

Brazil News



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Editorial

Historical Gravity

The idea that history is dull constricts the vision of so many people. This is unfortunate. Both ecclesiastical and secular history teach us some of the greatest lessons of all times. Far from being a rearview mirror that shows us only the past, history, when understood, is an uncanny prophet.

The first, and most difficult lesson, that history teaches us is a reconfirmation of the law of gravity: that that which goes up must sooner or later come back down, in what is known as the rise and fall of nations.

At any given time, historically, in each geographical area, there has always been a dominant nation, or nations—usually not more than two. Such dominance is dependant upon a number of factors:

Geographical location—For nations with a propensity for economical dominance, to be located on a major trade route—a seaport, a major river or confluence of rivers, a mountain pass—contributes significantly to dominance. (Or is it the other way around; does this create an economical propensity in a people?) The United States has been richly endowed by nature with the Great Lakes to the north, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to the east and west, with the Mississippi River running down the middle of the country.

Climate—Climate has a disproportional impact on decisive national leadership, indeed, on the people in general. No tropical nation has ever become a world power. In the meandering course of the Church through Asia, Europe, possibly the southern tip of Africa, and finally in N America, during the last two thousand years, there has never been a stronghold in a tropical region.

The tropics do not force men to be men. The men and women who lived in Russia and moved to N America were intimately acquainted with hardship. It isn't easy to get up at 4:30 in the morning in an unheated bedroom and head out into 20 degree below

zero weather to milk the cows. It's no picnic to hang out clothes on the line in similar weather and see shirts, trousers and dresses freeze solid in seconds. And then stumble back into the house to thaw out by the fire.

In all fairness it must be pointed out that there are men and women in the tropics who overcome the climatic lethargy and develop strong character. On the other hand, there are those—entirely too many—in temperate zones, so protected by an artificial climate produced by artificial heating and cooling, that they suffer from the tropical syndrome more than those living in the tropics.

Natural resources—As some of the Middle East countries are graphically proving, natural resources and power can go hand in hand. Once again, N America is a prime example of what natural resources can do for a country. Japan is a rare example of what a country can do *without* natural resources.

Ethnic background—Not all peoples have the same outlook on life. It can be argued that national personalities are forged by circumstances. There is some truth to that. But it is also true that some peoples consistently rise above circumstances, while others are pressed down, century after century. More bluntly, some peoples enjoy work more than others.

Religion—Religion exerts an unmistakable influence on the development of a nation. Heathen nations tend to wallow in darkness, and when there is ascension to power, it is usually accomplished and maintained dictatorially, at the cost of great cruelty and disregard for human dignity. On the other hand, nations founded on Old Testament principles and respect for Christian values, tend to prosper. Significantly, nations that blend Christianity with paganism (simultaneous worship of Christ and Mary, together with an array of saints) tend to be morally lax and economically unstable. Latin America is an excellent case in point.

(A little understood segment of US history is the period between Columbus and the Pilgrims, a time during which Spain and Portugal were world powers. A feverish effort was made by both powers to lay claim to what is now known as South, Central and North America. Lulled by the legend of seven cities of Gold, the Spanish expeditions went so far north as Lindsburg, Kansas, before setting their faces southward again. A monument, Coronado Heights, marks this spot. Not only did Spain claim all this land for the crown, but Rome hoped to convert all the native dwellers to Catholicism. The Lord had other plans for the North American continent, and the plans to colonize and evangelize came to naught.)

Dynamic leadership—This is the great overriding factor in everything we have just said. Dynamic leadership can “convert” a straggling nation into a strong, united body. It is said that in any given nation, there arises a truly great leader every 50 years. When this occurs more frequently, the result is a robust nation. And, lamentably, where this seems to seldom happen, the result is misery and despair.

It has been 511 years since Columbus discovered America, 383 years since the Pilgrims landed on the North American mainland, and 227 years since the Declaration of Independence was signed. It was in 1620, with the coming of the Pilgrims, that the seed of nationhood was planted. That this seed didn't die during the first terrible

winter, as happened with the Roanoke Colony, that disappeared without a trace in the late 1580's can only be attributed to divine providence. There is no doubt: God's plan for the United States was that it be a Protestant, and not a Catholic nation, which would have totally changed the course of history.

The following picture emerges:

Geographical location—Between two major oceans, with the Great Lakes on top and the Mississippi down the middle.

Climate—Severe enough to build strong character, but not so extreme as to stifle the development of the nation.

Natural resources—Abundant.

Ethnic background—A hardworking, courageous people. Those leaving the Old Country for the New, knew full well they were telling loved ones goodbye for the last time. They also knew that a cemetery would be a vital part of their venture.

Religion—Many of the original settlers were Huguenots, stern in their religious beliefs and solid, hardworking citizens.

All this, plus the fact that Heaven itself was directing the endeavor, makes it clear that the United States of America was destined to play an important role in the story of humanity.

America played her role very well, consolidating her position, not only through solid work ethics and a very acute...shall we say?...Old Testament conscience of right and wrong, but also through a number of wars. The first, with England, was the War of Independence, known as the Revolutionary War. Then came the War of 1812, the Mexican War (1846-1848), and finally the terrible Civil War that threatened to turn the United States into the Divided States. There was the skirmish known as the Spanish-American War (1898), not to mention other minor wars. These wars were directly related to the sovereignty of the United States.

World War I (1914-1918) put the United States into a new perspective. Troops were sent to foreign soil to help Europe defend itself against an internal aggressor. There is no doubt but what the outcome of the war would have been much different had the United States not intervened.

World War II (1939-1945) was again fought in Europe, against the same aggressor, now aided by Italy. The Second World War, in reality, was a dual war, with a second aggressor in a separate theater. Once again, the United States played a pivotal role, helping free the world of Nazism and fanaticism.

In one of the greatest ironies of all times, the United States, the bulwark of democracy, and the Soviet Union, the stronghold of Communism, joined hands to defeat the enemy. However, before the ink was dry on the armistice with the enemy, another war was begun, known as the Cold War, between the United States and the Soviet Union, between democracy and communism.

During this period there was the Korean War and the Vietnam War, especially the latter, with inconclusive results, with doubts as to who was really the victor.

The Cold War was a distressing time. You older readers will remember the time

when backyard or basement fallout shelters were advertised. Since, obviously, a minute part of the population actually possessed a fallout shelter, instructions were frequently given in newspapers and magazines as to how to proceed in the case of nuclear fallout.

Through this all, the United States was seen, not only by its own citizens, but by the free world in general, as the paladin of liberty. This doesn't mean it was loved by all, but even detractors showed a grudging respect for the role played by the United States.

When the Soviet Union fissured and communism imploded under its own weight (and an additional push from President Ronald Reagan), the free world applauded. It was the end of an era.

In more ways than one.

With the end of communism, free nations around the world woke up to the fact that they no longer needed the protecting arm of the United States. They began acting like the teenager who gets a job and no longer has to ask dad for cash. Nor for advice. Thus begins a new phase in the relationship between dad and son. Needless to say, son enjoys it more than dad.

While in the US several years ago, in an informal conversation I suggested that the governmental aid programs for underdeveloped and emerging nations often aren't inspired so much by humanitarian concerns, as by economic considerations. When it is known that a nation is contemplating a large hydroelectric project, a nice handout from the People of the United States can be a powerful lever when bids are let out.

(After picking the shrapnel out of my hide, I realized that isn't a very smart thing for a Brazilian to say in N America.)

Because of its vast industrial park, the United States exports to many countries. In some cases, like Japan, they rack up huge trade deficits. In others, the majority of the cases, the opposite is true. Countries that buy Made in USA products find it difficult to sell their products to the United States because of high tariffs. This unbalance was stoically swallowed for many years. Today this is no longer the case. An alarming anti-American sentiment has permeated the air.

Proof of this is the situation in Iraq. As one reads international and national news, and listens to people on the street, one gets the very distinct feeling that something has gone awry. Rare is the soul who is willing to speak out in defense of the United States.

It can be argued that this is a passing thing. Maybe. Probably not.

Why not?

For lack of a common enemy. With the threat of communism gone, countries feel they no longer need the protection of the United States. Instead of merely taking a neutral stance, they now show a strong resentment, not realizing that terrorism may very well turn out to be a more formidable enemy than communism. And that the protective arm of Uncle Sam might not be such a bad thing after all.

We have discussed some of the building blocks that are found in great nations. The United States of America rose to greatness because it had them all (although not all the leaders could hardly be labeled as dynamic). There is no doubt but what the

United States occupies an important place in the Hall of Fame of Great Nations.

Alas, no one who is allotted a place in a worldly Hall of Fame lives forever. Similarly, it would be naïve to believe that a place in the Hall of Fame of Great Nations guarantees immortality. Nations rise, nations fall.

The first great crisis faced by the United States was that of the secession of proslavery states and the war that followed. The second great crisis is now. For three reasons:

Foreign rejection—Foreign rejection can by no means be attributed exclusively to improprieties committed by the United States. We are living in a time of inverted—or rather, perverted values. It is with an almost satanic glee that men of honor are dissected by the people and the press in an effort to discover something that would demoralize, that would taint character.

Worst of all is the irrational rejection abroad of the United States and her values. A generation is rising that blindly believes that America is, to borrow Reagan's term for the defunct Soviet Union, an evil empire. This lack of international support will severely hamper the US in its effort to maintain global stability. Everyone will end up suffering.

Overspending—No one will deny that the United States overspends. The fact that this overspending brings benefits to its citizens holds popular criticism at a minimum.

The Soviet Union collapsed because of widespread corruption and excessive expenditures on military and space programs. When Reagan courageously proposed a missile shield that would, for all practical purposes, destroy the striking or retaliatory effect of the USSR's vast arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles, there was really no option for Soviet leaders. Unable to finance a similar program of their own, they somewhat ungraciously threw in the towel, thus taking second place as a military power and losing their international hegemony. In spite of what the Soviet Republics stood for and the much suffering inflicted on their own people, and others, they today are not hated; only forgotten.

To suggest that the United States may decline as a world power because of a financial crisis could bring on another barrage of shrapnel. Nevertheless, as time goes on, the true impact of September 11 will become more and more evident. The Cold War has past, but today we are in the Terrorist War.

I have no official figures on what is being spent daily in the United States on security. It is probably far more than we would imagine. And will probably increase yearly far more than we can imagine. This is money spent that will bring no visible benefits to the citizens. In fact, depending on the global economic situation, it may actually erode some of the visible benefits enjoyed by society today.

As the strangest of all wars, the war against terrorism may be lost by winning. We explain. The resources required to avoid another major terrorist attack may be so astronomical as to bring on financial ruin.

I hear someone say, "Brother, you're as wrong as can be." I reply, "Brother, I sincerely hope you are right."

Brazil News

Moral corruption—I read recently that 28,000 pornographic films are produced annually in the state of California. That is an average of nearly 80 a day. These films, Made in USA, are exported to all the world, including Brazil. They saturate the Internet, where well over half of the surfers end up in exactly these sites.

The films produced in Hollywood, advertised and viewed openly, are increasingly explicit. These too, circulate the globe.

If, 50 years ago, some atheistic country would have begun producing exactly the same material now being produced by the US, and exporting to the majority of the countries of the world, that country would have been invaded and destroyed by the United States. The war would have gone down in history as a holy war.

And so, is the editor of Brazil News predicting that the United States is doomed?

By no means. What has been written is a challenge to each of you readers. Think seriously. Think historically. Can “one nation, under God,” as the Flag Salute so nobly proclaims, export immorality to all the nations of the world and get by with it?

The atheistic Soviet Union and her satellites, exterminated tens of millions of lives in cold-blooded murder and brought misery to hundreds of millions, yet today hardly a voice is lifted to cry out against what was done.

The United States of America, on the other hand, founded on Old Testament principles and prospered by God, is criticized, is censured, is hated. Nations that today are free because of America’s crusade against communism, have developed an accute case of amnesia. Inexorably the United States is being isolated and its leadership derided.

All this seems profoundly unfair and we can permit ourselves to believe it will all blow over and once again the United States will be recognized by all nations as the champion of democracy. May it be thus.

Yet, even though we would like to believe otherwise, it would be good to remember that the law of historical gravity remains in effect and that that which goes up must someday come back down.

During World War II, France was invaded and conquered by the Nazis, who with great fanfare marched through the Arch of Triumph in Paris. In an act of extreme humiliation, Hitler demanded that the instrument of surrender be signed in the same rail car in which, at the close of World War I, Germany surrendered to France and her allies.

French resistance leader, Charles de Gaulle, was forced to take refuge abroad. As the Allied forces made plans to free France, de Gaulle was consulted and an effort was made to include him in their plans. Even though in exile with his country overrun, he would haughtily make demands and refuse to cooperate with anything that didn’t meet his approval, causing General Eisenhower to comment, “By the way he acts, you would think *he* is the victor.”

May God’s people have the humility and vision to see and interpret the handwriting on the wall. ▲

Interesting Facts

The Risk Factor

Shortly after September 11, the *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine published some interesting fatality statistics. If you are an American, these are the chances of your dying in the following situations:

Heart disease	1 in 300
Cancer	1 in 509
Gunshot wound	1 in 9,450
Car accident	1 in 18,800
HIV/AIDS	1 in 19,400
A fall	1 in 20,700
Skin cancer'	1 in 37,900
Pedestrian accident	1 in 45,200
Injury at work	1 in 47,600
Motorcycle accident	1 in 118,000
Influenza	1 in 159,000
Drowning	1 in 225,000
Bicycle accident	1 in 341,000
Boating accident	1 in 402,000
Smallpox vaccination	1 in 750,000
Lightning	1 in 4,260,000
Bus accident	1 in 4,400,000
Train accident	1 in 5,050,000
Earthquake	1 in 5,930,000
Skiing or snowboarding	1 in 6,330,000
Avalanche	1 in 8,140,000
Airline accident	1 in 8,450,000
Terrorist attack	1 in 9,270,000
Dog attack	1 in 10,900,000
Flood	1 in 18,200,000
Amusement park ride	1 in 70,000,000
Malaria	1 in 93,800,000
Shark attack	1 in 94,900,000

Of transportation related deaths, 72.2% occur in a car, 11% on foot, 0.21% in airplanes, 0.20% in subways, 0.05% in buses, 0.06% in trains, and 16.28 by other means of travel.

Statistically, a traveler would have to fly every day for more than 8,200 years to be in an accident where there are multiple fatalities.

The most dangerous places are: 1) the highway, and 2) your home.

The most dangerous nonhuman predator: the mosquito. ▲

The Greatest Fall

The August 29, 1960 issue of LIFE magazine featured Joseph Kittinger for a feat unequalled since. Sponsored by NASA, Kittinger went up in a helium balloon to an altitude of 31.3 kilometers (19.56 miles) and bailed out. He soon had accelerated to 989 km. per hour (618 miles per hour). At 5.3 km., Kittinger opened his parachute, after freefalling for four minutes and 32 seconds.

Kittinger reported that there was absolutely no sensation of acceleration or of speed as he dropped through space. There was no wind and his clothes didn't as much as ripple. ▲

Motorcycles in Rio Verde

Rio Verde today is a city of approximately 130,000 inhabitants. It's a busy city, a bustling city. Visitors can't help but be impressed by the amount of cycles seen on the streets.

According to the license department, there are 12,000 cycles registered in Rio Verde, and another approximately 3,000 that aren't registered, for a total of 15,000. That means there is a cycle for every 8.7 inhabitants. When figuring that most of the cycles are owned by people between 15 and 35 years of age, the ratio will probably drop to one cycle for every five inhabitants, which gives us an idea of the popularity of these little two-wheel vehicles.

In an emerging nation like Brazil, it isn't taken for granted that once son or daughter hits 17 or 18, they must have a car to get on with life. Yes, the rich folks follow that rule, and I must say that they come up with some pretty snazzy looking rigs.

Cycles are practical in Brazil, not only for economical reasons, but also because of the climate. Except in downpours and really cold weather, cycles are practical the year around.

Included in the approximately 15,000 cycles in Rio Verde, are 480 registered *mototaxi*. With just a wee bit of imagination you can figure that out, even if you don't know a word of Portuguese. It's a motorcycle-taxi. They are one of the best and one of the worst things to happen to Rio Verde.

They are a good thing because of the cheap and fast (take that literally) transportation they provide for the population. They take people to and from work, to and from school, to and from most anyplace you can imagine. In fact, they unwittingly brought the men out who kidnapped the Holdeman family on the Colony a number of years ago.

For two reals (66 US cents) a mototaxi will take a customer anyplace within city limits.

There are another 100 *motoboys*, office boys who run errands on cycles.

According to Marquinhos, the manager of the local Honda agency, he sells 150 cycles a month. Competition sells another 50, for a total of 200. If you figure a five-day week, that makes 10 a day.

Increasingly, there are parking areas designated for cycles only.

As can be expected, there are a lot of accidents, not only with cars and buses, but also with other cycles. Often there are casualties.

There are quite a few cycles on the Colony. Some aren't all that shabby, but most are very definitely work horses. They are used to go to the field, to check up on the cattle, to go to school, to go to church, and occasionally, to show off.

A cycle doesn't have all the comforts of a car, but they are economical to operate. And that's worth something. ▲

A Brazilian Story

by Mário de Moraes

A Century in a Minute

The reader who sent me this story didn't include his name and address. His story begins thus:

I had a large cattle ranch in the "interior," far from the amenities of civilization. In case of a medical emergency, it was a long way to the nearest doctor. For this reason the medications I kept on hand were enough to stock a small pharmacy, which was available to my ranch hands and relatives. There was always plenty of serum for snakebites, as the place was loaded with snakes.

Some time ago I decided to sell my ranch and buy a bigger one in a better location. The day before the new owner was to take possession of the ranch, we had everything packed up in boxes, ready to be loaded on trucks. This included our pharmacy.

This ranch had a beautiful lawn surrounded by flower gardens and a lake where ducks and geese would leisurely swim about. Every afternoon I would come to this beautiful spot, lie down on the lawn and take a nap. I decided to take one last nap before moving, as I had worked very hard and was tired out. Packing up all of ones goods is no small job. And then, I was depressed as I thought about leaving this ranch that I had turned into a miniature paradise for my family.

It didn't take long and I was sound asleep on the lawn. I don't know how long I slept, when I awakened, feeling a strange weight on my chest. Opening my eyes, I beheld an enormous rattlesnake lying on top of me, it's menacing jaws just a few inches from my face.

I don't know where I got the strength to stay absolutely still, to control myself to not think about all that I knew about snakes. I knew that if that huge rattlesnake should bite me, there would be no way to get back to the house, open the right packing crate, find the antivenin and have someone inject it. If I got bit, that would be the end.

I remember that snakes don't strike if they aren't provoked, harmed or surprised by a sudden movement. I decided that the rattler was probably returning to its den after having spent the morning hunting. Now this cold-blooded reptile was using my body warmth to help digest its meal. It probably thought I was a fallen tree trunk...

I don't know how long that snake was on top of me, probably less than a minute, but slowly it continued its course and I saw when it slithered down into an armadillo burrow.

Needless to say, I was no longer sleepy. I went to the house and told the others what had happened.

One of the men asked, "How long did that snake stay on top of you?"

I didn't have to think twice to answer: "A century!" ▲

The Church in Brazil

What if...?

What if, overnight, all the Americans had to leave Brazil? What would happen to the church?

Let's begin with the Pirenópolis Congregation, some 50 miles from Brasília. This congregation is strictly Brazilian, which includes a Brazilian minister and deacon.

Pirenópolis is a quaint tourist town set back in the hills. The cobblestone streets are narrow and winding. The architecture dates back to the eighteen hundreds, when work was still done with slaves.

The history and culture of Pirenópolis is intimately interwoven with the Catholic church. Old churches overflow with worshippers—worshippers nothing—with curious tourists hoping to get a glance of years gone by as the priest chants mass and treats all takers to a sip of wine and a small wafer, that, according to official dogma, has just taken on the literal properties of Christ's blood and flesh.

On weekends, holidays and during vacation, the size of Pirenópolis swells like dough placed in a bread pan. Our former president, Fernando Henrique, was an occasional visitor.

The surrounding area is hilly and rocky, precluding extensive agricultural projects. Quarries dot the landscape, where rock is extracted for building purposes. Other than for the vigorous tourist industry, the economic scene is quite desolate.

That is where the Congregação Pirenópolis, of the Igreja de Deus em Cristo – Menonita is located. In such a setting, will this congregation grow? Or will it shrink, as brethren look for work in other places, including Rio Verde?

Just as it is a miracle that there is a congregation in this type of setting, a miracle can open the door for growth. On the other hand, if the brethren from the Pirenópolis Congregation would migrate to existing congregations, or even to new areas, they would be a blessing wherever they went. This could happen.

We have at different times written about the Rio Verde Congregation. Because of not having ordained leaders, there was a three-man rotating committee that was responsible for the oversight of the congregation, together with a non-resident minister and deacon from the Rio Verdinho and Monte Congregations.

While waiting for the door to open for an election that would provide inside leadership, things took an unexpected turn. The Brazilian deacon, Adejenes Lima, from the Monte Alegre Congregation, let it be known that he felt the Lord would like for him and his family to become members in town. Needless to say, the Rio Verde Congregation supported this motion wholeheartedly. But what about the Monte Alegre Congregation? It was presented to the brotherhood one Sunday morning and then taken up in the evening service for a vote. There were no questions. Only a good vote of support. It's not very often that a staff member is granted such a swift and uncontested transfer. Evidently, it wasn't only Adejenes and his family who felt the Lord was in this thing.

Adejenes will now be the leader, aided by two brethren elected on a rotating basis.

Several weeks ago my wife and I paid a Sunday evening visit to the Rio Verde Congregation (before the new arrangements). As they do when visitors show up, they wanted to know if I would like to contribute something to the service. I told them that what I would really like was to sit back and see how they conduct their services, which is what happened.

What I saw in this congregation, of nearly 70 members, was inspiring, to put it mildly. Basically, their service is just like those conducted here on the Colony, or in N America. Oh yes, there are some insignificant differences. Their song leaders don't feel obligated to blow a pitch to start a song. Their ushers use a somewhat more down-to-earth approach to their ushering. Testimonies are more spontaneous. But what you feel in the Rio Verde Congregation, is exactly what you feel in your home congregation. I think that tells the story.

One interesting little sideline on this congregation: It is located on a *praça* (plaza or square). With the passing of years, this *praça* got noisier and noisier in the evenings. It would be overrun with hundreds of people, mainly youth. Lunch stands would be set up that sold alcoholic beverages. The loud, blaring music, the dancing and the shouting would at times reach a pitch to where the meeting had to halted for a few minutes. The mayor, a woman and a mainline evangelical, was aware of the problem, but for some reason couldn't seem to solve the problem. Then came a new mayor, the kind that doesn't seem to fear neither God nor man, and in a jiffy he got the *praça* cleaned up. Once again the brethren can worship in the beauty of holiness and quietness.

The landscape in the Monte Alegre Congregation is changing. Today the men's

Portuguese Sunday School class is double the size of its English counterpart. The youth Sunday School class is held in Portuguese (with the possibility of an English class when there are English speaking visitors in church). The youth Wednesday evening Bible Study class is also in Portuguese. Approximately half of the members in the Monte Alegre Congregation are Brazilians.

The proportion of Brazilians in the Rio Verdinho and Boa Esperança Congregations is less, with the difference that in Boa Esperança, even though there are more Americans, services and Sunday School are conducted basically in Portuguese. I don't know how services are conducted in the Palmas Congregation.

Back to the original question, what would happen if all the Americans would disappear overnight? I am convinced that the church would continue to prosper. We today, after some very turbulent years, have a fine group of Brazilian brethren who no longer feel the church belongs to the Americans. They understand that no one can lay claim to the church, but that all must support it.

One quick observation on the youth Wednesday evening Bible Study, in which we are using the book *Bible Doctrine and Practice* as our study guide. I mentioned several years ago, when we began studying the book, that it would be a real challenge to see how our youth would react to a study of doctrine.

Today that question can be answered. They are enjoying doctrine study. I was especially impressed by their reaction to the lesson on Non-conformity to the World. We dedicated two evenings to the lesson, but didn't have time to finish. They heartily supported another evening, which the superintendents granted us.

A little over half of these youth are Brazilians, the rest Americans. It's possible, and probable, that a few of them will eventually return to the United States. The majority, however, together with the Brazilian youth, will remain in Brazil. As I see them as building blocks in the walls of Zion, I feel assured that the structure will be sound. ▲

Brasília

What is Happening?

Last month it was mentioned that our president's honeymoon was over; that from now on the press would give him the same savage treatment they reserve for politicians and other newsworthy subjects.

President Lula is not an educated man, at least not by presidential standards; he commits grammatical errors and doesn't have a vast vocabulary. He is aware of this and isn't the slightest bit intimidated. When trying to transmit a concept that goes beyond his vocabulary, he effortlessly slips into soccer jargon which every Brazilian understands. I suspect he actually does a better job of transmitting his ideas than an erudite president who tends to speak to the elite.

President Lula is in an awkward situation. His entire life has been dedicated

to socialism. As a union leader, he often helped organize strikes. As a federal congressman, he systematically opposed and voted against projects that would have had a positive impact on society. It was exactly this systematic opposition to anything that could possibly have a rightist connotation that brought him millions of supporters. And votes.

Our president would hardly get a passing grade on his past comportment. Yet, in one of those inexplicable incongruities, President Lula today is pushing projects through congress that will have a lasting positive effect on the nation, projects that our former president, a highly educated, rightist statesman, tried, unsuccessfully, to get congress to approve.

President Lula knows that it was left of center voters who tipped the balance in his favor during the last election and put him into power. Consequently, and very understandably, he feels indebted to these voters. The incident reported in the last issue, when President Lula posed for photographers wearing the cap of the MST (*Movimento Sem Terra*), an extreme leftist group that invades large farms—usually thousands of acres—and attempts to claim parcels of land for its members, he was walking a tight rope. I doubt that he will make that mistake a second time.

To give President Lula a grade on his performance as president wouldn't be hard; he would get a good grade. His ability to admit mistakes and change course helps him pull out of tailspins that would send most crashing to the ground.

I realize that to you N American readers, most of what we have just described sounds like utter confusion. And it would be in your country. Here people take it in stride. They criticize and complain when things don't go the way they like, but when things get better, they soon forget and begin cheering. It is exactly this buoyant attitude that helps Latin Americans survive in the face of great odds.

Will President Lula suddenly show his true socialist face and turn Brazil into a socialist society?

At this point I doubt very much if his true face is socialistic anymore. As he himself has confessed, once one gets into power, things look different. Even his most ardent detractors must admit that President Lula has managed to keep inflation under control, in a one-digit setting. Under his direction the exchange rate has come down to three reals to a dollar, which is excellent. (Actually, 3.2 reals to a dollar would be even better.)

The president's big challenge today is exactly the MST, whose leaders are daily becoming bolder. Sooner or later stronger measures will have to be adopted. Irrate land owners are beginning to organize to combat the invasions. The president knows that this type of confrontation must be avoided at all costs.

Keep tuned in. The man whom we so feared may be exactly the man the Lord has picked to correct some centuries-old problems in Brazil. ▲

Thinking Out Loud

“Trapped”

At work at the Publicadora Menonita, better known as the Literature Center, we have a front porch that is glassed in on two sides. It isn't unusual for birds to fly in through the open end, hit the glass, panic, and become totally disoriented. This morning as I watched two “trapped” birds on the porch, a picture began to emerge.

There are young people, adults too, who get off on the wrong road. They do so through a series of deliberate decisions. They realize they are taking a risk, but are willing for it. We're not talking about this kind of people.

We are talking about those who are striving to be faithful, who are trying to make the correct decisions in life. Then one day something totally unexpected happens. Like the birds that suddenly hit a glass wall, these sincere souls have a similar experience. Often their first reaction is to blame themselves, believing they have fallen from grace. The evil one appears and hammers that thought home.

I would like to penetrate the brain of the birds “trapped” on the front porch and find out what they think. Some simply huddle on the floor, when all they would have to do is fly out, the same way they flew in. Others desperately beat their wings on the plate glass, sometimes injuring themselves in their attempt to escape. Finally, there are those that actually kill themselves by repeatedly striking the glass.

How I would like to talk bird talk. I would tell them: “Wait! Quit struggling! Fly out the way you flew in and you'll be free.” Since I don't talk bird talk, I must go out on the porch and try to steer them in the right direction. Or maybe even pick them up and carry them to liberty. As they fly away, I wonder what they are thinking. What do they tell the other birds when they are safe home?

The first lesson to learn from “trapped” birds is that even though their problem is quite simple, unless they find a way out, they sometimes die on the porch.

The second lesson is that the solution is so simple. To help these birds takes such a small effort.

I believe that most of us can recall occasions, especially during our early years of Christian life, when we got into a situation that seemed hopeless. We were scared, or ashamed, to tell someone, so we, like the “trapped” birds, just floundered around. Until someone came up to us and asked, “How is it going?”

Hesitantly we began telling our story. Instead of being shocked, the brother or sister listening to our terrible situation, just smiled. And said (although not in these words), “Just fly out!”

And then we smiled too. The spell of the evil one was broken. It was so simple. We just flew out.

Good reader, keep your spiritual eyes open. When you see someone who is

downcast, who seems to be scared, step up to your brother or sister, and ask, “How are things going?” Do it right away, before Satan can take advantage of the situation and actually rob a soul of his/her salvation. Not all situations will be this simple. But if you find that the problem is a trap, simply tell them, “Just fly out!”



This & That

June 2 marked the beginning of the 4th Boy’s Preparatory Class in Brazil, with Min. Papa Don Koehn as instructor, held at the Rio Verdinho Congregation. Those studying were:

Bradley Kramer	M Alegre
Francisco Silva	M Alegre
Elfraim Dias	M Alegre
Dorley Santos	M Alegre
Isaac Ismael	M Alegre
Diogo Ismael	M Alegre
Kenyon Kramer	B Esperança
Dwight Kramer	B Esperança
Robson Miranda	Pirenópolis
Jôcymar Cardoso	R Verde
Daniel Araújo	R Verde
Samuel Araújo	R Verde

The program was the evening of June 14. All the boys were of Brazilian birth, of which three were from American parents. These classes are real mouth-openers. Boys who never said a word in Bible Study begin to take part in the discussions.

Eudes & Julie Reinor, from the Boa Esperança Cong., spent several days on the Colony on their way to São José do Rio Preto, São Paulo, where they will be spending some time on the mission. The ladies took advantage of the few days they were here and had a baby shower for Julie.

Jessica, daughter of Leo & Mim Dirks, who is teaching school in Mississippi, spent her vacation with her folks in Tocantins and with her sister, Rosa, Mrs. Joedson Bessa, on the Colony.

Some of the visitors in Tocantins, who all traveled together by bus, beside Jessica, were: Isaac Penner and Otávio Becker (her cousins), the Cameron Goertzen and Irvin Dirks families, both from the States.

On June 12, Stanley & Kathy Holdeman and children sort of moved back to the US, where they will be living in Georgia. I understand they will still be putting out a crop here this year, so they will be spending some time here.

June 19-21, Min. Arlo Hibner gave special classes to the couples in the Rio Verde

Congregation on the function of the home. These classes are especially useful for couples that weren't raised in the church.

It appears our phone system is back to normal. Until now it was possible, at least on some phones, to make long-distance calls without specifying a carrier. While this new system was being implanted, at times we couldn't even make local calls.

Brazilian schools have several weeks of middle-of-the-year vacation in the month of July. The Rio Verde Congregation takes advantage of this time for their revival meetings. This year the evangelists were Min. Mark Loewen and Arlo Hibner. Since both speak Portuguese, there was no need for an interpreter. A blessing.

We are having a dry dry season. And for some people, dusty. Some on the Colony have rented their ground out to a fellow who sells grass seed. He plants the land to grass. When it goes to seed, he doesn't harvest it, but lets it fall to the ground. Since this is done in the middle and toward the end of the dry season, the chances of the seed getting soaked are minimal. The grass is windrowed to expose the seed and then machines with powerful vacuum sweepers suck up the seed. And enormous amounts of dust. As they travel through a field, belching out a billow of black dust, they bear a resemblance to the old steam engines as they came huffing down the track. Once all the clean ground has been covered, the straw is windrowed again to expose more seed. When this process is finished, the straw is burned.

The news traveled fast: Perdigão was being sold. Speculations traveled even faster. Would the Rio Verde unit be shut down? Would people with chicken and hog operations be down the drain? Once the truth had a chance to poke its head out of the dust, it became evident what was really happening. Like all large corporations, Perdigão's stock is negotiated on the stock exchange. It happens that one of the larger investors considered selling and buying elsewhere, which would cause the turnover of approximately 15 percent of its shares. Who was the avid buyer just waiting for the bidding to begin? Tyson Farms! Perdigão views this possibility very favorably. Let me see...that would result in a company called Pertyson, wouldn't it?

My niece, Jessica Dirks—the teacher—says she got a driver's license in Mississippi.

The whole process, the examination and whatever was involved, until the issuing of the license, took two hours and cost 20 US bucks. My wife and another niece, Joetta Burns, are getting their driver's license here in Rio Verde. According to national legislation, they must take 15 classes, which includes lessons on defensive driving, first-aid, mechanics, ecology, traffic laws. The classes were quite intensive. Friday: 7:00 pm-10:20pm; Saturday: 7:00 am- 11:00 am; 1:00 pm-7:00 pm; Monday: 8:30 am-11:00 am; 1:00 pm-5:00 pm. Once all the classes have been completed, the applicant must go to the DETRAN (traffic department) and take a test. Part of the test is to write a sentence that is dicatated, to make sure the person is literate. Those who pass this test then begin the actual driving lessons, which are fifteen 50 minute classes. Again the DETRAN gives a test. If this one is passed, in about a month the newly qualified driver receives a restricted license, good for one year. Any traffic violation during this period results in the automatic loss of the license, and

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the privilege of repeating the course. To get a license to drive a passenger car here in Brazil costs approximately 230 US dollars. Why so complicated and expensive? Brazil has some of the most imprudent drivers in the world. All this is an effort to change this picture. I have no doubt but what it will help, but the big problem is that traffic laws aren't consistently applied. And when a driver is fined for a traffic violation, it is possible to contract the services of a person who specializes in getting fines set aside.

A number of families ended up in the hospital in Tocantins after been attacked by an angry swarm of African honey bees. Read the story next month.

The exchange rate continues at three reals for one US dollar.

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