By Delbert F. Pleit, Q.C.

The Tour Group.

The 1995 Kleine Gemeinde (KG) heritage tour of Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Germany in now history. In a moment of weakness I promised some of my fellow travellers to write a report regarding our experiences. I am fortunate that two members of the group, Jonas Toews of Whittemouth, and Pauline Penner of Swan River, have provided me with copies of their journals which have made the task much easier.

First of all, let me introduce the members of our group: Harold and Bertha Giesbrecht, Whittemouth, Mennon, and Pauline Penner, Swan River, Eugene Reinier, St. Jean, Jonas Toews, Elma, Manitoba, Dr. Wilbert and Arlene Giesbrecht, Abbotsford, Peter and Yolande Hebert, Nanaimo, B.C., and Iris Groves, Mountbridge, Kansas. Later in the trip, we were joined by Patricia Reinier from Pincher Creek, Alberta. They were a marvellous group of people to travel with and I thoroughly enjoyed their company throughout and the spiritual fellowship was wonderful.

Special thank you to Harold Giesbrecht who was responsible for getting me involved in the tour host and also to my good friend Jonas Toews, who served faithfully as our group "treasurer", looking after the tips and group finances. I also thank my buddy James Urqu, Wellington, New Zealand, for faxing me a lengthy letter of suggestions and tips on short notice. Jonas and myself used these recommendations as our guideline throughout the trip.

Winnipeg to Kiev.

The main group left Winnipeg on March 27, 1995, flying to Toronto where we met the two couples the Wilbert Giesbrechts and Peter Heberts whose flight arrived from Calgary. At 5:20 we boarded a KLM flight for Amsterdam. I sat with Jonas and we had a good visit.

The flight was pleasant and routine except that a lady got sick and the pilot called for a Medical Doctor. Pauline Penner has described this as follows: "Dr. Wilbert Giesbrecht came forward and right near us they worked on a sick lady and got her settled. Later she had a nose bleed, so he [Wilbert] was there again. By the time we landed she was sitting up."

At 10:30 the next morning we boarded a 737 KLM flight to the Kiev. Jonas has written, "...a little later we got a good dinner, it was 12 noon - 4 A.M. back home." We had a little problem getting through the customs as the officer didn't see our Visas stamped right into our passports. After a quick huddle, and with Jonas' encouragement, I went back and showed him the page, after which he stamped us through, not saying too much.

The Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, has a literature station in Cherkassy and two of the young couples serving there, Elroy Toews' and Kerry Giesbrechts, were "...looking through the door when we came through the luggage check." Jonas has written, "...sure was good to see them in a strange land," Wilbert and Arlene, Irv and Irene, where they stayed for the night.

Having always been an avid student of military history, and especially the German Russian conflict of 1941-5, I followed some of the places we travelled in the history of the war by Paul Carol, one of my favourite historians. I realized that Cherkassy was the place were the German Army lost six divisions in a major Russian encirclement. Those people who were adults during World War Two will often have heard the name, Cherkassy, in contemporary news reports.

In his journal, Jonas Toews has described the market that they saw in Cherkassy which was typical of the markets we toured in various parts of Russia and the Ukraine. He writes as follows: "We went looking around in a department store. It's not like at home but looks fairly well stocked. Then to the Bazaar (market) which is something like in Mexico or Haiti. The meat market is in an enclosed place and very crowded. The meat..."
some milk. Outside there were all kinds of wares, clothes, flowers, live chickens and young goats. There were some trucks and small trailers with tanks on them to sell milk.

Kiev.
The rest of the group was met at the airport by Nina N. Hryshecnko, our tour guide who accompanied us to the Hotel Rus in Kiev, which was named to honour the earliest days of Christianity in Eastern Europe.

Among these structures was St. Sophia in Kiev.
travelled and walked in their footsteps. In Yalta I purchased an icon from an\naged beggar lady, a simple gold painted Crucifix, wrapped in yellowed newspaper — a\nsymbol of unity and oneness in Christ.

Affenfeld, Crimea.

On the morning of March 31, 1995, we
boarded the motorcoach on our way to\nZaporozhya. Jonas Toews describes the\ncountryside as follows: “The country along\nthe sea is very rugged, a lot of grapes are\nbeing grown for wine in small fields, some on\nsteep slopes. Medoro wine is being aged in\noak barrels in the sun. We saw some of the\nbarrels lying outside. Along the seashore\nthere are some palm trees but they are only\ntwenty feet tall. There were some flowers on\nfruit trees. The road goes inland and once\nwe are through the mountains it’s fairly level\nand agricultural land.”

In Simferopol we met by Olga Shma\nkina, our guide for the Zaporizya segment\nof our trip. Olga is famous for her extensive\nknowledge and expertise of Mennonite cul\nture and life in the southeastern Ukraine. She\nguided countless groups through the various\nMennonite settlements, and better than anyone\nelse knows the folklore and history of the\nregion. She has won the affection of\nhour tour members, and deserves great ap\npreciation from the Mennonite community\nfor her selfless work.

As we drove north through the Crimea we\nsaw “...nice fields of winter wheat and\nsome large grain elevators, and orchards of\napples and peaches. Most of the land is\nirrigated as the Crimea is dry. They have a\nlarge canal from the Dneiper River bringing\nwater to this area.”

After some searching Olga located the vil\nlage of Affenfeld, which was the main KG\n Village street in Fischau. A typical Molotschna streetscape.
communities in the pioneer years of the settlement.

We stopped in Fischau to look at an old school building constructed in 1896. Although obviously not the same building, the school house no doubt still stood in the same place where dozens of KG children including Erna, Toews', Fidsch and Doerkens had attended school and where KG school teachers Gerhard Doerkson (1825-1882) and Gerhard P. Goossen (1832-1872) had taught.

In Neu-Hallsdorf and Tokmak, population 60,000, we saw numerous buildings still standing from Mennonite times. After a two hour drive, we arrived in Zaporizhya, a city of 1,200,000. We checked into the Hotel Zaporizhya, the best in the City. Although only built in 1972, the hotel itself was not as nice as some of our other accommodation. The rooms and beds were good and the service excellent.

That night there was a light snowfall which was unseasonable.

**Molotschna.**

Saturday, April 1, 8:45, we left on a tour of the Molotschna or Molotschnaya. The previous night’s snowfall was almost gone. The Molotschna Colony, a settlement of some 100 square miles with 57 Mennonite villages, was established in 1804. It was here in 1812 that the KG was founded when minister Klaas Reimer and his group of fellow reformers held their first worship services. On March 21, 1816, they held their first communion in Petershausen with 33 participants.

The settlement is bounded by the Molotschna river on the west which has three tributaries flowing into it from the east. A row of Mennonite villages lay along each of these smaller rivers.

We started our tour by going east along the Tokmak River, the most northerly of the three. At Schoenau we cut across south to Friedensdorf along the Begim-Tschokrak, which feeds into the Kurusha, the middle tributary, in the next tier of villages.

We stopped in Landskre, the next village to the east, where Jakob S. Friessen, founder of the Steinbach Post (present day Derksen Printers in Steinbach) was born in 1862. We looked at the remnants of the Mennonite church which had been badly damaged during the war.

Because of its huge hydro-electric dam, Zaporizhya was a major military target in World War Two and so the battle front passed through the region including the Molotschnay twice, once in 1942 when the Germans invaded and then again in 1944 when they retreated.

Going further east we went through Hierschau and Waldheim both of which had several KG families in their day. Waldheim was the home of Rev. Jakob Barkman who drowned in the Red River in Manitoba in 1875.

Turning back towards the west we drove to Alexanderwohl where we stopped and paid a surprise visit to a collective farm. The entire Molotschna area now consists of State and Collective Farms. The Mennonite houses still standing are used as homes by the workers. It seems that very few of the attached barns have survived. Friend Henry Fast of Stinbach told me that many were destroyed in the war while others were torn down and used as building materials for new houses.

The workers on these farms had been resettled from other areas and probably felt less attachment to the soil than most of the people in our tour. At Rückenau — the ancestral home of all the present-day Steinbach Barkmans — we stopped for lunch; sandwiches and cold cuts.
From Siegercte we turned south to Kleefeld in the southern tier of villages along the Juschanee river. This was where Corinnes S. Piett, my great-great grandfather, settled in 1856 when the village was founded and where he also served as mayor. Unfortunately nothing was left of the village other than a pile of rubble where an old Mennonite building had stood two years previous.

We drove east through Alexanderkron where Johann L. Dueck and Johann Toews had lived. They were both great-grandfathers of Jonas Toews. We drove east to Neukirch where KG Aelster Abraham and two of his brothers — Precluhr Abraham and Dauon Klaas — had lived in the Mennonite mercantile.

We turned back and drove west through Kleefeld and stopped at a Russian village where we walked around another machinery park of a collective farm. It was a Saturday and so no one was working. Although it was cold and rainy, over 60 per cent of the seedling was finished and the winter wheat was several inches tall.

We stopped in Juschanee which was the estate of Johann Cornies, the great Russian Mennonite social reformer. According to Olga some of the towering oak trees had been planted by Cornies. The KG were favourites of Cornies and they worked enthusiastically with his reforms where they did not conflict with their faith.

The estate was later purchased by a Reimer family who built a large manor house, which in my view was one of the best examples of Mennonite architecture which we saw.

Going west we went through Rosenort, home of minister Klaas Friesen (1793-1870), my great-great grandfather, as well as many other KG. The next village was Ohrloff where Aelster Abraham Friesen (1878-1849) and four other KG families had farmed next door to the great Cornies.

Of the Molotschna, Jonas has written, "The Molochnaya is a beautiful area, gently rolling and creaking through it. The soil is quite black at places, but in many places it's lighter and subsoil showing through where it's plowed or ditches made. There is some irrigation. Very often a little ways from the cities we see many dachas, they are little places that the city people have here to get out of the city. Some are fairly nice looking buildings, but they range all the way to little shacks."

Then we drove along the Molotschna River getting our second look at the oldest Molotschna villages settled in 1803 where so many KG pioneers had once toiled — Hamms, Warkentine and Krookers in Blumentein, Loewens and Toews in Lindenauf, Heidebrechts and Kornelkens in Lichtenau, Essau, Enns' Eiders, and Fasts in Fischau, Wiebes and Fasts in Schoenau, and Koops, Reiners and Giesbrechts in Mantua. From Tkamak we headed home to Zaporizhya where we enjoyed a good supper and were ready for bed.

I must confess that I was somewhat disappointed after seeing the Molotschna. When I surveyed the buildings and region and tried to imagine what it must have been like in 1915, the peak of developments in Russia, I concluded that the East Reserve or Steinbach-Hanover area in Manitoba, had done quite well by comparison.

The major difference, of course, is that in the Zaporizhya region the buildings were constructed of kilned brick, so no wood was readily available. Hence the buildings have lasted longer and are more impressive from that perspective. In a progressive area like Steinbach too, the tendency is to tear down the old and build new.

Borosenko Colony.

Sunday, April 2, 1995. We headed to visit an area some 20 miles northwest of Nikopol where the KG settled in 1865, known as the Borosenko Colony. By the 1870s the area had been incorporated as the Nikolaital Wolost with its own local government.

As if by an omen, the day started with warm sunshine, something we had not experienced for a few days. We crossed the Dnieper over Chortitsa Island, and drove through West Zaporizhya, a city of 120,000 consisting mainly of apartments buildings.

Pauline Penner has written, "Out in the country we saw big fields, fresh seed and winter wheat. Big yards of farm machinery, a big cattle farm. The asphalt is green. The guide talked about people stealing other people's garden produce. One person was caught and arrested for punishment."

This episode tells us how much history stays the same. His memoirs, Rosenort school teacher and store owner. Johann W. Dueck already related of such problems during the 1860s.

We passed through Nikopol which was the City where the Borosenko people did their business. Five miles past the City we turned north into an area that was hilly and rolling. There were many surface iron mines and the area was quite densely populated.

The village of Blumenhofs was the first village we wanted to see as almost everyone in our group had some grandparents who had lived there. We had some difficulty identifying the village, known as Alexandrovka in Russian. The village had grown to a small city of some 12,000 people and spread out to the south over a large hill.

This made it impossible to identify its exact original location. We were assisted immeasurably by the map of "Borosenko and Selfersland" which KG historian Royston K. Loewen found in Poelman's Mitteilungen. The map showed Blumenhof (Alexandrovka) as being to the south and east of the junction of the Basulak and Soljenaja Rivers, which certainly establishes its general location. Hopefully further research can identify the site more precisely.

In his memoirs Johann W. Dueck mentions "a high iron bank by the Soljenaja River...as later...an iron mine was established there." We were looking for this natural landmark, but also realized that given the amount of mining activity in the area, the ore had probably been mined and hauled away decades ago.

After inspecting a war damaged community centre we walked to the river and down the river bank where we held our first Sun-
day worship service. It was a scenic spot by the water surrounded by banks of dried reeds which were as much as 12 feet tall. The rays of the mid-morning sun splashed over us and birds sang overhead; God's great outdoor cathedral.

Jonas Toews writes as follows: "Delbert read a letter that Peter Toews had written [from Blumenhof] just after he had been ordained as a minister in 1866. Irvin spoke a little and we sang a song. I led in prayer. A group of boys were watching as and as we walked away one started singing "Happy birthday to you" in English. I turned back and tried talking to them but did not get very far. They understood I came from Canada and they asked if we got there by plane. I beckoned them to come along to the bus and there Olga could intercept. They wanted to know when we were going back and if we would come again. I had given them each a candy and Bertha gave me some candy to give to them and also to some girls that had come there by now. They seemed happy to get it."

After eating our lunch we drove north across the Soljenaja River passing through the Russian village of Scholzhown. Unfortunately it was too wet to drive northeast along the north bank of the Soljenaja where we would have seen the KG village of Heuboden where the delegate David Klassen of Rosenhof, Manitoba once lived.

Instead we headed north. After driving some four miles, approximately across from where the KG village of Steimbach once lay on the west bank of the Basilik River, we turned east towards the village of Nikolaithal which was on the east side of the Borosenko or Nikolaithal Wlosi.

It was in this area that we all of a sudden realized why the KG had retreated to this area. This has never been written about in the history books and is something which one could only discover from a personal inspection: the area had some of the most beautiful soil one could imagine.

Some one called out, "Stop the bus" and before you know it the men were out on the field scooping up hands full of moist soil. It was black, loamy and from what we could see in the ditch cuts, at least three or more feet deep.

It was evident that the KG made a very astute purchase when they acquired the 18,000 acre tract for 10 ruble per acre. Credit for this goes to men like Johann Warkentin (1817-1886) Blumenhof, and Isaac Hart.

Sunday morning worship service among the reeds along the Soljenaja River, Blumenhof (Alexandrovka), Borosenko.
what they were and found it was for natural gas, which had been put up 3 years ago but never finished. They also told us that Germans had once lived on the south side of the street. Here was a well with a drum turned by a crank to lift out the water. The top covering was of wood but further down the well was lined with stone.

As we were leaving, some old ladies (it always seemed to be the old Babushkas that had this knowledge) told Olga that the village was called Rosenthal and not Rosenfeld as she had earlier understood it to be. In my notes I recorded that according to Peter's map, Rosenfeld was some eight miles northeast of Nikolaithal whereas the village we had seen was to the northwest of Nikolaithal. From this I concluded that the village we saw was not Rosenfeld and settled by other Mennonites, not the KG.

We continued north some twenty miles then turned east, back towards Chortitzya and home for the night.

Colony Villages.
Monday, April 3, 1995. We saw the Keper Dam, largest in Europe and second best in the world, surpassed only by the Hoover Dam. Then we drove across Chortitzya Island and toured the village of Chortitzya.

Typical landscape of a former Mennonite village, Rosenthal, Borosenko.

Group picture at the "Thousand Year Oak" in the village of Chortitzya, Zaporizhya. The boy standing on the branch of the tree gives a sense of dimension.
Hoepner was later dismissed by his brethren in disgrace and had to be buried outside of the church cemetery. His memorial stone erected in 1889 was later removed and moved to the Mennonite Museum in Steinbach.

Our tour bus dropped us off several blocks from our hotel and we concluded our visit to the Zaporizhya region with a leisurely walk along Lenin Avenue, enjoying the kiosks and street vendors located at every corner.

The Midnight Train.
At 2:30 Olga accompanied us to the train station and we said “goodbye”. By now it felt like she was an old friend. We were most thankful to our travel company as they had reserved two berths for each of us which meant that each couple could have a compartment to themselves.

By 3:30 the train was underway. At 11:30 there was a knock on the door. We were crossing the border into Russia and the customs officials and Russian soldiers were there to check us over. Everything seemed okay, except for Harold and Bertha. For some reason their declarations weren’t stamped and
and tried to keep smiling as graciously as possible.

Finally they left and we thought everything was okay. But half an hour later they were back, gesticulating and speaking Russian, of course. They did not appear to be looking for trouble and were as gracious as possible under the circumstances. Eventually they stamped the declarations and we got our passports back.

During the night the train stopped for an hour at the train station at Kursk, site of the largest tank battle of World War Two. The midnight train to Moscow was certainly an experience. As our group had two-thirds of a car to ourselves it was not as scary as it would be for a single person or couple travelling by themselves.

Moscow.
April 4, 1995. We arrived in Moscow at 12:00 noon. We were more than a little nervous about this connection as James Urry had warned me that the porters here could be worse than a pack of jackals. But our guide Alexei Azarov was standing on the platform waiting for us. What a relief!

We walked back to where our bus was parked. We were told that the travel company was looking after tipping the porters. As we took our seats in our comfortable motor coach we heard angry voices rising outside the windows. It was the porters and there were about twenty of them demanding more tip money. It seems that three or four of them try to touch a bag and each expect to receive at least a dollar U.S.

Moscow is a city of 10 million with 1.5 million cars. Average monthly income $70.00 U.S. We stayed at the Hotel Belgrade which was conveniently located in the heart of the City.

Our cleaning lady spoke some German. Throughout the Ukraine and Russia I was constantly amazed at the number of people that had some knowledge of German. Notwithstanding that English has become almost universally the international language of business, it seems that in most tourist places in Russia and the Ukraine, German is as useful as English.

At 5:00 our guide Alexei took us for a walk along the old Arbuz, a pedestrian promenade with peddlers, restaurants, antique shops and musicians, many blocks in length. We visited a department store and other shops. Naturally we also walked by the MacDonals, located just down the street from our Hotel.

April 5, 1995. We passed the Russian White House or Parliament, where the shooting with the rebels occurred in 1990. We drove along the street where the government tanks came along to take action against the rebels.

Our first stop was the Armoury in the Kremlin, a huge museum of ancient times: crowns, thrones, carriages for the cars, dresses, and all manner of artifacts. We also walked through Russia's main Red Square.

It was quite cold and so Jonas, Eugene and myself bought Russian Army for cargo which were being offered by street vendors everywhere — $10.00 U.S. In the afternoon we went to an outdoor market. Our group seemed to enjoy activities where they met the local people and saw what they were doing.

Alexei took us to the Metro, Moscow's huge underground subway system. After paying the $0.12 fee, we took an escalator 100 feet underground to the subway station which had ceilings covered with artwork like a cathedral. It was very crowded even though it was not rush hour.

We rode the subway from one station to another. As we passed a squad of soldiers marching through one station, the boyish-looking lieutenant noticed my army fur cap and gave me a wink and a quick salute.

Alexei showed us his apartment which consisted of six rooms, quite large even by North American standards. Most people in Russia live in apartments which are 2 and 3 smaller rooms, perhaps 200 square feet.

Alexei had an incredible sense of humour, and enjoyed regaling us with stories about events and various government leaders of the Soviet times. A typical joke: how do we know that Adam and Eve were Russians? Answer: They had to share an apple and didn't have enough clothes.

Later in the afternoon we stopped at a Russian Orthodox church where a worship service was being held. The singing was beautiful.

St. Petersburg.
April 6, 1995. At 10:15 we boarded the overnight train for St. Petersburg. It was a newer more modern operation than the Zapadny train. This time we were four to a compartment. We arrived in St. Petersburg at 8:00 A.M. Our guide Helen Martyanova met us and accompanied us to our Hotel, also called Helen.

In the afternoon we had a City tour. St. Petersburg is a city of beautiful three and four story buildings and is criss-crossed with canals.

We saw the Peter and Paul fortress which was used as a prison during Czarist times. KG land reformer Abraham Thiessen referred to this prison, and many others like it, filled to overflowing with innocent peasants, in several books he wrote and published during the 1870s.

The KG elders Toola and Friesen came to Petersburg in 1873 to lobby for freedom from military service. But to no avail.

We drove out to see the Czar's summer palace located on the Baltic Sea, a 45 minute drive.

Saturday, April 8, 1995. We toured the city again. St. Isaac's Cathedral was definitely a highlight. It was huge, stark and austere. After dinner the group toured the Hermitage. Eugene and myself played hookey and walked up and down Schmoldy Prospect, the heart of social and economic life in St. Petersburg.

Warsaw-Gdansk.
April 9, 1995. At 7:45 we were at the airport and boarded our flight to Warsaw, a Polish Airlines 747. We had a good flight but it was rainy and cold when we arrived in Warsaw.

The taxi drivers tried to tell some of the people in our group that Gdansk airport was closed because of the weather and that we might have to rent a bus. I walked across to the domestic terminal and confirmed that our flight was still departing as scheduled.

Our plane was a Turboprop ATR72, 64 seater. It was very windy as we approached Gdansk, and our plane was buffeted around.
from side to side. Our guide met us at the airport and we were taken to the Hotel Marina, a beautiful new hotel on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

**The Grosswerder.**

Sunday, April 9, 1995. From our hotel room windows we can see the waves rolling in on the Baltic Sea. We had breakfast in the dining room and our second worship service. Jonas Toews writes as follows: "Delbert gave us a run down of the villages where our forefathers lived here in Poland (Prussia). He read a number of articles about Klaas Reimer, the founder of the Kleine Gemeinde. We closed with a prayer led by Elvira."

We headed out to the Grosswerder. On the way we picked up Professor Rybalka, an expert on the Mennonite settlements in Prussia, now Poland. A few miles out of the city we drove by Neuhubn where KG founder Klaas Reimer farmed together with his wife's uncle Cornelius Epp.

We drove through Fürstenwerder where Johann Plott lived in 1776. He was a wealthy farmer who was the forefather of all the nations with a porch in front, called a Vorberhaus. The second story of the porch was held up by pillars or columns. It was said that the wealth of the owner was indicated by the number of columns, sometimes as many as 8 or 9.

It would take too long to recite each village and the ancestors who lived there. Nothing is left of the village of Tiegengen except the cemetery. This was the heart of KG country in Prussia, and home of Abraham von Riesen, Abraham Klassen, Jakob Reimer, Johann Loewen and many others.

The nearby village of Tiegengen has grown into a good-size town. This was also home to many future KG families during the 1770s. Isaac Loewen, the ancestor of all the KG Loewens, lived here.

Elbing, now called Elblag, in the northeast corner of the Grosswerder was a beautiful medieval city. It had suffered severely during the war but is presently being rebuilt.

The hills to the east of the Grosswerder were 198 meters high. To the north, are sand dunes lying between the Grosswerder and the Baltic Sea.

We drove further east to Thiensdorf, another village on the canal, which was the home of Peter Hiebert's ancestors. From here we drove south to Marienburg, located at the south point of the triangular-shaped Mennonite settlement in Prussia. The Marienburg castle was built by the Teutonic Knights in 1357. It is the largest castle built of brick.

On our way back to Kdansk, we stopped in Henbolen, where there is a large Mennonite cemetery.

**Kdansk.**

Monday, April 10, 1995. We toured Kdansk, a beautiful medieval city. The architecture is breathtaking. We saw the harbour and the spot where the first shot of World War Two was fired. In the evening I walked along the beach, three miles to the harbor and enjoyed the pedestrian promenade in the centre of the city. A place where one could easily spend a week or so.
Berlin.

Tuesday, April 11, 1995. Wake up call at 3:30. I confess that I was late as I did not get a wake up call, even though I had arranged it for everyone else.

At the airport, Harold and Bertha Giesbrecht had a problem as a seat was not reserved. I tried to help but no one seemed to speak German or English. A distinguished-looking man nearby saw that we were having a problem and asked a few questions in Polish. I handed him my business card and he replied in English that he was from Finland and also a lawyer, here on business. It seemed there was an immediate sense of collegiality between us. He was very helpful in translating for us and eventually a new ticket and boarding pass were issued for Bertha.

We flew through Warsaw to Berlin where we landed at 9:30 A.M. We stayed at the Forum Hotel, in the heart of the former East Berlin.

We enjoyed sightseeing and relaxing in the City for two days. It was here in Berlin in the presence of several other tour members that Irvy had his wallet stolen by a group of gypsy women.

Onasbruk.

Friday, April 14, 1995. We travelled by motorcoach to Onasbruk. The drive was very relaxing and the view of the prosperous German countryside was stunning. We drove around town and then to the Nazi concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen. A memorial service for the 50,000 Jews killed here was taking place while we were there.

We stayed in Onasbruk for two nights. We visited the Holdean literature station in Schloss Holte where we enjoyed a traditional home cooked meal courtesy of Lloyd and Alvina Koehn.

After dinner, Jonas took me and Eugene on a walk around town and showed us the apartment where his children had lived several years ago. We met George Brandt, one of the neighbors, who told us his story of how he had served in the army and eventually survived the war after service on both fronts.

His grandfather was also a George Brandt (c.1850-c.1918) from Landskron in the Molotschna. From his physical appearance I was sure that he must be related somehow to the Brandts of Blumenort, Manitoba.

Amsterdam.

Sunday, April 16, 1995. Our motorcoach picked us up at 8:20. Again we were delighted by the beautiful German countryside. We enjoyed a song service led by Irvy Goossen as we drove. Ten members of our group were continuing on for another two weeks on the so-called “European Extension”. We drove into downtown Amsterdam to drop these people at their hotel and then we went to the airport and the long flight home.

On behalf of the tour members and myself, I want to thank Micheline Hay and John Schroeder at Assiniboine Travel for making our trip memorable and enjoyable. All our transfers connected like clockwork and it was a nice feeling to know that John was always only a phone call away.

---

"Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour 1995"
Published by Crossway Publications, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0. T (204) 326-6454.

---

ASSINIBOINE TRAVEL SERVICE
is pleased to announce
THE SECOND ANNUAL HERITAGE TOUR
to the
HOMELAND OF THE KLEINE GEMEINDE
[A Journey of History and Faith]
April 3 - 24, 1996 with Delbert F. Plett, Q.C.
We invite you to bring your friends and family on this interesting tour.
Those who have already done this journey agree that it is a worthwhile investment.

For further information, please contact:
John Schroeder or Micheline Hay
ASSINIBOINE TRAVEL SERVICE
1317A Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 0V3
Tel: (204)775-0271 Toll-Free: 1-800-652-2080