than fifty hectares each. This possibly jeopardized the establishment of solidly Mennonite communities.

271. Franz Wiebe, interview by author, La Batea colony, Mexico, 20 December 1996.

272. Leonard Sawatzky, "Kanada-Durango-Zacatecas- und nun Campeche: Die Alt-West Mennonitenwanderung nach und in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 22, (18 March 1994): 1 and 3; Abe Warkentin, "Landknappheit in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 2, no. 1, (5 May 1978): 1; "Das Stromnetz in La Honda soll erweitert," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 2, no. 1 (18 June 1993): 9. Modernization proceeded rapidly at La Honda during the 1990s. Residents commonly used motor vehicles and rubber tires. Extension of electric power was underway to seven villages in 1993.

273. "Bericht von Durango", *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 1, no. 21 (12 March 1984): 6. By 1984, eighty families had moved to Campeche.

274. Leonard Sawatzky, "Kanada-Durango-Zacatecas- und nun Campeche: Die Alt-West Mennonitenwanderung nach und in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 23 (31 March 1994): 3 and 22.

275. Bishop Franz Wall and Isaak Fehr, interview by author, Buenos Aires colony, Mexico, 29 December 1996. The interest rate seemed favourable, rising from zero to seven percent over time. The Amish themselves borrowed some of the loaned money. Prospects were better in Campeche than in drought ravaged northern Chihuahua. They needed more money though to purchase the essentials to start life there. Land in the north also was difficult to sell to prospective settlers.

276. "Von Tamaulipas wird berichtet," *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 1, no. 5 (13 July 1983): 3. Only two families had less than ten acres of land, and thirty-three families, of a total of eighty-two families, had 160 acres or more.

277. Sawatzky, "Merkmale Gegenwärtiger," 208-209.

278. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 183.

279. "Die *Post* besucht die Monclova Mennoniten," *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 1 (17 July 1984); "Monclova Kolonie kann Land Besitz regeln," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 20 (29 April 1985): 8; Arthur Driedger, Associate Director for Overseas Services, MCC Canada, letter to Andrew Plett, 14 September 1981, vol. 3585, file OS-064, Mennonite Heritage Centre; "Illustrates money crisis," *Mennonite Reporter* 14, no. 14 (8 July 1984); Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 115R, 1982Y, "Mennonite Central Committee (Canada) Mexico Trip Report, January 3-16/1982," page 3; "Anleihe für Mennoniten in Monclova, Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 5, no. 6 (17 July 1981): 1. In 1984, it was described as being split into two school groups, one with thirteen students and the other with eight. Two church groups also operated. In 1985, some land title problems saw favourable resolution, giving more hope to the colony. One groups' four families attended the old church while the other group met in a school for church services. The residents hoped more settlers would come.

280. Sawatzky, *ME* 5, 651.

281. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 121; "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 20, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 5 (5 July 1995): 22. The colony only briefly had its own minister and otherwise relied on occasional visiting Old Colony ministers. The reason for the abandonment by the Old Colony may have been at least partly because most of the Yermo settlers used rubber tractor tires and some used trucks also. The Kleine Gemeinde was first asked to send a teacher from the Quellenkolonie and later the Kleine Gemeinde church also came to the community.

282. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 123.

283. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 124.

284. Walter Schmiedehaus, "Mennonites Again on the Move," *The American-German Review* (February- March 1961): 16. While the government welcomed foreign immigration in the 1920s, it frowned on this by 1961. The Mennonite settlements were blocked from obtaining needed land.

285. Leonard Sawatzky, "Kanada-Durango-Zacatecas- und nun Campeche: Die Alt-West Mennonitenwanderung nach und in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 23 (31 March 1994): 3 and 22. Since the withdrawal of Article 27, the problems with land security should lessen. The government no longer helps the *agraristas* to obtain land, which may ease land search problems for the Mennonites.

286. Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America," 11.

287. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 124; "Zweite Mennoniten Kolonie in Campeche," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 15 (17 February 1986): 8; Cornelius Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin colony, Mexico, 28 December 1996; Leonard Sawatzky, "Kanada-Durango-Zacatecas- und nun Campeche: Die Alt-West Mennonitenwanderung nach und in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 23 (31 March 1994): 3 and 22. They also may have applied compulsory levies.

288. Based on personal interviews with a number or people planning to emigrate.

289. Schmiedehaus, "Mennonites Again on the Move," 16; Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 21, 22; Leo Driedger, "From Mexico to British Honduras," *Mennonite* Life, October 1958, 160-166; Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 23; Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 178.

290. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 25, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 13 (1 November 1996): 22; George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 27, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 19 (7 February 1997): 22. Swift Current people went to Swift Current colony, near Brechas. Nord people went to Riva Palacios colony, also near Brechas, and Santa Rita founded Santa Rita colony, also in the same area.

291. Frank H. Epp, "Mexico farmers look at Argentina," *Mennonite Reporter* 2, no. 18 (4 September 1972): 1; Abram Siemens, "Mennoniten von Mexiko gründen neue Kolonie in Bolivien," *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 24 (19 April 1996): 1; Bishop Franz Wall and Isaak Fehr, interview by author, Buenos Aires colony, Mexico, 29 December 1996; Dan Penner, interview by author, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Mexico, 27 December 1996; Franz Wiebe, interview by author, La Batea colony, Mexico, 20 December 1996; John R. Peters, "25 Mennonitenkolonien jetzt in Bolivien," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no.18 (19 January 1996): 1.

292. Sawatzky, *ME* 5, 653; Isaak Ens, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996.

293. "Kolonien berichten," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 24, (15 July 1986): 15; Bishop Bernhard Bueckert and Gerhard Klassen, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996; Isaak Ens, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996. In 1996, enthusiasm for the move to Argentina seemed low, at least partly because of the cost involved. Those considering leaving Durango found it difficult to sell their land there, especially if they did not want to sell it on credit.

294. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file no. OS-054, George Reimer, "Durango and La Honda," 31 December 1981, page 6. Durango colony considered and rejected Brazil as a possible destination, possibly due to disunity, although their not speaking Portugese, the official language there, may have played a part.

295. Abe Warkentin, "Landknappheit in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 2, no. 1 (5 May 1978): 1.

296. "Bericht von Seminole," *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 1, no. 7 (15

August 1983): 6; Bruce Wiebe, interview by author, Winkler, Manitoba, 17 October 1996. Possibly most Mexican Mennonites in the U.S. lacked legal status there, but usually could remain anyway. From time to time, the U.S. declared amnesty for the illegals.

297. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 29, *Die Mennonitische Post*, 21, no. 1 (2 May 1997): 22; Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 27, 22; T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 427. The Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC), were formerly known as the Rudnerweider Mennonite Church. This evangelistic group came out of the Manitoba Sommerfelder Church in 1937.

298. Bruce Wiebe, interview by author, Winkler, Manitoba, 17 October 1996; "Mennoniten aus Mexiko ziehen in den Norden," *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 14 (17 November 1995): 9.

299. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2989, file EO-74-1980, George Reimer, "Some Impressions Of Mexican Mennonites Now," 20 October 1980, 2.

CHAPTER 4

300. J. Winfield Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico: An Introduction* (Akron, Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1945), 38; Calvin Wall Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 237-243.

301. Calvin Redekop and John A. Hostetler, "The Plain People: An Interpretation," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 51 (October 1977): 275. This fits with others' findings made about relationships between similar societies and their host societies. "Plain people have developed and grown and persisted on the basis of a reciprocal relationship with the larger environment. These relationships have tended to be affirmative of the plain peoples' life styles rather than serving as seductions for assimilation into the larger society. That is to say, the economic relationships, for example, have tended to help the plain people survive and become more autonomous, at least culturally, rather than making them more dependent and interrelated."

302. Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, Appendix B, page 251. The five points of the *Privilegium* granted freedom from military service and swearing oaths, and freedom of religion, education, and property.

303. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-32-4, part 2, Canadian Embassy, Mexico City, memorandum to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 25 February 1966; Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Saskatchewan, 16 October 1996. In 1966, the Canadian Embassy in Mexico commented: "scattered conversations with Mexicans disclosed less ill will towards the Mennonites than we would have anticipated. They were described as a hard working, sober people who did not get into fights, traits not typical of other residents in that area. . . . The Mennonites mix very little with the Mexicans." They were also described as being better off than most neighbouring Mexicans.

Cuauhtémoc holds a Festival of Three Cultures, celebrating the Mexican, Tarahumara Indian, and Mennonite cultures. The General Conference people often represent the Mennonites in dealings with Mexicans. While Old Colonists once would not have accepted this well, by the mid-1990s they identified more with the more liberal group.

304. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1971), 326.

305. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 326; J.G. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Mexico," unpublished report of trip to Mexico (1986), 92; Jacob Friesen, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 19 December 1996; "Mexico congregations establish Mennonite conference," *Mennonite Reporter* 21, no. 15 (29 July 1991). In 1996, one Mexican, who had married a Mennonite, lived on the Durango colony. The total of mixed marriages numbered less than ten from the colony. Most left the colony.

306. Isaac Ens, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 16 December 1996.

307. In 1996, the cooperative cheese factory of Durango colony had an office in downtown Nuevo Ideal where several Mexican women did business's bookkeeping. A telephone also was in the office. A less modern office, without telephone, electric typewriters, or computers was at one of the cheese factories where some of the book work was done by Mennonites.

308. Abe Wiebe and Abe Warkentin, for Kanadier Mennonite Concerns Committee, "Re-

port on the excommunication concerns," April 1993, page 2, Abe Warkentin files.

309. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat: Deutsch-Mennonitische Kolonisierung in Mexiko, 1922-1984* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1986), 148.

310. Franz Wiebe, interview by author, La Batea colony, Mexico, December 1996. One colony where this has occurred is at La Batea; Leonard Sawatzky, "Kanada-Durango-Zacatecas- Die Alt-West Mennonitenwanderung nach und in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 22 (18 March 1994): 1 and 3; George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 21, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 7 and 8 (2 August1996): 22; "Landlose Bauern wollen Land von Mennoniten," *Deutsch-Mexickanische Rundschau* 2, no. 2 (1 July 1993): 9.

311. Nuevo Ideal had about 10,000 residents and Cuauhtémoc had about 100,000 residents.

312. Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Saskatchewan, 16 October 1996. Helen Ens said that this highway did more to dispel the isolation in the colony than anything else. According to another report, farmers could not cross the pavement with their steel wheels. That helped force change in the Cuauhtémoc area colonies on the rubber tire issue.

313. Kelly Lynn Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua: Language, Literacy, and Identity among the Old Colony Mennonites in Northern Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996): 33.

314. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 25-26.

315. Jacob J. Friesen, *Aufzeichnung von den Verstorbenen* 2d ed. (Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua, Mexico: Imprenta Colonial, 1992), 69; "Mennonit grausam umgebracht," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no.16 (3 March 1986): 1. In 1986, Mexicans killed a Mennonite man from Santa Rita colony when he went fishing.

316. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 23.

317. Rodolfo Groth, *Gold Indianer Mennoniten: Schicksale in der nordwestlichen Sierra Madre von Mexiko* (Rodolfo Groth, 1960), 153-154.

318. Wolfgang Büscher, "Mennoniten: Gottes Fahrendes Volk," *Geo* (1 February 1996): 138.

319. "Die Landstrasse wird gefährlich," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 2, no. 3 (3 May 1988): 1; "Bewaffneter Diebstahl in Nord Kolonie," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 20 (29 April 1985): 1; "Bank in Lowe Farm, Mexiko, überfallen," *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 14 (17 November 1995): 10; "Viehdiebe 'arbeiten' im grossen Stil," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 21 (12 May 1986): 1; "Zwei Mädchen werden überfallen," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 6 (17 September 1992): 1; "Diebstahl wird schlimm," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 10 (25 November 1985): 8; "Dyck entführt; für 11,000 Dollar freigelassen," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 10 (19 November 1992): 16; "Wiebe wurde entführt," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 13 (7 January 1993): 1; Johann Klassen, "Männer in Durango angeschossen," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 8 (22 April 1994): 1; "Zwei mennonitische Jungens angeschossen," *Deutsch-Mexikanishe Rundschau* 1, no. 20 (6 May 1993): 16; "Hiebert tödlich erschossen," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 10 (19 May 1994): 12; Bishop Franz Wall and Isaak Fehr, interview by author, Buenos Aires colony, Mexico, 29 December 1996.

320. Based on personal conversations at La Batea.

321. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 324-325.

322. "Veintinueve Estados de Animo," *Excelsior*, 10 August 1957, 1 and 10.

323. "Los Menonitas se van...," *Excelsior*, 30 November 1967. Translation by author.

324. "Manitoba Kolonie verschenkt Land fuer Obdach und Schule," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no.18 (25 March 1985): 1; Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 327; Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements," 47; "Mexican Mennonites help drought-stricken neighbours," *Mennonite Reporter* 10, no. 3 (4 February 1980): 1.

325. "Fragen und Antworten über den Wegbau," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 2, no. 19 (2 February, 1989): 1; Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 327. In the 1950s, government called on the colonies to help pay for the highway from Chihuahua to Cuauhtémoc, which did not pass through any colonies, and for the highway to Rubio, which ran through the Manitoba colony. The four lane highway through the Manitoba colony when later built in the late 1980s or early 1990s, resulted in a levy on the Manitoba and Swift Current colonies of $450,000.

326. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 22.

327. "Neues Steuergesetz ("incometax") geht Mennoniten . . .," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexico* 4, no. 1 (19 September, 1990):8.

328. Abraham Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite History With Special Reference To The Conservative Mennonite Emigration From Canada To Mexico And South America After World War One" (masters thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, August 1960): 188; Groth, *Gold Indianer Mennoniten*, 157-158.

329. Frank H Epp, *Mennonites in Canada: 1920-1940* (MacMillan of Canada, 1982), 127-128.

330. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 33.

331. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8-B94, Schmiedehaus papers, file 23, J. Winfield Fretz, "Report of the MCC Commission to Mexico," 13 September 1946.

332. "Barrio trifft Jugend," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 12 (17 December 1992): 6. In 1992, the governor of Chihuahua state, Francisco Barrio, was unimpressed when he and his family encountered rude youths on the street in a village near Cuauhtémoc. Fortunately, his and other politicians' experiences with the Mennonites have proven overwhelmingly positive.

333. "President Fox Visits La Honda Colony, Mexico," *Preservings* 21 (December 2002): 67-71.

334. "Letters and Issues," *Mennonite Life*, July 1968, 114; "No Quisieron ser Mexicanos," *Excelsior*, 25 April 1971, 1 and 10; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1246, file no. IM 5850-3-595, Daniel Zehr, Executive Secretary MCC, Winnipeg, Manitoba, letter to Mr. A.E. Brooks, Enquiry Officer, Department of Immigration, Winnipeg, April 18, 1972. In 1968, an article entitled "Mennonite Privilegium to Expire in 1972" appeared in the Chihuahua *El Heraldo*. The article mentioned plans for an Old Colony commission, "to present their case to President Diaz Ordaz and Governor Giner." In 1971, *Excelsior* reported that the *Privilegium* had expired and that the *agraristas* were reclaiming their land for themselves. The article pointed out that the Mexican people were split over this, as the Mennonites had never caused any trouble during the fifty years that they had lived in the country. It also mentioned that the Mennonites did not want to be Mexicans. In 1972, Zehr wrote that the *Privilegium* would soon end, and that this likely would mean that many more would try to come to Canada.

335. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file OS-054, George Reimer, letter to Abe, "Documentation, M Post (Jesus Jose Martinez)," Christmas 1981, page 2. A belief, often heard, was that Mennonites should only work as farmers and that doing other things would endanger the *Privilegium*. The origin of this belief remains unknown, since the *Privilegium* does not mention this. Possibly verbal interactions with the Mexicans indicated this, or it may represent an interpretation of the *Privilegium* clause that gave Mennonites the right to control their own internal economic system. One possible explanation for this belief is that the *Privilegium* may only apply to those who remain as part of the original Mennonite community that went to Mexico in the 1920s.

336. Hildegard M. Martens, *Mennonites from Mexico: Their Immigration and Settlement in Canada*, 30 June 1975, a report submitted to Research Grants Program, Canada Manpower and Immigration and to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), 19.

337. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file OS-73, G. E. Rempel, letter to Mr. Arthur Driedger and/or Mr. Wm. Janzen, 31 March 1979, page 2; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file no. OS-082, R.A. Helling, Professor of Sociology, University of Windsor, letter to Mrs. Freda Enns, MCC Canada, Ottawa, 21 March 1979, page 2; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file OS-082, Art Driedger and William Janzen, "The Driedger-Janzen Trip to Mexico, December 1979: A Report for Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)," page 4. George Rempel offered one possible explanation of the Mennonites' legal status. An official in the Chihuahua passport office told him that the Mennonites, in order to maintain the *Privilegium* should have registered their children as "in Mexico born foreigners." This was said to have been verbally agreed to by the Mexican government and the Mennonites and that the Mennonites had been reminded many times of this, but had not complied with it. This shortcoming had apparently been used as grounds for a temporary suspension of the issuance of Mexican passports in about 1960. According to R.A. Helling, in order to become a Mexican citizen, those born in Mexico would only have to declare allegiance to Mexico, but few had done so. R. A. Helling pointed out that ministers in Mexico had to be Mexican citizens, yet many held Canadian passports. Others have said that military service has to be fulfilled to become a citizen. It also was claimed that it was necessary to

declare, in 1976 or at the person's eighteenth birthday, whether they wanted to be a Mexican or a foreigner, although Mexico did not enforce this law.

338. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 21-22.

339. "Zensus zählt Mennoniten wie andere Mexikaner," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 3, no. 24 (5 September 1990): 11.

340. "Pass machen fordert 'pre-cartilla'," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 13 (20 January 1986): 1; "Question governor on military service," *Mennonite Reporter* 15, no. 8 (15 April 1985):2.

341. "Soll ich die "Cartilla Militar" unterschreiben," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 4, no. 6 (9 January 1991): 1.

342. "Schwierigkeiten mit Dokumenten," *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 1, no. 22 (26 March 1984): 1; "Mexico to enforce registration for Mennonites," *Mennonite Reporter* 18, no. 10 (9 May 1988); "Fast hundert Mennoniten unterschreiben die 'Pre-cartilla'," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 2, no. 15 (19 December 1988): 11; "Gedanken zum Militärdienst," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 4, no. 6 (9 January 1991): 1 and 5; Franz Wiebe, interview by author, La Batea colony, Mexico, 21 December 1996. In 1996, the conservative colonies still complied little with the *tarjeta militar*. In 1996, one knowledgeable resident in La Batea knew of no one who had the card.

343. "Leiter werden mit Privilegium arbeiten," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 21 (12 May 1986): 3. Smaller groups of persons had tried unsuccessfully to convince the government that the Mennonites should not need the military card to obtain a pass. In 1986, the *Vorsteher* from the six Cuauhtémoc area colonies wanted to approach the government, using a lawyer and possibly the state governor to help them. There also was talk of trying to involve the other colonies in the effort. They wanted to argue that freedom from military service came from the *Privilegium*.

344. "Der Besuch...dieses Jahrhunderts," *Die Mennonitische Post* 14, no. 5 (6 July 1990): 1 and 3; Claude Good, letter to Mr. Janzen, 29 September 1984, from MCC Canada, Ottawa; "Question governor on military service," *Mennonite Reporter* 15, no. 8 (15 April 1985): 2; "Mexicans promote CO options," *Mennonite Reporter* 16, no. 1 (6 January 1986): 3. In about 1984, the government possibly experimented with an alternate service program, but one that did not involve the Mennonites. In 1985, the Chihuahua governor, Ornelas, advised the Mennonites to make a proposal to the president about alternate military service. The issue was important partly because of Mennonite problems in obtaining passports without the military card. On November 11, 1986, district presidents of Chihuahua state met to discuss how Mennonite youth could perform alternate service. The government was aware of the issue and of the citizenship and passport problems of the Mennonites.

345. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file OS-73, Art Driedger and William Janzen, "The Driedger-Janzen Trip to Mexico, December 1979: A Report for Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)," page 4.

346. Driedger, "The Driedger-Janzen Trip to Mexico," 5.

347. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file OS-054, George Reimer, "Documentation, M Post (Jesus Jose Martinez)," letter to Abe, Christmas 1981, pages 1-4. Renato Irigoyen, Consul of Mexico, Vancouver, B.C., letter to Mrs. Annie M. Ariss, Constituency Office, Morden, Manitoba, 1 February 1983, MCC Canada files, Ottawa.

348. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2463, file no. EO-70, Minutes of "Mexican Mennonites- adhoc Committee," August 3, 1972. These minutes indicate that Mexican citizenship was needed to make some land purchases.

349. "Die Kolonien Berichten," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 4, no. 9 (4 June 1991): 7; "Müssen auch Mennoniten Wählerkarten machen?," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 20 (6 May 1993): 4.

350. "Wie stehen wir als Mennoniten zur Socialversicherungsfrage? ('Seguros')," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 2, no. 7(August 1988): 2 and 11.

351. Calvin Wall Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 168; "Paulatina sera la emigracion: Los Campesinos están Dispuestos a Laborar la Tierra que Dejan los Menonitas," *El Heraldo*, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, 3 April 1957, section B, 1. One official of the Banco Nacional de Credito Ejidal said: "This land belongs to the Mexican farmers and now if they return it to our hands, we will have the solution

to the old problem of the lack of land to grant to the authentic campesinos." He went on to describe the Mennonites as not offering any advantage to the region or its people but that they only benefited themselves. In contrast, countless incidents during recent decades demonstrate that Mexican officials welcome the Mennonite presence.

352. "Gran Exodo de Menonitas al Canada," *El Heraldo*, 2 April 1957, pages 1 and 3. The report said that about 20,000 Mennonites would emigrate to Canada or British Honduras if they were forced to join *Seguro Social*. Reportedly the Mennonites had said they did not need *Seguro Social* since they had an unlimited fund to pay for medical care better than could the government program.

353. Based on personal interviews with officials in various colonies, December 1996; "Record of Proceedings," of meetings held between MCC and conservative colony Mennonites on October 25 and October 26, 1995 in Mexico, page 3, MCC Canada, Ottawa files. Possibly the greatest single demand on the colonies' *Armenkasse* was paying medical bills for destitute colony members. In 1995, Manitoba colony delegates to a meeting with MCC reported, "they had managed to reduce the drain on their 'armenkasse' by getting many of their people enrolled in the 'Seguero Social', the national health insurance scheme."

354. "Mennoniten im Seguro," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 1, no. 13 (9 July 1987): 8. The number of Mennonites enrolled in the program grew rapidly in the spring and fall when enrollment could take place. Those enrolled did not have a choice of doctors and faced delays in receiving service.

355. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 135.

356. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua," 301.

357. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 314; Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua," 301-302; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3585, file no. OS-065, George Reimer, "First Observations on Mennonite Education in Mexico (referring mainly to Cuauhtémoc area and Los Jagueyes)," 22 October 1981, page 5.

358. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 257.

359. "Regierung hilft Campeche Kolonie," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 14 (3 February 1986): 6.

360. Internet address: http://www.angelfire.com/biz/banrural/. *BANRURAL* is the acronym for Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural.

361. "Rückzahlung an Diesel," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 4, no. 11 (15 June 1995):12.

362. "Geld für Kleinbauern," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no.18 (1 April 1993): 19. PRONASOL is the acronym for the National Solidarity Program.

363. "Die Zukunft für die Bauern ist finster: Der Freihandelvertrag," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 2, no.12 (2 December 1993): 5.

364. "Procampo gibt Geld an die Bauern," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 2, no. 11 (19 November 1993): 5. PROCAMPO is the acronym for Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo. For crops seeded in the fall of 1993, payments of 330 pesos per hectare were available. For crops seeded in the spring of 1994, the payment available was 350 pesos per hectare. Payments in 1996 amounted to about 450 pesos per eligible hectare. Mennonites were involved, with some success, in negotiations to try to extend this program to crops that were not included.

365. Johann Wall, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 19 December 1996. In 1996, in Durango colony, payments were only received for about 4,200 to 4,500 hectares, even though applications covered about 10,000 of the about 14,000 hectares of cropped land. A delay in application may have caused the discrepancy. Enrollment in El Capulin was high, with only two or three farmers not taking advantage of the program. Some suspected the Mexican motives for bringing in the program, thinking that enrollment in the program might lead to higher taxes. Others did not apply out of opposition to taking part in government programs. It appeared though that the vast majority of farmers did apply, often with the help of the colony bookkeeper.

366. FINAPE is the acronym for Acuerdo para el Financiamento del Sector Agropecuario y Pesquero.

367. George Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin, Mexico, 28 December 1996.

368. Observations by author; Johann Wall, documentation agent, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 19 December 1996. In that case, many of the people wanted the power while the leaders did not. The leaders and others who were strongly opposed were likely to

quietly leave for South America.

369. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 35.

370. Based on this writer's observations while travelling in Mexico.

371. "Zwei Polizisten verlieren Amt," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 18 (25 March 1985): 1; "Polizisten gefaerden Mennoniten," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 1 (15 July 1985): 1; "Polizei misshandelt Mennoniten," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 3 (4 February 1994): 3; "Die Polizei ist den Mennoniten gegenüber ungerecht, oder?," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 2 (20 January 1994): 6. In 1985, two policemen lost their jobs after mistreating Mennonites in the Swift colony. Three other police lost their jobs after hitting a vehicle with several gunshots. In 1994, the police reported that two policemen mishandled two Mennonites working in a field, leading to one man needing medical attention. The police became upset after their vehicle hit a horse on the road.

372. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file no.OS-082, R.A. Helling, Professor of Sociology, University of Windsor, letter to Mrs. Freda Enns, MCC Canada, Ottawa, 21 March 1979. In 1979, R.A Helling of the University of Windsor saw three areas that the Mexican government had neglected with the Mennonites. They were citizenship, land holding, and education. He thought at least some of these areas would need to change. Helling also pointed out the illegality of some Mexican Mennonite land holdings, as Mexican law limited individual land holdings to 100 hectares. (Many Mennonites held more land than that, although it would not show up possibly due to the method of the Mennonites holding land titles.) Helling was only one of many who questioned how long the situation could go on without changing.

373. H. L. Sawatzky, *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 5 (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1990), 582.

374. T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed*, vol. 3, *Mennonites in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 2-3. See Regehr's work for discussion of the concepts of assimilation and accommodation.

CHAPTER 5

375. Abraham Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite History With Special Reference To The Conservative Mennonite Emigration From Canada To Mexico And South America After World War One" (masters thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, August 1960), 37.

376. *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 5 (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1990), 199. "Then the progressives frequently, in a mood of ungratefulness, either reviled the conservers for being too conservative, or tried to convert them because they seemed to the progressives to be lacking in spiritual, expressive faith."

377. James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889* (Hyperion Press Limited, 1989), 43.

378. Kelly Lynn Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua: Language, Literacy, and Identity among the Old Colony Mennonites in Northern Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996), 69.

379. Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonites History", 162-165.

380. Calvin Redekop, "A New Look at Sect Development," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13, no 3 (September 1974): 348.

381. Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October 1996. In 1996, Helen Ens, who had worked with the Mennonites in Mexico for about forty years, still felt that it had been right for other Mennonite groups to not leave the Old Colony alone. One reason given was that without the outsiders' efforts, the Mexican Mennonites would disappear into the Mexican culture. Opponents of the interventions by other Mennonites would not agree with Ens' assessment.

382. "Rain lifts spirits in Mexico colonies," *Mennonite Reporter* 27, no. 7 (31 March 1997):13.

383. Bishop Banman, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 24 December 1996.

384. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2535, file OS-31, Verney Unruh, Secretary for Asia, MCC, letter to Menno Wiebe, Winnipeg, 11 May 1976. Other Mennonite groups often have spoken about building understanding with the Old Colony group. Verney Unruh said: "We must repent of the attitude we have had toward the Old Colony Mennonites. . . . We need to learn to

listen to them for what they have to teach us. . . . Our concern should be to work for renewal in individual lives, not a change of their lifestyle." He then goes on to say "We need to recognize that we are agents of change and, therefore, we will inevitably cause some conflict. . . .We need to challenge them to recognize and work with their neighbors (non-Mennonites)."

385. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2535, file OS-31, William Janzen, "A Report on a two day visit with the Mennonites who have come from Mexico to southern Ontario," 23 June 1976.

386. "Unique mission retreat held in Mexico," *Mennonite Reporter*, 21 July 1975, 13; "Evangelistic meetings in Northern Mexico," *Mennonite Reporter* 25, no. 14 (10 July 1995): 2. In 1975, at a missions retreat in Mexico, where new ways of reaching the Old Colonists were explored, a General Conference missionary from Cuauhtémoc in referring to the Old Colonists said: "How does one work with people who think they are Christian?" At the same retreat, a Mennonite Brethren missionary said that: "Saying they are pagan is not bad." Another participant said: "They are very religious, but they do not know that they have life eternal. They are taught that they never know if they are saved." In 1995, the Janz evangelistic team from Canada spent about two weeks in northern Mexico conducting services, supported by the General Conference, EMC and EMMC churches.

387. David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 102.

388. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file no. OS-054, George Reimer, "Again on Education," letter from George Reimer to "Abe", 31 December 1981.

389. Jeffrey Lynn Eighmy, *Mennonite Architecture: Diachronic Evidence for Rapid Diffusion in Rural Communities* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 67.

390. William Janzen, "Now we see through a mirror dimly: A report on a ten day visit with Kanadier Colony Mennonites of Mexico," 20 May 1977, page 13, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

391. Cornelius J. Dyck, "Wer sind die Mennoniten heute?," *Die Mennonitische Post* 14, no. 6 (20 July 1990): 4. MCC came into existence in 1920. A precedent for MCC was the *Hilfskomitee*, founded by Dutch Mennonites in 1725. MCC soon helped Mennonites in and from Russia with various problems and over time built an international reputation for helping Mennonites and others in need.

392. Walter Schmiedehaus, *Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko* (Winnipeg, Manitoba:CMBC Publications; Steinbach, Manitoba: Die Mennonitische Post, 1982), 29.

393. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file no. OS-054, George Reimer, "Survey of Mennonites in Mexico, Belize, Bolivia, and Paraguay," April 1981, page 3.

394. *ME* 5, 576; J. Winfield Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico: An Introduction* (Akron, Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1945), 9.

395. "Mexican church approves congregational autonomy," *The Mennonite*, 8 February 1977, 87; "Mexico congregations establish Mennonite conference," *Mennonite Reporter* 21, no. 15 (29 July 1991): 2.

396. "Workers in Mexico busy in schools, clinics, churches," *Mennonite Reporter*, 1 April 1974.

397. Abe Warkentin, "Projections for MCC Canada Kanadier Work in Mexico 1992-1995," to MCCC Canada board members, May 1992, from Abe Warkentin files. "Mexico church almost doubled in one year," *The Canadian Mennonite* 16, no. 46 (3 December 1968): 1.

398. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-32-4, part 2, Canadian Embassy, Mexico City, memo to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 25 February 1966. The Canadian Embassy wrote a report on the colonies. Much of their information came from "a representative of the liberal General Conference Mennonite Church, who has been sent down as a missionary to convert the more old fashioned Mennonites to modern ways. His efforts are resisted and viewed with extreme dislike by the orthodox. They tried to have him thrown out with the help of one of the few Mennonites to come directly from Russia after the First World War, who has built up a small fortune handling the agricultural produce of the Mennonites."

399. Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October 1996.

400. H. Ens, *ME* 5, 638; George Rempel, interview by author, Cuauhtémoc area, 13 December 1996; Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October 1996; "Bible school will serve congregations in Mexico," *Mennonite Reporter* 10, no. 22 (27 October 1980): 11.

401. "Church and school dedicated in Mexico," *Mennonite Reporter* 6, no. 26 (27 Decem-

ber 1976): 4.

402. Janzen, "Now we see through a mirror dimly," 14.

403. Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October 1996; "Abschiedsfeier von Lehrerin Ens," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 4, no.12 (6 July 1995): 3-4.

404. Philip Dyck, interview by author, Manitoba Colony, Mexico, 11 December 1996. In 1972, he and the work moved to the Mexican Department of Agriculture, the National Agricultural Research Institute (INIA), later called the National Forestry and Agricultural Research Institute (INIFAP). After retirement in 1992, he continued working part time.

405. "Conference provides nurses at Mexico clinic," *Mennonite Reporter* 16, no. 14 (7 July 1986): 13; "Mexican couple administer medical clinic," *The Mennonite*, 18 October 1977, 602; "Mennonite Reporter supplement," *Mennonite Reporter* 16, no. 11 (26 May 1986): 12.

406. The Kleine Gemeinde is descended from the Russian settlement of Molotschna, which traditionally was quite separate from the Old Colony group.

407. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonite Colonization and Agriculture in Mexico," *Mennonite Life*, July 1966, 135.

408. "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach," part 20, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 5 (5 July 1996): 22.

409. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file no. OS-054, George Reimer, "First Observations on Mennonite Education in Mexico (referring mainly to Cuauhtémoc area and Los Jagueyes)," 22 October 1981, page 3.

410. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 250-251; Reimer, Survey of Mennonites," 6.

411. Partly based on personal observations; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file OS-054, George Reimer, "Santa Rita Colony," October 1981. Reimer commented on the inroads the Kleine Gemeinde made at Santa Rita in the wake of the Old Colony leaving for Bolivia. "The process of inviting Kleine Gemeinde teachers to be followed by their spiritual ministry, is very similar in Lowe Farm (Manitoba Plan), Swift Plan, and Santa Rita."

412. Jacob Unger, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 18 December 1996. In the 1990s, the Kleine Gemeinde made rapid inroads at Durango. The Old Colony excommunicated a Mrs. Guenther for not selling and using the car her deceased husband had bought. Her children and others dissatisfied with the Old Colony then asked the Kleine Gemeinde to come into the community. A popular Old Colony minister, Jacob Unger, also pushed the Old Colony limits and questioning various things about the church. He began holding Bible studies in his home and attending an evening school. He questioned excommunicating for rubber tires and vehicles while other more serious moral and behavioural transgressions went unpunished. Soon after he attended a meeting called by MCC in Chihuahua, he was told not to preach anymore. He was excommunicated in early 1996 for making an uproar. By April of 1996, he preached for the Kleine Gemeinde. Prior to that Kleine Gemeinde ministers had come from Chihuahua or La Honda. By December of 1996, the popular minister attracted 350 to 400 persons to Sunday services. A new school and church were built, partly with money from supporters from outside the community. Only about one-third of the money came from within the colony. The Old Colony preached against the Kleine Gemeinde, calling them false prophets.

413. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file no. OS-054, George Reimer, "Second Notes on Education," 4 November 1981, page 1; George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 27, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no.19 (7 February 1997): 22. The Kleine Gemeinde had a four classroom school, a church, and a power plant for the community at Campo 82 by 1981. Some from other villages came to the church and school there as well. The Kleine Gemeinde was so resented that some moved to other villages and from there planned to move to Bolivia. After a second migration to Bolivia of the Old Colony from Swift Current colony in the mid 1970s, the Kleine Gemeinde came into that colony. At one point they also attempted to begin a school at Campo 2B of the Manitoba colony, but Old Colony leaders asked them to leave. Later on, a school did open at Campo 2A, Gnadenthal. They now have two churches and schools on the Swift Current colony.

414. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8 B94, Schmiedehaus papers, file 23, P.C. Hiebert and William T. Snyder, "Report on commission to Mexico December 2-23, 1946;" Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8 B94, Schmiedehaus papers, file 23, William T. Snyder and Cornelius J. Rempel, "Report to MCC Executive Committee of Negotiations with the Government of Mexico and the Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico concerning refugee migration." They approached

President Aleman asking for the same privileges as the Old Colony received in the 1920s. MCC representatives favoured northern Mexico for the settlement. The Old Colony people seemed sympathetic to the problems of the refugees but did not want to receive them into the colonies. They were willing to help though with the settlement of the refugees in other sites chosen for them.

415. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*.

416. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8 B94, Schmiedehaus papers, file 23, Dr. C. W. Wiebe, "Report on health conditions of Mennonites in Mexico," August 1946. Wiebe's report on the Mexican colonies painted a dismal picture of the nutrition and health situation there. The people ate few fruits and vegetables, some sold their milk and kept little for themselves, trichina infested pork caused fourteen deaths the previous winter, gastroenteritis was a serious killer, maternal care appeared deplorable and morbidity was high, and many of the people lived in unsanitary conditions. Wiebe recommended an education program to help remedy these deficiencies and the engagement of a nurse and a doctor to help with the problems.

417. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 4.

418. Fretz, *Mennonite Colonization in Mexico*, 39-40.

419. Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG8-B94, Schmiedehaus papers, file 23, J. Winfield Fretz, "Report of the MCC Commission to Mexico," 13 September 1946.

420. "Mennonite Health Program Reborn in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico," *The Canadian Mennonite* 2, no. 31 (13 August 1954): 1; *The Canadian Mennonite* 6, no. 47 (28 November 1958): 5; "Whom Shall We Send Now," *The Canadian Mennonite* 7, no. 31 (7 August 1959): 9. The community had no hospital when MCC brought its health services to Cuauhtémoc in 1947. The nearest one was in Chihuahua, about sixty-five difficult miles away. Initially a seven bed hospital opened. MCC reopened the hospital in about 1951, which had been closed due to lack of personnel. In 1953, MCC sent three nurses to the regional hospital. By 1954, it had thirty to forty beds and was a joint effort with the Mexican government. In 1959, four General Conference people and numerous Mexicans worked at the hospital.

421. Warkentin, "Projections for MCC Canada Kanadier Work."

422. "Carload of Flour to Mexico," *The Canadian Mennonite* 2, no. 2 (8 January 1954): 1.

423. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 2, Aaron Klassen, Director, Mennonite Central Committee, Cuauhtèmoc, Chihuahua, Mexico, letter to Canadian Ambassador, "His Excellency" Douglas Seaman Cole, Mexico, D.F., 8 November 1956,.

424. Bill Janzen, Mexico MCC, letter to Bill Janzen, Ottawa MCC, 7 August 1996, MCC Canada, Ottawa files; Reimer, "Survey of Mennonites," 4. In speaking of the early MCC work in Mexico, Bill Janzen, MCC worker in Mexico, said: "The Old Colony leaders were set against MCC at that time and wanted their people to stay clear even though they were not able to provide them with necessary provisions through their deacon fund." George Reimer commented about the early MCC and early General Conference work: "Resistance to interference in Old Colony spiritual affairs was widespread."

425. Mennonite businessman Aaron Redekop told MCC workers they had twenty-four hours to get out of Mexico. Two of the workers, Tina Fehr and Helen Ens, only went as far as the border at Juarez where they discovered that they did not have to leave and then returned to Cuauhtémoc.

426. Bram Siemens, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 14 December 1996; Bishop Franz Banman, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 24 December 1996. People thought MCC tried to start a church, which was not really the case.

427. Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 1996.

428. Warkentin, "Projections for MCC Canada Kanadier Work;" Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3121, file K-09, Arthur Driedger, MCC Winnipeg, "MCC stance toward Mexico," memo to Kanadier Mennonite Colonization Committee, 24 September 1980. MCC did not have any further program in Mexico until 1976, when it asked the Mennonites in Mexico to help with a flood in La Paz, Baja California. Some MCC workers did visit some of the colonies in the 1960s and 1970s. Still in 1980, MCC said it did not have a program in Mexico, although at that time they considered placing a staff person there.

429. Abe Warkentin, interview by author, Steinbach, Manitoba, 17 October 1996. The Old Colony representative, Abe Rempel threatened to resign if women were allowed on the commit-

tee. Abe Warkentin said that the Old Colony had controlled the agenda of the Kanadier Concerns Committee.

430. "Die Post," *The Canadian Mennonite* 12, no. 2 (14 January 1964): 5.

431. "New newspaper for Mexican Mennonites," *Mennonite Reporter* 13, no. 17 (22 August 1983): 14; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2535, file no. OS-31, Abe Warkentin, "Die Mennonitische Post", a report prepared at request of Frank H. Epp, chairman of the Kanadier Sub-Committee, Mennonite Central Committee, 19 June 1976. The *Welt Post* of Omaha, Nebraska bought the *Steinbach Post's* subscription list and published some Kanadier correspondence, but the large readership in Mexico fell off due to a "change in style and content."

432. George Reimer, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 12 December 1996.

433. "The conservative colony Mennonites," a pamphlet of *Die Mennonitische Post*, 1992. In 1992, MCC provided $100,000 of the *Post's* and *Das Blatt's* $242,000 budget.

434. "Die Mennoniten mancher Kolonien," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 6 (18 March 1994): 6-8; Abe Warkentin, "Latin America a potential powderkeg, greatest enemy is illiteracy," *Mennonite Reporter* 15, no. 4 (18 February 1985): sec. A, 9. In 1985, subscriptions for Mexico stood at 2,400, with total subscriptions of about 6,400. This was estimated to represent about 30,000 readers.

435. Warkentin, "Die Mennonitische Post", a report, 2-3.

436. "The conservative colony Mennonites," 1992.

437. Based on personal observations and readings.

438. Warkentin, "Projections for MCC Canada Kanadier Work," 3.

439. "New newspaper for Mexican Mennonites," *Mennonite Reporter* 13, no. 17 (22 August 1983): 14.

440. "Mexikanische 'Beilage' stellt Erscheinen ein", *Die Mennonitische Post* 10, no. 5 (4 July 1986): 15. When the *Beilage* finished on June 30, 1986, the *Post* said that its successor was to be locally owned in Mexico. A local committee was in place to look after a new publication. The *Menno-Zeitung* had gone through several earlier names, including *Mennonitisches Nachrichten Blatt* and *Mexikanische Menno Zeitung.*

441. "Die Mennoniten mancher Kolonien," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, 6-8. In 1994, it stood at 2,280.

442. Abe Warkentin, interview with author, Steinbach, Manitoba, 17 October 1996.

443. Victor Fast, "Issues affecting the Low German colony system in Latin America," a report presented at the KMCC meeting in Winnipeg, 18 October 1991, from MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

444. "Goals/Plans for MCC Canada Kanadier work in Mexico," Draft, 1992, Abe Warkentin files.

445. Warkentin, "Projections for MCC Canada Kanadier Work," 8.

446. Abe Warkentin, Director, Kanadier Concerns, letter to various MCC and Kanadier Mennonite Concerns Committee members, 12 July 1995, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

447. Warkentin, letter, 12 July 1995.

448. There are two William Janzens involved with the Mennonites in Mexico. The one will be referred to as William and the other as Bill. William is the long time MCC worker from Ottawa, Ontario. Bill worked as an MCC worker in Mexico in the 1990s.

449. Janzen, "Now we see through a mirror dimly," 10.

450. "A vision statement for MCC's continuing relationship with Low German Mennonites in the Americas," 2 and 3.

451. Abe Peters, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 9 December 1996.

452. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 185. The Durango colony borrowed $5,000 U. S. from the Manitoba, Canada Mennonites to buy feed for their milk cattle. Also in those years, the Comité Menonita de Servícios, directed by the General Conference, worked in the Cuauhtémoc area to distribute seed and necessities of life.

453. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol.3585, file OS-064, Arthur Driedger, Associate Director for Overseas Services, MCC Canada, letter to Andrew Plett, 14 September 1981; "Illustrates money crisis," *Mennonite Reporter* 14, no. 14 (9 July 1984).

454. Marvin Dueck, "Einige Gedanken über meine Reise nach Mexiko im April, 1996," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 4 (21 June 1996): 3; "La Batea macht letzte Anzahlungen", *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 21 (7 March 1997): 2; Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta,

9 November 1996. The Old Colony also was involved in providing this aid. In spite of Bishop Loewen's objections to the aid, ministers overturned his decision not to help and became involved. This help is said to have led to a reconciliation between Manitoba and La Batea colonies. La Batea long had shunned Manitoba colony because of its liberality.

455. "Mexican Mennonites receive assistance," Mennonite Reporter 25, no. 15 (31 July 1995): 4.

456. "Record of Proceedings," of meetings held between MCC and conservative colony Mennonites, 25-26 October, 1995 in Mexico, page 4, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

457. Abe Peters, interview by author, Cuauhthémoc area, Mexico, December 1996.

458. Bishop Franz Wall and Minister Isaak Fehr, interview by author, Buenos Aires colony, 29 December 1996.

459. Bishop Franz Banman, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 24 December 1996.

460. Calvin Redekop, "Decision Making in a Sect," *Review of Religious Studies* (Fall 1960): 83.

461. Calvin Redekop, "A New Look at Sect Development," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13, no. 3 (September 1974): 348.

462. "Zentrum für Mennoniten in Nuevo Casas Grandes", *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 5, no. 5 (7 March 1996): 5.

463. Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 1996. In 1996, Bill began Saturday afternoon sessions. Some Old Colony and Reinländer teachers and other community members attended. In July 1996, Campo 8, Reinland, wanted sessions for teachers and parents. Five training sessions were held for them. Three ministers and a deacon attended to see if the sessions were appropriate. Interest existed in using the curriculum developed by Fast. At least one Old Colony school in Mexico used Fast's materials, although it was said that the parents did not know about this. Bill felt optimistic that, with parents pressuring the Bishops, educational change would proceed.

464. "Hat unsere Milchproduktion Zukunft?," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 2, no. 5 (20 August 1993): 13-14.

465. Dan Penner, interview by author, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Mexico, 27 December 1996, and observations of author. Comments about Dan and his family from Old Colony leaders and other people were positive. A visiting minister criticized MCC or Dan Penner one Sunday. The next Sunday, another minister corrected the false information given the previous week.

466. Abe Warkentin, Director of Kanadier Concerns, letter to Henry Bergen, Durango, 21 April 1992, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

467. Larry Kehler, Acting Associate Director for Overseas Services, letter to Glendon and Rietha Klaassen, 26 February 1981, MCC Ottawa files; William Janzen, "Mennonites in Mexico (3): Mission effort divides the church," *Mennonite Reporter* 7, no. 21 (17 October 1977): 9. Already in 1981, MCC recognized that: "Some of our mission boards have seen the Kanadier as objects of mission, rather than as brothers and sisters in Christ." In 1977, William Janzen commented on the Mennonite churches' mission efforts: "But usually these projects have been resisted by the Old Colony people. Considerable bitterness has resulted. Several projects have closed down after operating only a few years."

468. "Mennonites in Mexico (3),"17 October 1977, 9; Hildegard M. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico: Their Immigration and Settlement in Canada," a report submitted to Research Grants Program, Canada Manpower and Immigration and to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), 30 June 1975, page 28. In 1975, demonstrating an understanding of the processes involved in making inroads among the Old Colony, Martens saw the outsiders' possibilities of making inroads into the Old Colony as improving. Before that, the Old Colony leaders, with the help of a "Spanish-speaking Russian Mennonite businessman, and local Mexican politicians" had sometimes managed to close the schools of the excommunicated Mennonites and exert other pressure on them. The newly elected Chihuahua state governor was expected to "be favourably inclined towards the schools of the excommunicants."

469. Warkentin, "Projections for MCC Canada Kanadier Work," 3. In 1992, he said "The conservative Mennonite churches in Mexico (with the exception of a Kleine Gemeinde invitation for an education worker in 1992) have never asked MCC or other Mennonite agencies to come and help them, though individuals or smaller colony groups have asked for assistance many times,

always or nearly always, against their religious leaders' wishes." Warkentin then went on to recognize the importance the Old Colony places on separation from the world and mentions the Old Colony stand on intermarriage, preservation of traditions, and education and describes the lengths the Old Colony has been prepared to go to in order to follow its ideals. Instead of concluding that harm to the Old Colony occurred, he stated: "Given the above, one can understand why MCC and the General Conference moved into Mexico in the 1940's against the wishes of the conservative Mennonite leaders and began working in the spiritual, educational and medical areas."

470. Abe Warkentin, "Update on meetings of North American mission agencies reps. to discuss closer working together in Mexico," to MCC Canada executive; The Kanadier Mennonite Concerns Committee, 28 September 1992, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

471. Warkentin, "Update on meetings of North American mission agencies reps."

472. Abe Peters, interview by author, Cuauhtémoc area, Mexico, 8 December 1996.

473. "Kapitalanleger könnten mexikanischen Kolonien helfen", *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 20 (16 February 1996): 1.

474. In 1974, Paul and Mary Poetker of Edmonton, Alberta started a day school for about thirty children of former Old Colony families. In 1976, David and Mary Niessen of Saskatoon continued this work in space in the new church building near Schoenfeld.

475. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2566, file no. OS-48. Peter Kroeker, "Mexico", June, 1977, 4.

476. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2989, file EO-74-1980, "The Friesen-Janzen Trip to Mexico May 1980: A Report to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)," page 2; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2566, file OS-48, Peter Kroeker, BOMAS, "Mexico", June 1977, Page 5. A BOMAS representative saw the need for community development work but recognized that with the resistance from the Old Colony leaders that this should not be initiated. They also saw the need for a public health program. In view of resistance encountered, he recommended to continue working with individual cases. In its summary, the representative said "Because the resistance to outside influences in of paramount importance to the OC church elders, a comprehensive program of aid for the settlement is not feasible at present. But the pressures of population growth and the probable change in government attitudes to their isolation may bring a crisis to the settlement within the next decade. . . . I would encourage Bill and other personnel to continue contacts with influential persons in the church in order to be prepared for open doors in the future."

477. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 29, *Die Mennonitische Post* 21, no.1 (2 May 1997): 22. The EMMC also made inroads among the Mennonites in Belize and more recently among the Mennonites at Seminole, Texas.

478. T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 427.

479. Johann Wall, EMMC minister, interview with author, Durango colony, Mexico, 18 December 1996.

480. Johann Wall and Mervin Kornelsen, interviews by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 18 December 1996. In December 1996, the EMMC school attracted only about forty students compared to the more than ninety that the Kleine Gemeinde already had attracted to their school in a short period of time. The EMMC attracted only about sixty people to their Sunday morning services, compared to the Kleine Gemeinde's 300 or so.

481. Bishop Bernhard Bueckert and Gerhard Klassen, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996.

482. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 254.

483. Reimer, "Survey of Mennonites," 9.

484. Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 20, 22.

485. "Amish delegation visits Mennonites in Mexico," *Mennonite Reporter* 25, no. 7 (3 April 1995): 4.

486. Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 1996.

487. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 25, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 15, 6 December 1996; And based on personal observations, December 1996. The first Gemeinde Gottes missionaries arrived in 1975. They apparently were helped into the community by three Old Colony ministers, including Elder Rempel, after the more conserva-

tive part of the Old Colony left for Bolivia. The presence of the teachers who came from Canada primarily to work as missionaries caused divisions among the Mennonites since the outsiders questioned their beliefs and practices.

488. Reimer, "Survey of Mennonites," 9.

489. Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 25, 22. The Reinländer came into being in Manitoba in the mid-1950s when they broke from the Sommerfelder church. As the Old Colony in Canada no longer used the name Reinländer, they were free to use it.

490. Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 1996; Reimer, "Survey of Mennonites;" Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3121, file K-09, George Reimer, "Some Impressions Of Mexican Mennonites Now," 20 October 1980, 2. Reimer says that the Reinlanders ordained the new bishop and preachers in February 1979.

491. George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 21, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, nos. 7 and 8 (2 August 1996): 22; Reimer, "Santa Rita Colony;" Reimer, "Survey of Mennonites," 6; Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 1996; George Rempel, interview by author, Cuauhtémoc area, Mexico, 11 December 1996; Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok," part 25, 22; "News from the Gemeinden," *Preservings* 19 (December 2001): 77-78. In 1981, there were 699 members and 2,021 persons in the Reinländer group in Swift Current colony and 199 members and 647 persons in Santa Rita. As of the end of 1992, in the Swift Current colony, they counted 3045 persons of whom 1202 were members. At Santa Rita, they had 1511 people of whom 540 were members. The Reinländer also had some members in Nord colony in 1996. The Mexican and Manitoba Reinländer work as partners. The Swift Current ministers gave up the high boots, while the Santa Rita ministers did not. They were able to take over the Old Colony churches in the Swift Current colony but not in Santa Rita. One church still sat empty there in 1996. Some Old Colony people still lived in Santa Rita but belong to the Old Colony on Nord colony. In a more recent development, as of April of 2001, it appeared that the Old Colony would again provide a church presence on Santa Rita colony. The Reinländer withdrew from Santa Rita but continued at Swift Current colony.

492. "News from the Gemeinden," *Preservings* 19 (December 2001): 77-78.

493. "Wie steht's mit der Rundschau," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 3 (6 August 1992): 3. It has been privately owned by a group of persons.

494. Abram Siemens, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 14 December 1996.

495. "Mexico Work Curtailed," *The Canadian Mennonite* 11, no. 42 (22 October 1963): 1-2; "New Low German Radio Released In Mexico," *The Canadian Mennonite* 12, no. 25 (23 June 1964): 3; *The Canadian Mennonite* 15, no. 42 (24 October 1967): 1; "Mexican church approves congregational autonomy," *The Mennonite*, 8 February 1977, 87; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 115R, 1982Y, "Mennonite Central Committee (Canada) Mexico Trip Report, January 3-16/1982," page 6. Already in 1963, two radio stations broadcast a program in three languages. In 1964, the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions from Hillsboro, Kansas planned to broadcast a thirty minute Low German program that could cover Mexico, from Monterey, Mexico. It was said: "An estimated 25,000 Low German speaking Mennonite people reside in Mexico and present a tremendous challenge for gospel broadcasting." The plan called for following up the broadcasts with a program of Bible courses. In 1967, a five minute program was offered in Spanish from Monday to Saturday, along with a half hour program, at least partly in German, on Sunday. Beginning in about 1972, the Mennonite Church of Mexico (General Conference) began to provide seasonal radio programming in Mexico. In 1977, it decided to begin weekly fifteen minute programs in Spanish. Beginning in 1976, the EMMC from Saskatoon put on a half hour program every week. In the early 1980s, Gerhard Ens of Winnipeg, Manitoba produced thirteen Low German programs on Mennonite History, which the local station aired.

496. Carsten Brandt, *Sprache und Sprachgebrauch Der Mennoniten in Mexiko* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1992), 11-12.

497. "Woakt op met Radio Formula!", *Die Mennonitische Post* 14, no. 1 (4 May 1990); "Geschäftsmänner übernehmen Radioprogram," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 4, no. 11 (15 June 1995): 12. A group of Mennonite businessmen bought the German program, which was sixteen hours per week at that time.

498. George Rempel and George Reimer, interviews by author, Cuauhtémoc area, Mexico, December. In the past, the Old Colony of Manitoba Colony favoured a more conservative bookstore and printing shop over one less so. George Rempel (Senior) operated a printing business

in Campo 22, later taken over by his sons George and Peter. A Mr. Loewen, a former employee of the Rempel shop, went into business on his own and received the substantial Old Colony church business. Rather than compete with each other, the Rempels and Loewens reached an agreement whereby the Loewens would run the bookstore/print shop business and the Rempels would print calendars and have a retail store. That agreement continued in effect in 1996. Friction arose when others wanted to print and sell calendars and religious books, which were very popular in the colonies. The Rempel family left the Old Colony some time ago.

499. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 115R, 1982Y, "Mennonite Central Committee (Canada) Mexico Trip Report, January 3-16/1982," page 5; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2989, file no. EO-74, 1980, Abe Warkentin, report for *Die Mennonitische Post* Board meeting, 9 August 1980.

500. "Altenheim-Laden in Mexiko: Geschichte der Zusammenarbeit," *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 6 (21 July 1995): 1-3; Also based on personal observations.

501. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 115R, 1982Y, Abraham Wiebe and Arthur Driedger, "Mexico Trip Report, February 15- March 5, 1982," page 3.

502. "Einweihung des Altenheims bei Cuauhtémoc, Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 10, no 9 (5 September 1986): 1.

503. Marvin Dueck, "Einige Gedanken über meine Reise nach Mexiko im April, 1996," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 4 (21 June 1996): 3.

504. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4360, file 104 R 1983Y, George Reimer, "Work with the handicapped in Mexico: the opening shot and echoes," 23 July 1983. They sent a worker to Mexico to work with a selected group of families with handicapped members. Initially the program worked with eight handicapped persons, but due to rumours, divisions, and suspicions, the effort folded before the worker's term ended. Hoped for additional workers did not arrive, and the Old Colony ended their involvement in the project due to the use of a tape recorder, rumours about questionable morals, and training of local people to take over the program not occurring. Later, the Old Colony again joined the other congregations in support of the project.

505. "Einjährige Jubiläumsfeier vom 'Unser Hoffnungsheim'," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 6 (18 March 1994): 5-6; "Einweihungsfeier des Heims für Behinderte," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 2 (21 May 1993): 1. Jake and Ella Neufeld of Manitoba trained up to forty persons to work with handicapped in the new facility and at home.

506. Helen Ens, interview by author, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 16 October 1996.

507. Warkentin, "Projections for MCC Canada Kanadier Work;" "Mexico Work Curtailed," *The Canadian Mennonite* 11, no. 42 (22 October 1963): 1-2. Deportation of all non-Mexican Mennonite workers took place in 1963 because of pressure from conservative Mennonites. Some of the excommunicated had attended the church in Cuauhtémoc known as the "Redekop" church. A complaint was lodged with immigration officials in the face of increasing acceptance of the outsiders. Immigration officials checked visas, the nature of the work, and the source of support for the work. Two women workers were ordered to leave within twenty-four hours and some phases of all work were ordered discontinued. Serious curtailment of programs took place. The medical and agricultural work continued. Colony leaders did say that they did not complain to the government.

508. "Mexico denies visas," *The Canadian Mennonite* 16, no.1 (2 January 1968): 1; Also based on interviews and observations. In 1968, several General Conference workers returned to Winnipeg after working in a clinic. They had used tourist visas and were refused permanent visas.

509. Lois Barrett, "Rubber tires, schools, and a mission," *The Mennonite*, 9 August 1977, 470. One man had his house surrounded by men who threatened him for his children attending a General Conference school. In about 1974, the General Conference school at Kronsgart closed due to threats of violence, and General Conference farmers sometimes found that Old Colony cheese factories would not take their milk.

510. Leo Driedger, "The Anabaptist Identification Ladder: Plain-Urbane Continuity in Diversity," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, no. 51 (October 1977): 278.

511. Driedger, "The Anabaptist Identification Ladder," 286.

512. Reimer, "Survey of Mennonites," 2.

513. Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch," 33.

514. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America: Is History Repeating Itself?" (N.p, n.d.): 14. The upheaval these other groups have brought "is spreading and self-

perpetuating, progressively fragmenting and polarizing, and, indeed poisoning relationships in the community more and more, in a manner reminiscent of comparable events in Russia in the mid-19th Century, and in Canada in the 20th."

515. Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America," 14. The presence of outside groups led to "an even higher degree of competitive economic individualism than that prevailing in Old Colony society." The new groups are "much more consumption-oriented, particularly in respect to goods whose acquisition and use carry with them little or no potential for the multiple recycling of wealth within the Mennonite community."

CHAPTER 6

516. Calvin Wall Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 20; William Janzen, "Documentation Work for Mennonites moving from Mexico to Canada," a submission to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), 6 September 1977, page 1, MCC Canada, Ottawa files; "Old Colony Mennonite Church," *Mennonite Reporter* 12, no. 4, Section A (22 February 1982): 10; William Janzen, Director of the Ottawa Office of MCC Canada, "The movement of Mennonites from Mexico back to Canada," a paper written for Mr. J. Vanderloo, Director General of the Manitoba Region of Employment and Immigration, February 16, 1981, amended March 10, 1981, from MCC Canada, Ottawa files; "Economic Woes Erode Lives of Kanadier Mennonites in Mexico," *Mennonite Central Committee News Service Release*, 12 July 1996, Internet address: http://www.mennontecc.ca/mcc/pr/1986/07-12/5.html.

517. H. L. Sawatzky, *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, vol. 5 (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1990), 580.

518. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1971), 121.

519. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada: 1920-1940* (MacMillan of Canada, 1982), 355.

520. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 149-150, 156.

521. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 29, Records of the Department of National Health and Welfare, vol. 287, file 402-2-5, F.C. Blair, Director, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa, letter to Dr. C.P. Brown, Quarantine and Immigration Medical Services, Department of National Health, Ottawa, 3 July 1939 .

522. E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., 1955), 259.

523. Dawn S. Bowen, "The Transformation of a Northern Alberta Frontier Community" (master's thesis, The Graduate School, University of Maine at Orono, December, 1990), 80. Edward W. Van Dyke, "Blumenort: A Study of Persistence in a Sect" (Ph.D. thesis, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1972), 23.

524. Bowen, "Transformation,"140.

525. T. D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed*, vol. 3, *Mennonites in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 130-131.

526. Walter Schmiedehaus, *Die Altkolonier- Mennoniten in Mexiko* (Winnipeg, Manitoba:CMBC Publications; Steinbach, Manitoba: Die Mennonitische Post, 1982), 151.

527. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada*, 135.

528. "Colonization Board Meets to Discuss Immigration, Relief," *The Canadian Mennonite* 2, no. 23 (4 June 1954): 1.

529. Hildegard M. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico: Their Immigration and Settlement in Canada", June 30, 1975, Page 33, Submitted to Research Grants Program, Canada Manpower and Immigration and to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), June 30, 1975.

530. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 1, D. N. McDonell, Pacific District Superintendent, Vancouver, B.C., letter to Director of Immigration, Ottawa, Attention- Chief, Admissions Division, 16 November 1955.

531. *The Canadian Mennonite* 2, no. 40 (15 October 1954): 1.

532. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada*, 137.

533. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 2, Acting Director, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Branch, memorandum for file, 10 April 1957; "Pilgrims from Mexico Will Need Help This Winter," *The Canadian Mennonite* 6, no. 50 (19 December 1958): 3; Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 45.

The CPR spoke to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration about these settlers. The Superintendent of the Ontario Northern Railroad encouraged movement of the Mennonites into the Matheson and New Liskeard areas, unlike the Acting Director of Immigration.

534. "New Settlers Receive Machinery, Cattle, Help," *The Canadian Mennonite* 9, no. 20 (19 May 1961): 1. Machinery and possibly some cattle were bought with loans from other Mennonites.

535. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada*, 137.

536. Victor Fast, interview by author, Aylmer, Ontario, 3 December 1996.

537. David Friesen, interview by author, Aylmer, Ontario, 3 December 1996; Bruce Wiebe, "Mexikanische Mennoniten in Ontario," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 11 (1 October 1993): 1 and 21.

538. William Janzen, "On the Mennonites who have come from Mexico to southern Ontario," July 1974, MCC Canada, Ottawa.

539. Roswitha Guggi, "Mexican Mennonites struggling to survive," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 24 June 1978, 37; "Sixty Families From Mexico In Ontario," *The Canadian Mennonite* 14, no. 25 (21 June 1966): 1; William Janzen, "Mennonites in Mexico (4): Moving to Ontario," *Mennonite Reporter* 7, no. 22 (31 October 1977): 7.

540. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 22.

541. "Canadian Mennonites from Mexico find Ontario life tough," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 24 July 1994, A2. Possibly MCC has kept the best statistics on the Mexican Mennonite movement to Canada. However, MCC only began to keep these statistics once it established programs to work with the immigrants, which leaves prior decades for which no figures exist. It is difficult to know what percentage of those coming to Canada are represented in the figures, although MCC workers have thought they see almost all who make the move. Those coming to Canada for the first time seem more likely to seek the help of MCC than someone who has travelled to Canada repeatedly. Also, someone who has their papers in order before leaving Mexico will be much less likely to use the MCC services. Similarly, the prior presence of family or friends in Canada will reduce the need for help from MCC. The fact that MCC only offers these services in specific areas also limits the number of persons who seek out MCC, even though MCC has located their services in the areas where most Mexican Mennonites go. MCC figures are useful since they do give some idea of the size of the movement and also of changes in the pattern of the movement.

542. Marvin Dueck, "Newcomers: Mennonites from Mexico in Essex and Kent County: Who are they and why are they coming?" MCC pamplet, December 1990, page 3, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

543. Marvin Dueck, interview by author, Leamington, Ontario, 3 December 1996.

544. Help Centre, "Research and Analysis of the Low German speaking Mennonites from Latin America," page 5, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

545. Marvin Dueck statistics, December 1996.

546. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2566, file no. OS 48, William Janzen, MCC Canada, letter to Art Driedger, MCC Canada, 18 November 1977; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2566, file no. OS 48, William Janzen, MCC Canada, letter to Mr. David Bickford, Defence Relations Division and to Mr. Joe Knockert, Department of External Affairs, 18 November 1977. Correspondence reveals speculation about the wisdom and implications of such a move. MCC also spoke to Canadian government officials about making changes to the point system to ease entry for many of the Mexican Mennonites.

547. "Mennonites welcome in Manitoba," *Toronto Sun*, 7 October 1977.

548. Abe Warkentin, Director of Kanadier Concerns, letter to Henry Bergen, Durango, 21 April 1992, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

549. Bruce Wiebe, interview by author, Winkler, Manitoba, 17 October 1996; "People & Events," *Mennonite Reporter* 21, no. 10 (13 May 1991): 19; Karl Redekop, "Latin American Mennonite Immigrant Families in the Garden Valley School Division," thesis proposal, The University of Manitoba, February 1991, page 16, Abe Warkentin files; Isbrand Hiebert, "Mennoniten aus Mexiko kommen weiter nach Manitoba," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no.14 (18 November 1994): 1; Irene Friesen, "Wieder mehr Mennoniten aus Mexiko nach Manitoba," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 22 (7 April 1995): 5.

550. Bruce Wiebe, interview by author, Winkler, Manitoba, 17 October 1996. In most cases of Mexican Mennonites coming to Manitoba, at least one spouse held Canadian citizenship. This

seemed more so for those coming to Manitoba than to Ontario.

551. John Janzen, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 26 December 1996.

552. Don Petker, M.C.C. Alberta Kanadier Research Project Report, August 1993, from Abe Fehr; "Keine Ruebenfelder zu jaeten fuer uns bei Coaldale, Alberta," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 3, no. 1 (29 July 1985): 7; Byron Rempel-Burkholder, "Couple helps Kanadier from Mexico find their way in Alberta," *Mennonite Reporter* 27, no. 12 (June 9, 1997): 1; Abe Fehr, interview by author, Lethbridge, Alberta, 9 November 1996; Martens brothers, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 9 December 1996. One of the Martens brothers worked for Mennonites and one for a Norwegian family. The latter spoke English with a strong Norwegian accent. Both sent money home to their family in Mexico and returned to Mexico for part of the year.

553. "Die Kolonien Berichten," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 4, no. 12 (7 August 1991): 3.

554. "Mennonites in Mexico (4): Moving to Ontario," 7.

555. "Old Colony churches in Ontario baptize 145 young people," *Mennonite Reporter* 21, no. 16, (19 August 1991): 16.

556. Marvin Dueck, interview by author, Leamington, Ontario, 3 December 1996.

557. William Janzen, Draft of "A History of OMIAC, 1976-1996," 24 March 1996, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

558. Abe Warkentin, "Altkolonier Gemeinde wächst," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 15 (3 December 1994): 1; "Gemeindestatistiken aus dem Jahre 1994," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 18 (20 January 1995): 11.

559. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 104R 1982Y, George Rempel and William Janzen, "Population figures on People of Mexico Mennonite Background Residing in Ontario," 27 April 1982; Janzen, Draft of "A History of OMIAC," 2, 15; Abe Warkentin, "Ontario Trip Report, September 20-27, 1991," MCC Canada, Ottawa files, page 2; "Old Colony group accepts 'new' name," *Mennonite Reporter* 15, no. 2 (21 January 1985): 5; "Mennonites from Mexico in Southwestern Ontario," a map from Marvin Dueck; Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996. In the mid-1990s, a private school and a church operated. A number of the conservative Mennonites spent some time at this group's Bible School at Carbon Hill, Ohio.

560. Abe Warkentin, "Altkolonier Gemeinde wächst," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 15 (3 December 1994): 1.

561. Marvin Dueck, interview by author, Leamington, Ontario, 3 December 1996.

562. Abe Warkentin, Kanadier Concerns, MCCC, "A Study Paper Focusing on the Impact of the Mexican Mennonite Migration on Southern Manitoba," March 1991, 5-6.

563. Menno Kroeker, "Kanadier Mennoniten im Süden Albertas," *Die Mennonitische Post* 14, no. 19 (1 February 1991): 1.

564. Isbrand Hiebert, "Drittes jährliches Kanadiertreffen in Manitoba," *Die Mennonitische Post* 15, no. 7 (2 August 1991): 1.

565. "School board seeks to attract Mexican Mennonites," *Mennonite Reporter* 25, no. 9 (1 May 1995): 16.

566. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2566, file OS-48, William Janzen, chairman of OMIAC, memorandum to Art Driedger, for the Kanadier Mennonite Colonization Committee of MCC (Canada), 2 December 1977; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2566, file OS-51, OMIAC minutes of the June 24, 1977 meeting, 2; "Old Colony Mennonites start three schools," *Mennonite Reporter* 19, no. 23 (27 November 1989): 3; William Janzen, "An Outline of OMIAC History," 8 February 1996, MCC Canada, Ottawa files, 9; "Old Colony churches in Ontario baptize 145 young people," *Mennonite Reporter* 21, no. 16 (19 August 1991): 16; Warkentin, "Ontario Trip Report, September 20-27, 1991," 2; Abe Warkentin, "Altkolonier Gemeinde wächst," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 15 (3 December 1994): 1; "Grassroots education at Mennonite school," *The Chatham Daily News*, 2 December 1989, 13; Advertisement for a teacher, 29 July 1991, MCC Canada, Ottawa files; "Mehr mexikanische Mennoniten suchen neuen Anfang in Süd-Alberta," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 11 (7 October 1994): 1. Translation by the author.

567. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, D.W. Franks, Superintendent of Education, Essex County Board of Education, Essex, Ontario, letter to Mr. H. I. Bastien, Canada Immigration, Windsor, Ontario, 9 July 1979. This source indicates some of the problems in Ontario.

568. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 57-58.

569. Help Centre, "Research and Analysis," 22-23.

570. Nandy Heule, "Immigrants from Mexico resist Canadian schools," *Mennonite Reporter* 20, no. 9 (30 April 1990): 5; "People and Events," *Mennonite Reporter* 19, no. 24 (11 December 1989):22; "Valedictory address salutes Low German-speaking parents," *Aylmer Express*, 2 November 1994, 22.

571. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 62. In 1973, in the Winkler elementary school, twenty-eight of twenty-nine teachers knew German. This eased the adjustment for Mexican Mennonite students, as did the Mennonite identity of many of the other students.

572. John Janzen, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 26 December 1996.

573. Elizabeth Payne, "Trickle of Mennonites to Aylmer area has evolved into a steady stream," *The London Free Press*, 28 July 1994, B9; "Arbeitsplaetze in Ontario nicht versprechend," *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no.19 (15 April 1985): 8; Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 46; Karl Redekop, "Latin American Mennonite Immigrant Families," 19-21.

574. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 107.

575. Based on personal observations, December 1996. After about six months in Canada, they returned to Canada with less than half of what they earned, although still with a substantial amount of money.

576. "Migrant workers in Ontario: Are they being mistreated?," *Mennonite Reporter* 3, no. 18 (17 September 1973): 1. At the time, the report raised controversy, with evidence offered for and against the charges. In her 1975 report, Hildegard Martens also pointed to the poor living conditions of the Mennonites from Mexico.

577. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 43-44.

578. National Archives of Canada, RG 76, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, District Administrator, London, Ontario, memorandum to Director General, Immigration, Ontario Region, 2 August 1979, page 6.

579. Nancy Sheppard, "Literacy program doing well: More funds needed," *St. Thomas Times-Journal*, 8 November 1988, 20; "Program gives Mexican Mennonites second chance for education," *Simcoe Reformer*, 20 January 1996; Help Centre, "Research and Analysis," 22; Janzen, draft of "A History of OMIAC," 21.

580. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 108-109.

581. Mennonite Health Promotion Project fourth bi-annual report, 16 October 1992, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

582. Warkentin, "A Study Paper Focusing on the Impact," 11-13.

583. Abe Fehr, interview by author, Lethbridge, Alberta, 9 November 1996.

584. Help Centre, "Research and Analysis," 19; "A view from Aylmer," *Mennonite Reporter* 24, no. 25 (26 December 1994): 2; Nancy Huele, "Housing project raising local opposition," *Mennonite Reporter* 19, no. 22 (13 November 1989): 3.

585. John Janzen, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 26 December 1996.

586. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*, 323.

587. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 80.

588. Payne, "Trickle of Mennonites to Aylmer area."

589. "Migrant workers in Ontario: Are they being mistreated?," *Mennonite Reporter* 3, no. 18 (17 September 1973): 1.

590. "Workers from Mexico 'fall between the cracks'," *Mennonite Reporter* 24, no. 25 (26 December 1994): 2. One advocate for the workers said: "It's been known for years within the community that Mennonite farmers are taking advantage of their own people, but no one talks about it . . . When I look at the way these children are living it makes me sick. And the fact that it is being done by Mennonite farmers makes my stomach turn."

591. Payne, "Trickle of Mennonites to Aylmer area," B9.

592. Henry Bergen, "Steigende Zahl Mennonitenkinder brauchen Hilfe in Ontario," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 16 (16 December 1994): 23.

593. Victor Fast, interview by author, Aylmer, Ontario, 3 December 1996.

594. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 104- R 1982Y, Abe Wiebe, letter to George Reimer, 5 August 1982, page 2.

595. Brenda Suderman, "Families from Mexico having visible effects on southern Manitoba communities," *Mennonite Reporter* 18, no. 14 (4 July 1988): 5.

596. Warkentin, "A Study Paper Focusing on the Impact," 11.

597. Karl Redekop, "Latin American Mennonites," 27.

598. Abe Fehr, interview by author, Lethbridge, Alberta, 9 November 1996,.

599. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 81.

600. National Archives of Canada, RG 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, District Administrator, London, Ontario, memorandum to Director General, Immigration, Ontario Region, 2 August 1979, page 5.

601. Karl Redekop, "Latin American Mennonites," 18; Personal observations.

602. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 95-96.

603. "Special services are unfair to immigrants," *Aylmer Express*, 23 May 1990.

604. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 98.

605. Karl Redekop, "Latin American Mennonites," 18.

606. Robb Cribb, "Exodus," *The London Free Press*, 26 August 1995, E1.

607. George Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin colony, Mexico, 28 December 1996.

608. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996 is only one source for this information. Some who sold land to move to South America priced their land in litres of milk to protect themselves from inflation. By the mid- 1990s, most of the once rich people at Durango had lost much of their wealth. In constrast, the Cuauhtémoc area included many more well off people.

609. William Janzen, "The Mennonites from Mexico in Ontario: Notes for a video tape by William Janzen," first presented in slightly modified form at Aylmer, Ontario, 6 October 1988, page 8, MCC Canada, Ottawa files. William Janzen wrote: "the social system caused a significant number of people to become marginalized, meaning that they were economically impoverished, or religiously alienated, and educationally unequipped for other positive options, and – of particular importance to us – that it has often been those on the margin of Mennonite society in Mexico who have made their way to Ontario."

610. Personal observations; Abe Warkentin, "Aus dem Mennonitenleben: Eine Untersuchung des Einflusses der mexikanischen Mennoniten auf Südmanitoba," *Die Mennonitische Post* 15, no. 5 (5 July 1991): 3. Many felt ashamed to tell Canadians about their low wages in Mexico.

611. Kelly Lynn Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua: Language, Literacy, and Identity among the Old Colony Mennonites in Northern Mexico" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996), 239.

612. Marvin Dueck, MCC Ontario, letter to Abe Warkentin, KMCC Director, 3 January 1992, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

613. Help Centre, "Research and Analysis," 5.

614. "Willkommen zurück aus Kanada!," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 4, no. 3 (22 October 1990): 7.

615. Jacob and Heinrich Unger, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 18 December 1996.

616. Warkentin, "Ontario Trip Report, September 20-27, 1991. In 1991, Abe Warkentin of Kanadier Concerns wrote: "these are refugees fleeing a system that has become bogged down in legalism and can no longer meet the economic, spiritual and educational needs of the people."

617. "Exodus," *The London Free Press*, 26 August 1995, E5.

618. Isaak M. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde von Canada nach Mexico* (Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico: Imprenta Colonial, 1971), 85. He goes on to quote Ezekial 20:39 where it says: "'O Israel, the Lord God says: If you insist on worshipping your idols, go right ahead, but then don't bring your gifts to me as well! Such desecration of my holy name must stop!'" The translation of Dyck's words from the German is this writer's. The Bible passage is taken from The Living Bible, Paraphrased, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

619. Personal interviews in various colonies, 1996. Some said they only needed to go to Canada for one more year, but they said this year after year. Each time some returned, they promised to stay in Mexico, while some already had arranged the next year's work with their employers in Canada. Leaders found it difficult to tell the honest from the dishonest.

620. Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country*," 320.

621. Helen Roberts, A/Chief, Programs Policy Application, Health and Welfare Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, letter to Mr. Marvin Dueck, MCC Chatham Help Centre, Chatham, Ontario, 29 July 1991, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

622. Based on personal observations, December 1996. MCC became involved and paid off the debt to his employer when his pay cheques had been stopped to recover the loan.

623. Jacob Unger, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 18 December 1996.

624. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, "Merkmale Gegenwärtiger Deutsch-Mennonitischer Kolonisierung in Mexiko," *Jahrbuch für Ostdeutsche Volkskunde*, (Marburg: N.G. Elwert, 1987), 226-227; "Kanadier Work in the Ninetees," MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

625. Janzen, draft of "A History of OMIAC," 3-4; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2535, file OS-31,"Minutes Number 4 of the Kanadier Colonization Committee," 15 September 1976, page 1.

626. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada: 1939-1970*, 136-137.

627. Over the years, Janzen repeatedly brought general problems with immigration and citizenship policies to the departments' attention. He also intervened on behalf of many individuals who experienced problems negotiating the bureaucratic maze. It is not an exaggeration to say that hundreds, and possibly thousands, of Mennonites from Mexico would not have been able to enter or remain in Canada had it not been for the work of Janzen and MCC.

628. MCC Canada, "Toward Fairness in Citizenship Law," a submission to the Registrar of Canadian Citizenship regarding the government's review of the Citizenship Act, 5 November 1987, MCC Ottawa files.

629. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file OS-054, KMCC minutes, no.16, 12 May 1981, page 4. Dennis Scown of the Immigration Department in Manitoba, "encouraged MCC (Canada) to assign personnel in Mexico to assist Mennonites in acquiring adequate documentation."

630. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file OS-73 1979, William Janzen, "An assignment in Mexico?" a background paper, March 1979, page 5; Driedger, "The Driedger-Janzen Trip to Mexico," 8; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file OS-73, George Rempel, letter to Mr. Arthur Driedger and/or Mr. Wm. Janzen, 31 March 1979; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol.2989, file EO-74-1980, "The Friesen-Janzen Trip to Mexico May 1980: A Report to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)," page 1; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3584, file OS-054, George Reimer, "Thoughts on Documentation and Migration," 22 October 1981. In 1979, William Janzen concluded that MCC Canada should offer documentation work in Mexico. After a trip to Mexico, Janzen and Driedger also recommended working with the documentation agents in Mexico by giving them information, encouraging coordination of their work, and by keeping in contact with the Canadian Embassy. In 1980, related work took place when several MCC workers travelled to Mexico and met and taught six documentation agents there. This seemed to remove the urgency of posting a separate MCC documentation worker in Mexico. George Rempel, another long time MCC worker, also favoured MCC involvement with documentation work in Mexico, although for somewhat different reasons. Rempel saw that Canadian documents served many purposes besides just allowing persons to enter Canada to live. The papers helped some with life in Mexico or South America.

631. Draft of "A History of OMIAC, 16.

632. Minutes Number 4 of the Kanadier Colonization Committee, 2; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2535, file OS-31, "Conclusions and Recommendations of the Kanadier Committee of MCC (Canada) Meeting," 3 June 1976.

633. William Janzen, "A Report on O.M.I.A.C. for the MCC Ontario Board of Directors," 1 February 1984, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

634. David and Helen Friesen, interview by author, Aylmer, Ontario area, 3 December 1996; "LIP grant to assist Mexican immigrants,"*Mennonite Reporter*, 19 March 1973, 3; Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 111.

635. Janzen, "An Outline of OMIAC History," 2; Janzen, draft of "A History of OMIAC," 14; "Appoint advocate for immigrants from Mexico," *Mennonite Reporter* 7, no. 7 (4 April 1977): 1.

636. Mennonite Heritage Centre, Volume 2535, OS-31, William Janzen, "A Proposal for a Service Program among the Mennonites who have come from Mexico to Ontario," December 1976.

637. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 104 R 1982Y, William Janzen, MCC Canada, Ottawa, letter to George Reimer, MCC, Mexico, 1 September 1982.

638. In 1981, Tina Wiebe began to work out of Leamington, and various volunteers helped out in the Aylmer area along with George Rempels work.

639. "Ontario expands ministries to immigrants from Mexico," *Mennonite Reporter* 18, no. 16 (15 August 1988): 3.

640. Janzen, draft of "A History of OMIAC," 17; Janzen, "An Outline of OMIAC History." OMIAC staff increased from three to eleven from 1987 to 1989 and the budget rose from $48,000

in 1986-87 to $249,485 in 1990-91. By 1994-1995, the budget increased to $462,557. Whereas in 1977-78, government grants made up $15,000 of the $35,700 budget, in 1994-95 government grants made up $396,076 of the $462,557 budget. The balance of the funds throughout the years came from MCC funds and donations.

641. Janzen, draft of "A History of OMIAC, 17; Janzen, "An Outline of OMIAC History," 9; Hilda Friesen, Mennonite Health Promotion Project third bi-annual report, 15 May 1992, Abe Warkentin files.

642. Janzen, "An Outline of OMIAC History," Appendix 2.

643. Victor Fast, interview by author, Aylmer, Ontario, 3 December 1996.

644. Janzen, "Documentation Work for Mennonites," 9.

645. Warkentin, "A Study Paper Focusing on the Impact," 3.

646. Warkentin, "Aus dem Mennonitenleben: Eine Untersuchung," 7 June 1991, 3. In 1991, most help given to the immigrants dealt with documents, employment and related issues such as social insurance numbers and unemployment insurance, and finances, including dealing with government assistance programs such as family allowance.

647. "Neues Büro für Familiendienst für Kanadier Mennoniten im Süden Manitobas," *Die Mennonitische Post* 12, no. 2 (20 May 1988): 1.

648. Isbrand Hiebert, "Mennoniten aus Mexiko kommen weiter nach Manitoba," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 14 (18 November 1994): 1.

649. Janzen, "Documentation Work for Mennonites," 9.

650. Don Petker, "*M.C.C. Alberta Kanadier Research Project Report*," August 1993, from Abe Fehr.

651. "Nachrichten von Ontario," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no.10 (19 May 1994): 12-13.

CHAPTER 7

652. William Janzen, "Documentation Work for Mennonites moving from Mexico to Canada," a submission to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), 6 September 1977, 2, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

653. National Archives of Canada, RG 25, Records of the Department of External Affairs, G1, vol.1724, file 5CB, Acting British Consul-General at Mexico City, letter to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 13 May 1936.

654. National Archives of Canada, RG 25, Records of the Department of External Affairs, G1, vol. 1724, file 5CB, W. Stuart Edwards, Deputy Minister of Justice, letter to E. H. Coleman, Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa, 4 May 1937.

655. National Archives of Canada, RG 25, Records of the Department of External Affairs, G1, vol. 1724, file 5CB, Joseph Pyke, British Consulate General Office, Mexico City, letter to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, London, 10 February 1936.

656. Janzen, "Documentation Work for Mennonites," 3.

657. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

658. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, Part 3, The Canadian Embassy, Mexico, D.F., letter to The Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 29 September 1961; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 3, D.M. Cornett, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, letter to Registrar of Canadian Citizenship, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Ottawa, 25 October 1962.

659. William Janzen, MCC Ottawa Office Director, letter to The Honourable John Roberts, Secretary of State of Canada, 30 June 1978, page 2, MCC Canada, Ottawa files; William Janzen, Director MCC Ottawa, letter to Mr. R.W. Nichols, Registrar, Canadian Citizenship Branch, Ottawa, 29 March 1977, MCC Canada, Ottawa files; R. W. Nichols, Registrar of Canadian Citizenship, Department of the Secretary of State, letter to William Janzen, Director, Ottawa Office, MCC, 16 August 1976, MCC Canada, Ottawa files. "for some time the Canadian government was ignorant of the Mexican law regarding marriages and certificates of proof of citizenship were issued."

660. John Roberts, Secretary of State of Canada, letter to William Janzen, Director of MCC's Ottawa Office, 16 August 1978, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

661. Janzen, letter to The Honourable John Roberts, 30 June 1978, 4.

662. Ken Monteith, M.P. for Elgin, four letters to The Honourable Gerry Weiner, Minister of State, (Multiculturalism and Citizenship), Ottawa, 28 June 1989, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

663. Gerry Weiner, Minister of State, letter to Ken Monteith, M.P. for Elgin, 23 August 1989, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

664. William Janzen, director of MCC Ottawa office, letter to Mr. K. John Downie, Manager Canada Immigration Centre, London, Ontario, 1 May 1990, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

665. William Janzen, Draft of "A History of OMIAC, 1976-1996," 24 March 1996, MCC Canada, Ottawa files, 3.

666. Mennonite Heritage Centre, Volume 2566, File OS-48, *Citizenship Certificates Given to 76 Mennonites from Mexico*, MCC News Service Release, 8 March 1977; William Janzen, "Now we see through a mirror dimly: A report on a ten day visit with Kanadier Colony Mennonites of Mexico," 20 May 1977, page 1, MCC Canada, Ottawa files; Janzen, Draft of "A History of OMIAC, 3; William Janzen, interview by author, Ottawa, Ontario, November 1996.

667. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol.3073, file OS-73, William Janzen, report for the MCC Canada Executive Committee meeting March 23 and 24, 1979, page 5.

668. Secretary of State Communique, "Secretary of State Announces New Citizenship Act Passed By Parliament," 1976, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

669. Janzen, "Documentation Work for Mennonites, 6.

670. William Janzen, "Obtaining Canadian Citizenship," 10 November 1977, pages 4-5, MCC Canada, Ottawa files; Janzen, "Documentation Work for Mennonites, 4; Janzen, letter to The Honourable John Roberts, 5. If a Canadian citizen, whether born before or after 1947, did not follow the proper steps to retain citizenship, they would lose citizenship. They then could apply for resumption of Canadian citizenship. They first needed to be "admitted to Canada for permanent residence" and then live in Canada for one year as a landed immigrant.

671. Hildegard M. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico: Their Immigration and Settlement in Canada", June 30, 1975, Submitted to Research Grants Program, Canada Manpower and Immigration and to Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), June 30, 1975. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico," 104.

672. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

673. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996; George Rempel, interview by author, Cuauhtémoc area, Mexico, December 1996.

674. Irene Friesen, "Wieder mehr Mennoniten aus Mexiko nach Manitoba," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 22 (7 April 1995): 5; Abe Fehr, interview by author, Lethbridge, Alberta, 9 November 1996; "Einwanderung nach Kanada kommt teuer," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no. 23 (7 April 1995): 1 and 5; Marvin Dueck,"Ein Blick von Ontario," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 20 (21 February 1997): 3.

675. "Exodus," *The London Free Press*, 26 August 1995, E5.

676. "Wie wird man kanadischer Bürger?," *Die Mennonitische Post* 18, no.17 (5 January 1995): 2.

677. "Landkarten nach Kanada werden abgestäubt," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 2, no. 21 (14 March 1989): 11.

678. Bill Janzen, MCC in Mexico, letter to William Janzen, Ottawa MCC, 22 April 1993, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

679. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1246, file no. IM5850-3-595, "Manpower and Immigration Operations in Mexico," report from Foreign Service Headquarters, Department of Manpower & Immigration, Ottawa, August 1973; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1246, file no. IM 5850-3-595, Director, Region 'A', memorandum to Officer in Charge, Kingston, Jamaica, Subject- Processing of Immigrant Applications Mexico, 25 April 1969; Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2463, file EO-70, J. W. Dobson, Manager, Immigration Secretariat, Manpower and Immigration, letter to Reverend William Janzen, Ottawa, Ontario, 17 July 1972.

680. Pierre S. Pettigrew, Minister of Human Resources Development, letter to author, 26 November, 1996; B.R. Brookes, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, letter to author, 20 December, 1996.

681. National Archives of Canada, RG 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, Regional Intelligence Officer, J.G. Russell, Prairie Region, Winnipeg, memorandum to A/Director, Immigration, Winnipeg and other distribution, 19 March 1976.

682. Director General , Immigration Ontario Region, memo, 29 January 1980, MCC Canada, Ottawa files.

683. National Archives of Canada, RG 25, Records of the Department of External Affairs, G1, vol. 1724, file no. 5CB, Joseph Pyke, British Consulate General Office, Mexico City, letter to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, London, 10 February 1936; National Archives of Canada, RG 25, Records of the Department of External Affairs, G1, vol. 1724, file no. 5CB, Laurent Beaudry, Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, letter to His Britannic Majesty's Consul General, Mexico City, 29 October 1936.

684. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-32-4, part 1, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Canada, memorandum to The Canadian Ambassador, Mexico, 11 December 1951.

685. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 29, Records of the Department of National Health and Welfare, vol. 287, file 402-2-5, F.C. Blair, Director, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa, letter to Dr. C.P. Brown, Quarantine and Immigration Medical Services, Department of National Health, Ottawa, 3 July 1939; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 25, Records of the Department of External Affairs, G1, vol. 1558, File 44-C, O.D. Skelton, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, letter to L.R. Macgregor, Australian Trade Commissioner in Canada, 25 June 1936.

686. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 29, Records of the Department of National Health and Welfare, vol. 287, file 402-2-5, R.E. Wodehouse, M.D. Deputy Minister of Health, Ottawa, letter to Dr. Malcolm R. Bow, Deputy Minister Department of Public Health, Edmonton, 29 July 1938.

687. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 29, Records of the Department of National Health and Welfare, vol. 287, file 402-2-5, *Regina Leader Post,* 29 June 1938.

688. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 29, Records of the Department of National Health and Welfare, Volume 287, File 402-2-5, The Director, letter to G.W. McDonald, Esq. M.P., Boissevain, Manitoba, 9 August 1938.

689. Blair, letter to Dr. C.P. Brown.

690. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 29, Records of the Department of National Health and Welfare, vol. 287, file 402-2-5, J.J. Heagarty, M.D., Chief Executive Assistant, Department of Pensions and National Health, Ottawa, letter to M.R. Bow, Deputy Minister of Health, Department of Public Health, Edmonton, 22 August 1938,.

691. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 2, Acting Director, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Branch, memo to file, 10 April 1957.

692. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-32-4, part 1, Laval Fortier, letter to Dr. J.G. Taggart, Deputy Minister, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, 23 April 1952.

693. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 2, A/Chief, Operations Division, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Branch, memorandum to All District Superintendents, 28 November 1956.

694. National Archives of Canada, RG 25, Records of the Department of External Affairs, G1, vol.1724, file 5CB, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, letter to His British Majesty's Consul, British Consulate, Mexico City, 18 February 1936.

695. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol.122, file 3-32-4, part 1, C.E. Smith of Department of Citizenship and Immigration, memorandum to The Deputy Minister, 24 January 1952.

696. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-32-4, part 1, Laval Fortier, letter to The Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, Attention Leslie G. Chance, 26 January 1952.

697. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-32-4, part 2, Canadian Embassy, Mexico City, memorandum to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 25 February 1966.

698. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol.122, file 3-32-4, part 1, J.E. Duggan, Registrar of Canadian Citizenship of Department of the Secretary of State Canadian Citizenship Registration Branch, memorandum to Deputy Minister, 29 January 1952; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 2, J.E. Duggan, Registrar of Canadian Citizenship, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, memorandum to Mr. C.E.S. Smith, Acting Deputy Minister, 21

September 1956; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-23-4, part 1, Director C.E.S. Smith, memorandum to Deputy Minister of Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 20 May 1955; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 855, file 554-22, part 2, Acting Director, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Immigration Branch, memorandum to file, 10 April 1957.

699. Fortier, letter to Dr. J.G. Taggart, 23 April 1952.

700. "2,000 mile trip by 28 in truck wasn't too bad, only too long, Mexican immigrant to Canada says," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 10 November 1966; "Ottawa to probe farm helpers from Mexico," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 9 November 1966; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 690, file 568-3-23-1, part 1, Director, Home Branch, memorandum to Assistant Deputy Minister, 22 November 1966.

701. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, Chief, Enforcement Research and Analysis Division- Prairie Region, memorandum to Acting Director, Immigration- Prairie Region, 13 April 1976.

702. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, District Administrator, London, Ontario, memorandum to Director General, Immigration, Ontario Region, 2 August 1979, page 6.

703. Abe Fehr, interview by author, Lethbridge, Alberta, 9 November 1996.

704. "15-Jährige vermisst," *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 14, 17 November 1995, 10.

705. Based on personal interviews, December 1996; Isaac Ens, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996. Rates of 100 to 150 dollars per person were commonly charged for the trip to Canada. A lower rate possibly applied to children. Those travelling to Canada from Durango sometimes paid a higher rate, possibly 200 to 300 U. S. dollars per person.

706. Canadian National Archives, RG 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, J.D. Love, memorandum to the Minister (of Immigration), 6 November 1979.

707. Canadian National Archives, RG 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, District Administrator, London, Ontario, memorandum to Director General, Immigration, Ontario Region, 2 August 1979, page 2.

708. District Administrator, London, to Director General, Immigration, 13.

709. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol.1112, file 554-22, Officer in Charge, Windsor, Ontario, memorandum to Regional Director, Toronto, Ontario, 23 March 1967.

710. National Archives of Canada, RG 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, Regional Intelligence Officer, J.G. Russell, Prairie Region, Winnipeg, memorandum to A/Director, Immigration, Winnipeg and other distribution, 19 March 1976.

711. Officer in Charge, Windsor, to Regional Director, Toronto.

712. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol.1112, file 554-22, A/Officer in Charge, Sarnia, Ontario, memorandum to Regional Director, Toronto, Ontario, Subject- Mexican Mennonites...and Family, 10 April 1967; National Archives of Canada, R.G. 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol.1112, file 554-22, S/S R. Pritchard, memorandum to Officer in Charge, Windsor, Ontario, 20 March 1967.

713. "Mennonitische Familie aus Mexiko Eintritt in Kanada verweigert," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 2, no. 2 (14 April 1988): 11.

714. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico,"106.

715. National Archives of Canada, RG 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, J.F. Dinsmore, Immigration Officer, London, Ontario, memorandum to A/Officer-In-Charge, Canada Immigration Centre, London, Ontario, 16 September 1977.

716. David and Helen Friesen, interview by author, Aylmer, Ontario area, 3 December 1996.

717. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

718. Robert Andras, Minister of Manpower and Immigration, letter to Mr. Frank H. Epp, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, 27 January 1975, attachment to Martens, "Mennonites From Mexico".

719. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3585, file OS-063, Bill Janzen, Ottawa Office of MCC (Canada), report to the Mennonite Brethren Conference, Saskatoon, 6 July 1981. In 1981, a forty year old man, who appeared mentally or emotionally handicapped, was forced to return to Mexico, after living in Ontario with relatives for about one year.

720. J. G. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Mexico," unpublished report of trip to Mexico (1986): 80-83.

721. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol.122, file 3-32-4, part 2, Canadian Embassy, Mexico City, memorandum to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 25 February 1966.

722. Martens, "Mennonites from Mexico,"24.

723. Johann Wall, documentation worker, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 19 December 1996; George Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin colony, 28 December 1996. Johann Wall had handled about 160 citizenship and passport applications in 1994, about 320 in 1995, and about 400 in 1996. He also handled some applications from La Batea and La Honda although some also have gone to Manitoba colony for their paperwork. January to May was the busiest time of year for the applications. Johann Wall had taken over this work since Henry Bergen and his son Jacob moved to Canada. In 1996, George Neufeld handled about twenty to twenty-five citizenship applications and about fifteen passport applications. Some of his customers came from other nearby colonies.

724. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

725. National Archives of Canada, RG 76, Records of the Immigration Branch, vol. 1428, file 209-24-1, Immigration Department memorandum, from Director, Immigration Intelligence, Ottawa, 12 June 1978.

726. National Archives of Canada, R.G. 26, Records of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, vol. 122, file 3-32-4, part 2, Canadian Embassy, Mexico City, memorandum to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 25 February 1966.

727. Henry Bergen, interview by author, Port Burwell, Ontario, 2 December 1996.

728. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 3073, file OS-73, Art Driedger and William Janzen, "The Driedger-Janzen Trip to Mexico, December 1979: A Report for Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)," page 3.

729. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 4322, file 115R, 1982Y, William Janzen, "Documentation work for Mennonites from Mexico: A review of the policies," 9 December 1982, page 6.

CHAPTER 8

730. George Rempel, "Altkolonier und Sommerfelder Mennoniten zogen vor 75 Jahren nach Mexiko," *Der Bote* 74, no. 15 (9 April 1977): 1 and 3; G. E. Rempel, "Jubiläumsfeier der Mennoniten in Mexiko," *Der Bote* 74, no. 15 (9 April 1977): 2-3.

731. Calvin Redekop, "The Old Colony: An Analysis of Group Survival," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 15, no. 3 (July 1966): 210.

732. Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 1996.

733. Bram Siemens, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 14 December 1996.

734. G. E. Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 26, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 17 (3 January 1997): 22.

735. Bishop Bernhard Bueckert and Gerhard Klassen, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 12 December 1996.

736. "Landeigentumstitel werden in Campo 105 durch gearbeitet," *Die Mennonitische Post, Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 1 (17 July 1984): 1.

737. Jeffrey Lynn Eighmy, *Mennonite Architecture: Diachronic Evidence for Rapid Diffusion in Rural Communities* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 65.

738. David Thiessen, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 15 December 1996.

739. Isaak Ens, interview by author, Durango colony, Mexico, 17 December 1996.

740. Leonard Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America: Is History Repeating Itself?" (N.p, n.d.): 12.

741. Abram Siemens, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, December 14, 1996.

742. Eighmy, *Mennonite Architecture*, 60.

743. Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten Eine Heimat: Deutsch-Mennonitische Kolonisierung in Mexiko, 1922-1984* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1986), 211.

744. "News from the Gemeinden," *Preservings* 20 (June 2002): 78.

745. Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America," 14.

746. Abe Warkentin, Kanadier Concerns, "Mexico Trip Report," to MCCC, MCC and KMCC, February 2, 1993, page 5, from MCC Canada, Ottawa files; "Mennoniten wird 100,000 Hektar Land angeboten," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 4, no. 23 (4 February 1992): 1.

747. "Mexico Mennonite Population 10,000," *The Canadian Mennonite* 14, no. 5 (1

February 1966): 1. Some long criticized the Mennonites in Mexico for not utilizing the potential of the milk production more. They lost much income because of incomplete milk use. They likely could produce a larger range of milk products than just cheese. The recent construction of two new plants in the Cuauhtémoc area are a positive development.

748. "Neue Hoffnung in Kolonien in Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 24 (18 April 1997): 3.

749. George Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin colony, Mexico, 28 December 1996.

750. Bishop Franz Wall and Isaak Fehr, interview by author, Buenos Aires colony, Mexico, 29 December 1996. Buenos Aires and El Cuervo colonies fell under the same *Lehrdienst*. Two bishops remained there. Bishop Bernhard Wiebe, a grandson of the highly respected Fürstenland Bishop Wiebe who led the 1870s exodus from Russia, had retired from active work. The new bishop was Bishop Franz Wall. The leaders of the community did not really approve of electric power but no longer saw any alternative.

751. Peter Kroeker, "Mexico," June 1977, page 2, vol. 2566, file no. OS-48, Mennonite Heritage Centre; "Elektrizität kommt nach Patos Kolonie, Mexiko," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 20 (21 February 1997): 1. The price for ninety-two kilometres of power lines stood at 12,500,000 pesos, which could be paid for over a number of years. It was thought that about sixty percent of the residents would take the power. In personal interviews, residents said the cost was 12,500 pesos per hookup, payable over a number of years.

752. "In Nuevo Ideal sind einige gegen Stromleitung," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 24 (18 April 1997): 1-2. This report said that the cost was 12,500 pesos per village plus 2,000 pesos per household.

753. Philip Dyck, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 11 December 1996. The exact years of drought vary somewhat from area to area. The Cuauhtémoc area colonies experienced serious drought from 1992 to 1994, while 1995 was somewhat better and 1996 was back to about normal rainfall. Colonies farther north, including El Capulin, Buenos Aires, and El Cuervo, even though largely dependent on irrigation, have had less than normal rainfall now for a number of years. Farther south, La Batea has also experienced intermittent drought in the past several years.

754. David Wolfe, interview by author, Manitoba Colony, Mexico, 11 December 1996. "Bewässerungsbrunnen um Cuauhtémoc, Namiquipa und Riva Palacio", *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 8 (15 October 1992): 9. By 1992, residents in Los Jagueyes, Manitoba, and Santa Rita colonies, which previously had not irrigated much, drilled new wells up to about 700 feet deep. In many cases, results appeared good.

755. George Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin colony, Mexico, 28 December 1996. Some grow summer and winter crops. Irrigated wheat and oats are seeded in January and harvested in May and June. Sorghum can grow on the same land in summer. Corn, kaffir, beans, and cotton grow as summer crops. Farms reached to 200 hectares.

756. In spite of its low income levels, for many years Mexico had higher prices for many agricultural products. Fixed prices of many basic foods made them affordable for the masses. NAFTA also affected the agrarian subsidies paid to the farmers.

757. Cornelius Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin colony, Mexico, 28 December 1996.

758. Based on personal observation.

759. Based on personal experience in 1996.

760. J. G. Guenter, "Canadian Old Colony Mennonite Settlements in Mexico." Unpublished report of trip to Mexico (1986): 45.

761. Sawatzky, *Sie Suchten eine Heimat*, 250.

762. Bill Janzen, interview by author, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 1996; Abe Peters, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, December 1996.

763. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2989, file EO-74-1980, George Reimer, "Some Impressions of Mexican Mennonites Now," 20 October 1980, page 5; Hedges, "Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch in Chihuahua," 245. In 1980 it was observed that due to drinking, "about twenty youths were jailed every weekend." Hedges observed that "before they have been baptized and become full members of the *Jemeent*, young people are expected to sow their wild oats, engage in roughhousing, and to stretch some of the rules of the *oole Ordnunk*, especially those regarding clothing and relations with the *Welt*. The majority of the Old Colonists who attend Mexican

circuses, concerts, and rodeos are young adults, and although drinking by the young people is universally condemned, it is usually tolerated as evidence of teen rebellion. It is expected that when the young adults are 'converted' . . . confess their sins, and are baptized, they will, as full members of the *Jemeent*, uphold all the tenets of the *oole Ordnunk*, including those about language." While parents now wring their hands over teenaged drinking, reports from the sixties report similar occurrences. Some who are parents now likely also drank as teenagers. Outsiders possibly focus on drinking and other "wild" behaviours among Old Colony youth largely because those actions seem incongruous with expectations for the group. The presence of teenage rebellion conflicts with images of a church centred community.

764. "Ein Nebel hat sich über den Kolonien gelagert," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 1, no. 9, (5 November 1992): 3.

765. Wolfgang Büscher, "Mennoniten: Gottes Fahrendes Volk," *Geo* (1 February 1996): 138.

766. Hedges, *Plautdietsch and Huuchdietsch*, 82.

767. Sawatzky, "Mennonites in Northern Latin America," 15-16. Sawatzky spoke of a malaise and said: "there is reason to suspect that among the large and increasing number who appear to be resorting to alcohol as refuge – and indeed at increasingly younger ages – there are also increasing numbers of those who perceive themselves as powerless . . . to attain that tangible level of accomplishment which would accord them stature and a position of equality and respect in the community."

768. Ron Rempel, "Community responds to uncovering of 'Mennonite mob'," *Mennonite Reporter* 22, no. 6 (March 23, 1992): 1 and 5; Marvin Dueck, MCC Ontario, Chatham, memorandum to John Longhurst, 10 March 1992, MCC Canada files, Ottawa.

Wilma Derksen, "TV exposé of drug trafficking: A sign of deeper problems," *Mennonite Reporter* 22, no. 6 (23 March 1992): 5; Wilma Derksen, "Drug smuggling story boosts work among Mexico Mennonites," *Mennonite Reporter* 22, no. 13 (29 June 1992): 1.

"TV-Programm über Drogen schmuggel schockiert Mennoniten in Kanada," *Die Mennonitische Post* 15, no. 22 (20 March 1992): 1; "Aus dem Mennonitenleben: Lehrdienst der Reinländer Gemeinde von Manitoba nimmt Stellung zu Artikel, TV-Programm," *Die Mennonitische Post* 15, no. 24 (16 April 1992): 3; "Manitobaer in Drogenschmuggel fall gegen Kaution freigelassen," *Die Mennonitische Post* 13, no. 17 (5 January 1990): 3; Aiden Schlichting Enns, "Controversial coverage of drug smuggling scam," *Mennonite Reporter* 23, no. 11 (31 May 1993): 3; "Mann aus der Winkler Gegend in Texas verurteilt," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 3 (4 June 1993): 17; "Mennoniten werden des Drogenschmuggels zwischen Mexiko und Kanada angeschuldigt," *Die Mennonitische Post* 17, no. 1 (7 May 1993): 1.

769. Aiden Schlichting Enns, "Controversial coverage," 3. From May 1 to 4, 1993, the *Winnipeg Free Press* six times ran the headline of "Bible belt is drug corridor: The Mennonite connection," for a series of articles on the drug situation. One report said that U. S. law enforcement officials were to come to Winnipeg to destroy the Mennonite drug organization. The article mentioned the possibility that Mexicans grew most of the drugs in the hills near Cuauhtémoc and sold to the Mennonites. In retrospect, the reports proved sensationalist and exaggerated the problem. Singling out the Mennonites, while members of many other ethnic groups were involved with drug smuggling, also appears unfair.

770. "Readers protest the 'Mennonite connection'," *Mennonite Reporter* 23, no. 11 (31 May 1993): 3.

771. "Drug smugglers sentenced," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, (7 May 1997).

772. "Mennoniten die grössten Marijuana Schmuggler?," *Die Mennonitische Post* 21, no. 2 (16 May 1997), 11.

773. Aiden Schlichting Enns, "Mennonite community responds to Free Press series on drugs," *Mennonite Reporter* 23, no. 11 (31 May 1993): 3.

774. "Five held in pot bust," *Windsor Star* (10 July 1995); "Woman gets bail in major drug case," *Windsor Star* (11 July 1995); "Four suspects freed on bail in drug case," *Windsor Star* (12 July 1995); "Mennoniten im Blicke von Zeitungen," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 4, no. 13 (20 July 1995): 13.; Marvin Dueck, "Er sagt, er wollte seiner Familie helfen," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no 20 (21 February 1997): 1; "Froese wegen Drogenschmuggel für schuldig erklärt," *Die Mennonitische Post* 19, no. 10 (15 September 1995): 22; Tim Padgett, "Its Hard to Watch," *Newsweek* (17 July 1995): 33.

775. "Drug smugglers sentenced," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, (7 May 1997).

776. "Gesetz-Beamter gibt seinen Rat," *Menno-Zeitung von Mexiko* 1, no. 4 (20 January 1987): 2.

777. "Werden 'Pickups' noch immer 'mexikanisch' gemacht?" *Die Mennonitische Post: Beilage für Mexiko* 2, no. 13 (14 January 1985): 6. After 1982, stricter restrictions began for the import of vehicles. In spite of this, the payment of bribes helped vehicles into the country. 1984 was known as "the year of the pickups" for the Mennonites in Mexico, as thousands of vehicles saw importation that year.

778. Personal observation, 1996.

779. This incident occurred while I visited the colony where the young man lived.

780. Mennonite Heritage Centre, vol. 2989, file EO-74-1980, George Reimer, "Some Impressions of Mexican Mennonites Now," 20 October 1980, page 4; "Selbstmord ein Zeichen von Hoffnungslosigkeit?" *Deutsch Mexikanische Rundschau* 3, no. 8 (22 April 1994): 3; "Selbstmordrate alarmierend," *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 5 (5 July 1996): 3. (reprinted from *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*). Suicide, once rare, was no longer uncommon in the colonies. Apparently no psychologist or psychiatrist in the Cuauhtémoc area specialized in dealing with this.

781. Cornelius Neufeld, interview by author, El Capulin colony, Mexico, 28 December 1996. This could be seen in 1996 at El Capulin, where the leaders lost the support of many. Hard economic times also possibly played a part. When asked why attendance was poor, one person replied, "alles geht entzwei" (everything comes apart).

782. Eighmy, *Mennonite Architecture*, 154-159.

783. Bernd G. Längin, *Gottes letzte Inseln: Wie die Hutterer und Amischen leben* (Augsburg: Pattloch Verlag, Weltbild Verlag GmbH, 1996), 209.

784. Abe Fehr, interview by author, Lethbridge, Alberta, 9 November 1996.

785. G. E. Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," Part 25, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 15 (6 December 1996): 22; Bishop Franz Banman, interview by author, Manitoba colony, Mexico, 24 December 1996.

786. Abram Siemens, "Auswanderung nach Bolivien," *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau* 5, no. 5 (7 March 1996): 1; George Rempel, "Onnse Welt enn onnse Spruok: Woo es de Sach?," part 21, *Die Mennonitische Post* 20, no. 7 and 8 (2 August 1996): 22. In 1996, persons left Buenos Aires and El Cuervo for Bolivia, not because of land shortages, as some land was vacant, but because of electric power coming into the community. Bishop Abram Thiessen from Buenos Aires and preacher Bernhard Wiebe from El Cuervo led them. This time Elder Bernhard Wiebe stayed behind.

CONCLUSION

787. Jack Thiessen, "Mexican Mennonites lost their way," *The Carillon*, Letters to the Editor, 14 July 1993. Quote from Schmiedehaus included.

788. Translated this means "we still can manage".

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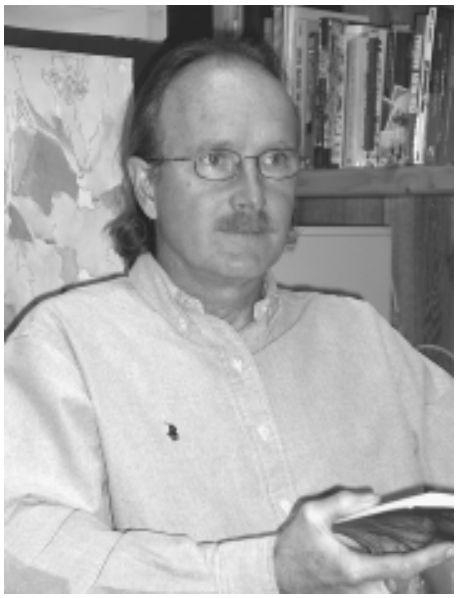

David Menno Quiring, the author of this book, was born in 1948 in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Although both of his parents were born in Russia, their families represent two somewhat divergent streams of Mennonite history. David's father, Rev. David D. Quiring, came from the Fürstenland region of southern Russia. Many of the Old Colony Mennonites came from that same area in the 1870s. The author's mother, Eliese (nee Dyck), came from the less traditional Am Trakt settlement near Saratov. In the 1920s, both parents emigrated to Canada where they joined the General Conference Church. Yet, while growing up David experienced firsthand some of the differences between the more traditional and liberal Mennonite groups – these contrasts lived on in the microcosm of his extended family.

In his undergraduate work at Bethel College, David became interested in studying historical events. For a time, graduate training in social work and a career in that area led away from the study of history. More recent studies at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan led to his obtaining Masters and PhD degrees in history. In addition to researching and writing about the conservative Mennonites of Mexico, the author also is publishing work about northern Saskatchewan and northern Canada. David has taught in Nunavut Territory for Carleton University of Ottawa, Ontario and continues to lecture at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

David and his wife Suzanne live in their home located in the forest fringe area of northern Saskatchewan. They have three children: Erika, Nole, and Jonathan.