

Brazil News



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Editorial

Defeated by Success

In 1996, Exame magazine, in its annual Best & Biggest” edition which lists the 500 largest businesses in Brazil, chose Arapuã as the top home appliance retailer. Several months later Forbes dedicated two pages to the “king of household appliances in Brazil.” With 265 appliance stores nationwide, Arapuã’s sales hit 2.2 billion dollars and were responsible for 16 percent of the sales in their sector.

Today, two years later, Arapuã is insolvent with a debt of over 600 million dollars. What went wrong?

In a recent article, Nely Caixeta, Exame bureau chief in Brasília (See BN no. 51 for her article on the Colony), analyzes Arapuã’s woes and comes up with an interesting conclusion. First of all she tells all that was done right and then dwells on some of the mistakes made. We want to notice her final analyses, which contains a profound lesson that transcends the boundaries of the business world. “When the winds were favorable, Arapuã didn’t make a strategic stop to evaluate its good performance. If suppliers are willing to sell, if buyers are wanting to spend, and if the business is showing a good profit, why change? This is exactly one of the errors that Arapuã committed. It is the ability to not become complacent in success that separates the winners from those who eventually lose out, no matter how brightly their star may be shining. Coca-Cola’s worldwide supremacy . . . is a conquest that is reexamined every day by the company. No one takes a nap, even though they have outdistanced all their competitors.”

Failure to make strategic stops in life to analyze our performance can spell disaster.

A prime example of the importance of analyzing both defeats and victories can be found in the armed forces. In wartime, after battles, key elements—especially officers—are called in to give what is known as an “oral history.” The officer or soldier is asked to relate his version of the battle while the details are still fresh in his mind. Everything he says is duly recorded and a verbatim report is made available to military

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strategists (and later to historians) responsible for planning future engagements. Contrary to the handwriting “upon the plaister of the wall of the king’s palace” in the time of Belshazzar, which was clearly visible to all and caused the king’s knees to smite one against another, the handwriting of our defeats and victories must often be dug up. We must really want to know. If we fail to analyze our battles, we risk losing the war.

One of the contributing factors of Hitler’s defeat in World War II was his inability to grasp the precariousness of many of his victories. His blitzkrieg, which leaned heavily upon the elements of surprise, speed and audacity, helped him overrun small nations at the beginning of the war. However, when he tried it on Russia, thus opening a two-front war, he found out it takes more than surprise or audacity to face the rigors of a Russian winter. Like Napoleon, stimulated by victory, he bit off more than he could chew. He lost the war—and his life.

In the Pacific theater, the Japanese opted for their own cruel version of blitzkrieg, attacking Pearl Harbor with stunning success. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, who planned the attack, had initial misgivings. An erstwhile language student at Harvard and naval attaché in Washington, he was an eyewitness to America’s industrial brawn. He clearly stated his position: “If I am told to fight [the Americans] regardless of consequences, I shall run wild . . . for the first six months or a year, but I have utterly no confidence for the second and third years.”

Yamamoto’s predictions were painfully accurate. Intoxicated by the sweeping success of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese ran wild and failed to see the handwriting on the wall. Battlefield reports often were fanatically exaggerated, reflecting what officers wished the outcome would have been, and not the actual facts. Yamamoto did not live to see the smoldering ruins of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Like the Germans, the Japanese failed to evaluate their victories.

Sometimes success falls into our lap. Some of you readers are acquainted with the Posto Chapadão service station and restaurant some 35 kilometers out of Rio Verde on the way to Jataí. A young man and his uncle built this station approximately 25 years ago. It was a big undertaking for their meager means and they ended up with a heavy debt load.

The two partners struggled along for a number of years, but were never able to really get on top of things. Finally the elder of the two sold out his part to his brother, who was the young man’s dad. Shortly after, the station became a roaring success doing a landslide business. The new partner told anyone who would stop to listen—and even those who didn’t want to—what he had done. “I” was the key word. He mercilessly berated both his brother and son for their incompetence. Yet a few years later he too had to sell out, a victim of success.

What really happened? When the Middle East oil crisis hit, Brazil relied heavily on petroleum imports. As the price of a barrel of crude oil rocketed into the stratosphere, the country’s balance of trade went into convulsions. In fact, it was exactly this occurrence that set off the inflationary spiral which nearly wrecked the economy. To combat the dollar drain, drastic steps were taken to reduce petroleum consumption.

All over Brazil service stations could only operate between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on weekdays. Sundays and holidays they couldn't open at all. It was illegal to stock up on fuel in any kind of container. Needless to say, this brought immediate results.

It was during this time that our man bought out his brother in the service station.

Shortly afterward the government made an exception to the rigid service station curfew. Any station at least 30 kilometers from a city could remain open around the clock. Since Posto Chapadão was 35 kilometers from Rio Verde, and even farther from Jataí, it could remain open 24 hours.

Business flourished. But contrary to what the new owner believed and told everyone, it had nothing to do with his management. In fact, he was a very hot tempered man who made enemies left and right. But people put up with his antics because they needed fuel.

When finally the curfew was lifted on stations in town, sales at Posto Chapadão once again plummeted. Had the new owner stopped to evaluate his success, he would have realized that sooner or later things would return to normal. He could have then used this time making friends instead of enemies. But because he didn't understand his success, he too became an ex-owner.

There is nothing wrong with being successful. This world needs successful businessmen, successful scientists, successful doctors, successful politicians. In the church we need successful farmers, successful day laborers, successful teachers and cabinet makers.

Success is the adrenaline of life. Without this "hormone" we become lethargic, we lose our ability to rise to challenges, we passively accept defeat. We need success.

Success is not a problem. The problem is what we do with success and what it does with us.

We have said that sometimes success falls into our lap. But seldom. Usually success is the result of perseverance and hard labor. Or put differently, as a rule we have to earn our success. And since we have to earn it, we feel we own it.

In the kingdom of this world, ownership of success is given the same treatment as ownership of property. But in the kingdom of Christ, no one gets a deed to success.

Why not? If we have earned it, can't we lay claim to it?

The apostle Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 6:20, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The man of the world doesn't belong to God and so he has a right to ownership of his success. God grants him this right, not because he deserves it, but because, like the rich man in the story of Lazarus, this is the only reward he will get.

But the moment that a person deeds his body and spirit over to God, he loses his deed to successes, past, present and future. When we give Him our all, that includes our successes.

It's hard to let go of success. To begin with, success is something totally legitimate. It's not a sin or something that requires repentance. Much to the contrary, it's the fruit of our honest labor, of our diligence. It's proof of who we are . . . Hold everything! That was a foul ball.

Our success is not proof of who we are. For the Christian, success is proof of what someone else has done for us. Let's notice.

We say we are successful because we get up early and work hard. We don't loaf around. Good. But there are people who get up earlier and work harder than we do, and yet life for them is a struggle.

We say we are successful because we are careful with our money. We don't spend unwisely. Good. Yet there are people who pinch their pennies more than we, but they just don't get ahead.

We say that we can sing well, or write well, or speak well, because we have cultivated a gift that comes natural to us. Good. These are visible gifts. But there are invisible gifts too. And there are people who cultivate these invisible gifts with the same dedication you cultivate yours. If your gifts were invisible, would you do as well as your quiet brother?

Folks, let's face it. Down deep we would like to believe that we are entitled to a deed to our success. Caixeta recommends a strategic stop to analyze success. If that is a good idea in the natural kingdom, how much more in the spiritual?

The success casualties in our midst are too high. We have lost far too many men, women, young men and young women, because they assumed ownership of their success.

We can't afford these losses. We need successful men, women and youth in the church. But we must realize that when we give all to the Lord, this means all of our success too. We will then deed everything over to Him. If we don't find this grace, we, like the station owner, may also become an ex-owner.

Nabuchadnezzar assumed ownership of his success and ended up eating grass. ▲

This Month

Hodgepodge

Answer quick! What do patriotism, politics, lunacy, heart attacks and religion have in common?

Give up? Don't feel bad. It's just a little test to see if you have ever been in Brazil during a World Cup soccer tournament.

For the benefit of readers who aren't sure what the World Cup soccer tournament really is, we'll make a quick explanation. Every four years all the countries of the world with a half way decent national soccer team get together for a tournament. Eight years ago it was in Spain, four years ago in the US and this year in France.

Needless to say, the final objective of a tournament is to eliminate weaker teams until only one is left—the winner. Theoretically the winner is the best team.

OK, let's take them one by one.

Patriotism. Under normal circumstances Brazilians are not patriotic. They find fault

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with their leaders, with their economic system, with their manufactured goods and with one another. It's not that there isn't any patriotism down in one corner of their bosom. There is. But it takes some sort of catalyzer to bring it to the surface. There are two ways: Agree with them that Brazil is no good or wait for the World Cup to come around.

Several months before the World Cup is to begin, the Brazilian flag begins showing up all over—on balconies, in front of stores, on radio aerials. People everywhere are proud to be Brazilians and lose their desire to emigrate.

Politics. Believe it or not, the outcome of the World Cup has an influence on presidential elections. Political commentators, serious commentators, repeatedly pointed out before the Cup that if Brazil lost it would cost President Fernando Henrique Cardoso votes in his bid for reelection. The simple televised image of being on hand to greet the returning victorious team would also make him look like a victor. A resounding defeat (especially to Argentina) would make him look like a loser.

Lunacy. There is no hyperbole in the observation that Brazilians become deranged during a soccer game. They do. If they would put as much importance on their eternal destiny as they do on the outcome of a game, there would be few sinners in this country. To make matters worse, almost all male Brazilians 14 or older know more about soccer than the coach, than the referee, or even than the players themselves when they make a mistake. The fact that during a game (in which Brazil is losing, naturally) any Brazilian male 14 or older could be selected and that he would do a better job than the incumbent coach, is sort of a comforting thought. Ah, such talent! (Only you have to be in an advanced stage of lunacy to recognize it.)

Heart attacks. We could add here, nervous breakdowns and suicides. Not everyone's heart and mind can stand the strain of a crucial game (and what game isn't crucial?). It would be interesting to know how many people actually succumb to some sort of physical or mental disorder during a game.

Religion. This is the sad part of this whole story. The final Copa do Mundo game was played on Sunday afternoon (our time). That evening a number of us were standing around before church started and discussing the part religion plays in these games. Someone made the statement, "I'm glad that Brazil lost."

A Brazilian brother overheard and dryly observed, "Well I'm not!"

"Why not?" someone asked him.

"Because I'm a Brazilian."

Someone then explained to him why we felt this way and even he had to agree. Paulo David says that the evangelicals claim that Brazil won the last World Cup because of their prayers. Both Protestants and Catholics become one as they feverishly implore God's help to win the cup. Shamelessly they mix religion and soccer.

Like the Brazilian brother, I too would have liked to see Brazil win the cup, especially for political reasons. But when I think of the religious implications, then I am very happy with the outcome.

Why did Brazil lose the final game? Because they made less goals than the French

team. Brazilians aren't champion losers. So when they do lose, they must come up with "reasons." The most convenient, of course, is that the referee favored the other team. The next victim is the coach who was no good. (Anyone else could have done better.)

This time Brazil innovated. One theory that floated around was that the multinationals that patronize the French team paid off the Brazilian coach and players to lose. Rather wild, but it does bring a bit of comfort. More credible is the "fact" that Ronaldinho, Brazil's star player, had some sort of a seizure several hours before the decisive game. He played very poorly, which doubtlessly had an influence on the game. The latest version of his malady is that he cracked under stress.

And why shouldn't he? Everyone else did.

They Don't Clap, But They Sing

When we moved to Rio Verde in 69, all grain, which was mainly rice, was handled in sacks. Even when we began raising soybeans and stored them bulk on the farm, they had to be sacked up to be shipped to market.

Storage facilities in Rio Verde were limited to several large sheds where the rice was stacked. To get unloaded, trucks would sometimes spend three or four days in line.

All that has changed. Today everything has gone bulk, we have modern storage facilities in which trucks spend a matter of minutes in line.

It used to be that the farmer tried to find the best business to deal with. This still is true, of course, but now with an added dimension: businesses are trying to find the best customers to deal with. That makes for a happy marriage.

Different ones on the Colony take at least part of their grain to a business called Caramuru. They have an elevator in Rio Verde and another on the other side of the Colony toward Montividiu. We knew they had elevators in other towns, but had no idea of what size they really were.

In appreciation for the business they have gotten (and hoping for more, naturally), the people from Caramuru organized an excursion to the town of Itumbiara, where their headquarters are located.

For the benefit of you folks who were here on tours, Itumbiara is the first big town out of Rio Verde on the way to Iguaçú Falls, about a three hour drive from here. We went in a Nacional bus, the same as you did, except that instead of being a sleeper, this was a "panorâmico" in which one sits up so high that it is possible to "look down" on almost everyone.

Thirty-five of us got together at church at 6:30 a.m. on July 14. When we got to Itumbiara, we went directly to their processing plant and toured the facilities. We saw how both soybeans and corn are processed and transformed into different products.

Lunch was in a restaurant on the bank of a large river (the Mississippi River, according to them). One of the owners and the directors had come out from São Paulo for the event. The local managers were there too.

Before lunch was served, they showed us a film of their business and then the managers, the directors and the owner introduced themselves. According to custom and etiquette, we should have clapped after each one had introduced himself. Since there were at least 15 of them, it would have been no small task. But we didn't. We just politely sat there and smiled when they said something funny.

The director was the last one to introduce himself and then the people from Caramuru clapped, so we did too. Weakly.

I don't know what those folks were thinking about us by then. But since lunch was ready to be served, the master of ceremonies generously asked if maybe we would like to say grace before we ate. Jake Loewen said yes, we would sing a song. Which was done.

You know, I believe those people forgot we didn't clap. After lunch the master of ceremonies came to me and asked, "Where did they practice to sing like that?" I explained that singing is just part of our life on the Colony. He digested that one and then reached his own conclusion. "So you all sing on the Colony." I explained to him that not everyone sings, that I'm not a singer. I'm not sure he believed me. What I do know, though, is that so long as we can cultivate the gift of song, we don't have to worry too much about cultivating the gift of clapping.

At any rate, we had a most enjoyable time with the people from Caramuru.

Now for a few statistics. Caramuru owns grain elevators in 12 different towns with a total storage of 743,731 metric tons. It has rented facilities in 19 towns, with a total storage of 290,800 metric tons, for a grand total of 1,034,531 metric tons. Rio Verde holds 73,737 metric tons and Montividiu 90,000 tons.

In a future article we hope to report on Caramuru's setup in São Simão, where they load their product on barges that can either go to São Paulo or to the Atlantic Ocean and on to foreign ports.

If the reception we were given by Caramuru tells us anything, then we can conclude it is a company we can comfortably work with. ▲

Land Leveling

A problem that has plagued the Colony from the onset is the lack of options for making a living. There have been several reasons for this:

No jobs. In N America if you are needing a job, you go to town and get a job. And that is how you make your living. Here we have virtually no jobs of that nature. Sure, in a developing country there are all kinds of jobs, but most of them pay less than \$500 a month. With living expenses about the same as in N America, 500 dollars just don't go around.

A farmer's paradise. The Rio Verde area is a farmer's paradise. I believe there are few places in the world in which it is possible to raise good crops more consistently than here. Since farming is such a good deal, and since everything indicates it will continue to be, why look for something else?

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There are reasons to look for something else. First of all, not everyone is a farmer at heart. Secondly, land is sky high in this area. There is no financing for buying land, so it's no small deal to come up with enough land for the oncoming generation. Either they will have to move out when they come of age or come up with some new options for making a living.

We need to diversify. Because almost all Americans are farmers, lookers-on get the erroneous impression that you need to be a farmer to be one of us. This of course isn't true. But it is true that our sphere of influence could be increased if we diversified.

The Perdigão hog and chicken operation that is coming in will open up a whole new set of opportunities. But it won't do much to change the idea that to be one of us it's necessary to live on the farm.

Now a new opportunity has opened. Land leveling. Three brethren, Sidney Schmidt, Arlo Hibner and Mark Loewen have purchased scrapers and are working for a contractor who is operating in the area, taking jobs from Perdigão and Gessy Lever.

As the Perdigão project gains momentum, there will be a tremendous lot of work to be done. Personally I believe the brethren from the Colony will do very well. The reason is simple. They own and operate the rigs. If they begin running around the clock, like their boss is asking them to do, there will be workers involved, but even so the owners will never be very far off.

Building is another opportunity that is opening up. With hundreds of barns to build, this is a wide open door. So far as I know, no one is interested in this. Anybody from N America interested in doing some building here?

A 19 Billion Dollar Sale

Telephone service in Brazil actually

isn't all that bad. The problem is that it's not available to the majority of the population. When you really get down to it though, that's the worst kind of service.

Today in Brazil there are 11 telephones for every one hundred inhabitants. That is a very, very low ratio. There are three cellulars for every one hundred inhabitants. Also low.

It isn't that people don't want to own a phone. There are 17 million Brazilians who have their name down for a conventional phone, and seven million for a cellular. Many of these will have to wait two years or more to get their phone.

A phone—actually the right to own a phone—used to cost around \$2,000. Today that cost is down to \$50. But what difference does it make to be \$2,000 or \$50 or free, if you can't get one?

What's the problem?

The problem is that telephone service in Brazil has been controlled by one mother company, Telebrás, and her subsidiaries, all state owned. That's a no-no if you want good service.

What's the solution?

The solution occurred on July 29 when the mammoth Telebrás was auctioned off to private investors for a total of 19 billion US dollars.

What will change?

By the year 2001 the private companies that bought out Telebrás are obligated to up the 17 million phones to 33 million, resulting in 22 phones for every 100 inhabitants. It is believed that there will be no lineup for phones by 2001. Also by this date, it is hoped that there will only be a small installation fee for new phones, like in N America.

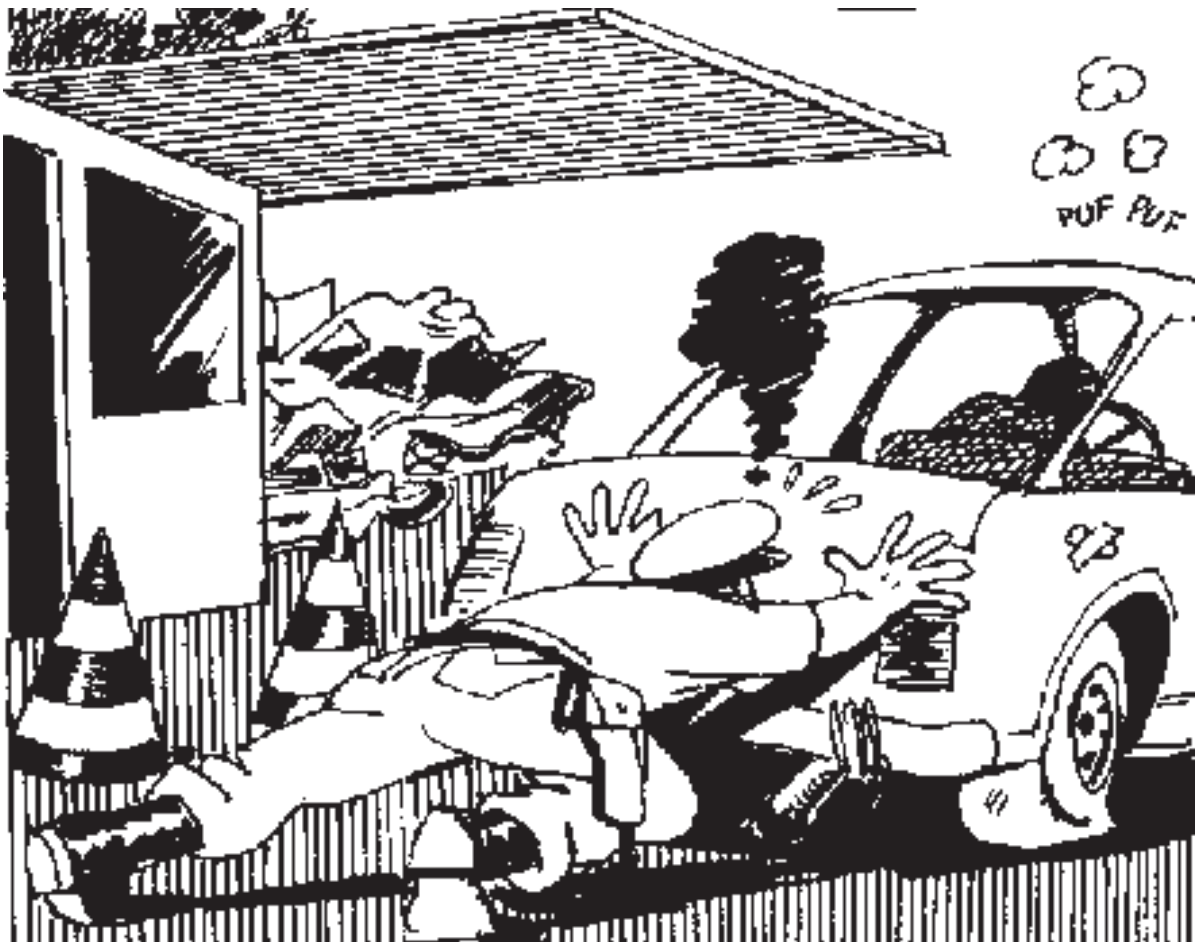
To meet these goals, the new private phone companies will have to spend 10 billion dollars a year. Telebrás was prepared to spend three billion. Those extra seven billion will do miracles. ▲

A Brazilian Story

By Bariani Ortencio, as published in **O Popular**

The Jalopy

[Just a few explanations before Ortencio tells his story. Brazilian cops don't spend a lot of time cruising around looking for traffic offenders, like N American cops. Rather, they have their stations right along side the highways, usually a few kilometers from town. When the weather is cool or rainy, they can stay inside and observe the passing



cars through large plate glass windows. If someone suspicious comes by, they run outside and give him a blast of their whistle. If the suspect doesn't stop, they jump into their patrol car and give chase. It isn't unusual for these cops to set up a roadblock right in front of the station and make everyone stop and submit to an inspection.

In the little illustration, you will notice a wrecked car just beyond the station. This is a common sight. Wrecked cars are often towed to the station and left there for an undetermined time.

In our story, you will notice that the man who has been stopped refers to the cop as *seu guarda*. "Seu" is a title of respect, and "guarda" means policeman. However, when "seu" and "guarda" are used together, the respect gives way to just a pinch of ridicule.

A driver, a typical Brazilian, was stopped by the cops as he drove past the station. He drove quite a distance before he actually got his car stopped. The cop, a good-natured fellow, immediately sized up the situation and pleasantly greeted the driver.

"Good afternoon, young man."

"Good afternoon, *seu guarda*."

"Please step on the brake."

"If this thing had any brakes, do you think I would have stopped way out here?"

"Well, what about the seat belt?"

"I'm using the seat belt to tie down a bottle of butane in the trunk."

[I insert here that it's illegal in Brazil to run vehicles on butane, although many of the older cars do just that..]

"So what you're telling me is that this car runs on butane?"

"Exactly."

"May I see your driver's license, please?"

"Let me tell you, *seu guarda*, that government bureaucracy is really a problem in this country. Would you believe that another *guarda* stopped me and for some reason kept my driver's license. That's been some six months ago..."

"What about the car documents?"

"They got stolen, *seu guarda*. Would you believe somebody snatched them right out of my pocket and I didn't even notice? That gives you an idea of how chuck full of thieves this place is."

"OK, OK, but what about the windows? It looks to me like you don't have any glass in the side windows."

"In this kind of heat, what in the world do I want with windows? Are you wanting to see me die of a heat stroke in this oven? I try to be practical about things, *seu guarda*."

"Yes, I see. Please honk the horn."

"*Seu guarda*, I only drive in town and you yourself know it's against the law to honk in town."

"Well then, turn on your headlights."

"Turn on my headlights, *seu guarda*? What for if I only drive during the day?"

"I'm noticing that you have no spare tire and the other tires are as bald as they come."

“My spare tire, do you know where it is? It’s at the service station. It’s been there for days. I haven’t picked it up because I don’t have the money to pay for getting it fixed. Now if I can’t afford to patch a tire, how in the world do you think I can buy four new ones, seu guarda? That’s the reason I’m running around with these baldies.”

“What about your windshield wipers? It looks to me like they don’t have any scrapers on them.”

“These windshield wipers aren’t worth a wooden nickel. The only thing that works is this... (and our man pulls a plug of tobacco out of his pocket). Rub this stuff on the windshield and you won’t see a bit of water on it.”

“OK, OK. I suppose you know it’s against the law to wear thongs while you’re driving a vehicle.”

“Man, seu guarda, there isn’t a thing you don’t see. Would you believe that I took my shoes to the cobbler to have them resoled and to this day he hasn’t let me know that I can pick them up. That’s a bummer, isn’t it?”

“I’m going to have to keep your car over here. It just isn’t in shape to be traveling on a public road.”

“Seu guarda, this car isn’t even mine. By what I’ve heard, it may even be a stolen vehicle. If you keep my car over here, you’ll have one headache on your hands.”

By now our guarda’s good humor is wearing a bit thin.

“You’re just a little bit too brash to suit me. I’ll tell you what. Get this jalopy out of here before I change my mind.”

“In that case, seu guarda, you’re going to have to do me a little favor. The battery on this thing isn’t worth a hoot, so you’re going to have to give me a push to get it started...”



Paraguay

by Edwin Schmidt, chapter V

Voluntary Service in Paraguay

Now what was I to do? The committee in charge of keeping order hadn’t done anything to stop it. I don’t know how many of the Mennonite groups I spoke for, but I stepped on the floor and the dancing stopped. I told them that the people that I represented and who were giving money to help them would not approve of this kind of activity. They seemed to respect me enough that that stopped it and as far as I know they didn’t try that again.

I don’t just remember if it was a few days after this when two or so of the young men came to talk to me. They said they supposed I’d be glad when they would be gone. I told them I would be glad when they were settled on their own and would be answerable for themselves. I believe that as some of these people called upon God in

their anguish and trouble, the Lord heard and answered, and they found the Lord. Among others there were losses in spirituality, morality, and in honesty and integrity, We leave it to the Lord to judge all this.

One day a man in his forties came up to me and asked, “Is it wrong to steal?” At this time the Holy Spirit did not give me words for a prompt response. As I pondered his question, he continued. “When I and my family were fleeing out of Russia, we’d look for a place to spend the night as evening came. We were looking for a farmstead where there was a feed stack and a chicken house. We did not expect to get anything if we went to ask for it. Sometime during the night we went to get some feed for the hungry horses and a chicken to feed my hungry family. Was that wrong? That was the only way to continue the next day.”

What, reader, would you have told this man? Here was a situation of trying to stay ahead of the retreating German army that the Russian army was trying to drive out and destroy. Doesn’t the Bible say it is permissible to take and eat as you go past a man’s field, but you shall not take to carry away? I did not give the man an answer. Let God be the judge.

With the revolution continuing, many of the refugees became restless and began to ask the MCC to consider another location for a colony. Two of the men came one day to express themselves in regards to the effect their past life in Russia had left on them, especially so on the young men who had grown up under the communist influence. They said that their outlook was so different from the colonists’ that they didn’t think they could get along very well together. Therefore, they preferred to start their own separate colony, even though they realized this would mean greater hardships for them.

The refugees had a man they called Preacher Prist who tried to minister to their spiritual needs. The MCC also sent men from the States and Canada. From Canada a Cornelius Remple came to try to revive more of a non-resistant teaching. A Wiebe from Hillsboro, Kansas, came to hold revivals and also a Gerhard Warkentine who was here on a longer term basis. Their revival meetings were much like we had in our church, as well as their altar calls. As a whole, their preaching was basic. That, however, did not close the door for personal contacts with the people. I know there were points of doctrine on which we differed.

The MCC gave consideration to the refugees’ request to look for land in southeastern Paraguay. Some men chosen from the refugees together with some from the MCC were impressed with a tract of land that the refugees who earlier went to Friesland had been interested in. Once this was settled, people were asked to decide where they preferred to go. Next, they were asked to form groups to make up different villages when it was open to settle them.

During the four years that these refugees had been moving from place to place they had school for their children whenever possible. While here they were able to have a graduation program for around twenty students graduating from the 8th grade. It was a happy time for the students, parents, and teachers. Each graduating student received

a present. Afterward coffee and cookies were served. It was enjoyable to witness this happy event for these people.

July 9, 1947, after two months in the refugee centers here, the first group left to start the new colony in southeast Paraguay to get things ready for more people to go. A co-op was organized with whom the MCC would deal from then on. A big building for temporary housing was built in which people would live until they could build their own houses. The new colony was named Volendam, after the big Dutch ship that brought them from Europe. It was farther up the river than the Friesland colony, but not as far from the river, which was an advantage. The river upstream being smaller, the river boats from Asuncion were also smaller.

The first groups, as I remember, were from fifty to sixty people together with their baggage. It was usually with considerable excitement and rather high spirits that the people left. As I watched them leave I wondered just how they would accept what the future held for them. It was going to be a pioneer life, and a hard one. After two weeks the settling of the refugees came to a halt. The rebel forces came down the river faster than expected, and the military took over the transportation facilities to haul their troops. The rebels were coming to try to capture Asuncion. In a weeks time it was close enough to clearly hear the guns.

The La Fabrica center was located on the highest ground in the vicinity on kind of a knoll so that we had a rather good view to all sides. A hundred yards from the center was a two story house with a flat top over part of the roof and this had a railing around it. Suddenly one day a lot of soldiers were brought here who began to dig trenches and put up barbed wire entanglement barricades. Upon asking what it was all about, we were told they were putting up a six ring defense zone around the capital city of Asuncion, and this was the middle defense area. Fox holes were also being dug and machine guns set up. It was easy to see that this was not a place to have the refugees.

About this time a number of the MCC personnel from the MCC center in Asuncion came and it was decided that they go back to Asuncion to see what could be done to move the refugees completely out of this defense zone area. This place could well become a hotly contested battle area. The government troops also told us they knew the rebel troops were short on war supplies. Their plan was to run them out of supplies trying to get through the defense zone. When that happened the war would be over.

In the afternoon we were informed that a bus and truck were coming to haul the people to the San Lorenzo center. The people were quickly to get some things ready to go shortly. San Lorenzo was in the direction from which the rebels were coming, but outside of the defense zone. It was thought that they would just move through and not cause much trouble. Since some of the refugees had already moved to the colony before, with those who were left the bus made three trips and the truck two, to get them all moved. This left all the big baggage behind.

Thirty of the men said, "We are not leaving. Every time we have fled we've lost everything we had. Now with what the MCC has given us we are not willing to leave.

We are going to stay and try to save it.” The two of us MCC workers who were with them said, “We will stay with you.”

Within two days the front seemed to have moved to about a mile from where we were. The last number of nights we could see the arching tracer fire and the arching of the explosive projectiles the two sides were dropping on each other. The government troops also set up one of these guns beside the building we were staying in, on the opposite side from which the rebels were firing.

Then also the government troops closer to Asuncion began firing their bigger guns. At times we would hear those projectiles whistle overhead on their way to the rebel troops. This was nothing new to the young refugee men who had been drafted into the German army after arriving in Germany. They said they were not afraid of the rifle fire as the bullets would not come through the thick brick walls. The danger was from the arching projectiles. They said if one of them came through the roof and exploded it would kill all of us.

Since the big sliding doors were of corrugated metal, they used big baggage to make a barricade 7 ft. high and 4–5 ft. thick, about 5 ft. away from the door to stop any bullets that might come through the door. They also made an opening through the brick wall between the two rooms to go from room to room without going outside. In one room in one corner they also took of the big baggage and made walls about 4 ft. thick and about as high over which they laid thick boards, on top of which they piled more baggage for a bunker for some added protection.

Thus we waited it out. The troops did the same outside. They set up a machine gun about 75 yards from one end of the building, another about that far on the opposite end of the building, and another one in the V of the roof where the two rooms joined right above us. A small mortar was set up not so far away from the outside wall. On one side a little ways farther away, there was a cemented-out drainage ditch 3 ft. deep which soldiers used as a trench. On the opposite side of the building there were trenches, fox holes, and barbed wire entanglement barricades to which they tied tin cans that would rattle whenever something or someone in the dark ran or walked into it.

By the sounds of the gunfire, the fighting was steadily coming closer. We continued to make our meals in one of the big kettles. The day came when the fighting was close enough that we began to hear the zip of bullets in the treetops above us and at night there was almost continual shooting, at times very heavy. There was firing from the machine guns above and on both ends of the building, and also from the side where the trenches, fox holes, and barbed wire entanglement barricades were. At night when they couldn't see they shot at any noise they heard. At times it was a noise made by someone or something rattling the cans on the barricade. Some mornings we saw a dead cow or donkey that had gotten shot. Also the government troops told us the rebels were infiltrating their lines at night. Once they said they caught around thirty rebels. Another night we heard a scream. One of the young men said, “Someone got hit; that was a death scream.”

One evening, after dark there was a knock on the door. I pushed it open a little bit

and saw a man's head and shoulders in front of me. He said, "The commander has sent me to search this building. I stepped aside and said, "Pase." (Come in.) As I stepped aside to let him in and the light fell more fully on him, I saw he'd had a dagger with around an 8 inch blade right at my stomach.

He came in and acted as though he was looking under the beds. He had no uniform on and we knew he was a bandit who had come to steal. Some of the refugee men had seen what was happening and six or more of them each with a club in their hands, followed him. I followed along too, wanting to see what would happen. He walked to the end of the room, turned around and came back to the middle of the room to where the hole had been made in the wall to go to the other room. He went to the other room with the men following him. He went to where the men had made the bunker and opened a couple pieces of baggage. In one he found some butcher knives, of which he took one and also a blanket. I took it that the refugee men figured that wasn't enough to put up a fight for. Before leaving he asked for my fellow worker's wristwatch. When it wasn't given to him right away, he quickly stuck a knife blade under the band to cut it, but my fellow worker said, "No, I'll give it to you." ▲

To be continued

This & That

Broadway, the road that turns off the main road near the Monte Alegre church and goes down to Emma Burns' place and the Kramers, has been built up and graveled. The municipality sent out a caterpillar, a loader, trucks and a grader to help with the gravelling. We have a mighty fine road there.

Paul & Hermínia Wedel, Mennonites from Curitiba were out for a short visit. They are originally from the Witmarsum Colony. They are very fine people and once again it goes to show how badly we need to have missionaries in that city.

The Dean Penner family is here for a visit. They were the original missionaries in Mirassol, São Paulo. Dean is keeping up his permanent visa, which will make it easier for the entire family to get theirs again when they return to Brazil. They visited in both Mirassol and on the Colony.

Ministers Richard Mininger and Elias Stoltzfus and their wives were to the Mirassol mission for a short series of meetings.

The Dennis Kramer family from the Rio Verdinho Congregation are moving to the colony in Mato Grosso. Dennis came to Brazil with his uncle Daniel in 69 and was in on the original pioneering. Now he is going to pioneer again. He and his family will do just fine and be a real asset to that movement.

Work has begun on the addition to the Monte Alegre School. Two classrooms are being added and a large covered play area. In the future another set of restrooms and a kitchen will possibly be included. Since the project won't be completed by the time school starts, the social hall may be used for a short time for several of the classes.

Brazil ¹⁶ News

Our schools have never been registered during these almost 30 years. We were hoping they would never have to be, but things were getting more and more complicated, so now an effort is being made to register them. Maria Borges, a local lawyer specialized in school registrations has taken on the job. Because of not having college educated teachers, we will need a special concession, but she believes something can be worked out.

Our literature work is being registered too. This is really a very straightforward procedure. Until now it hasn't been necessary, but to get our books on the national market, we need to register. The name will be Publicadora Menonita (Mennonite Publisher). Since the name Mennonite has a very positive connotation in Brazil, we felt it would be appropriate to use it to identify our work.

In spite of Brazil taking second place in the World Cup, President Cardoso continues well ahead of his closest opponent. He stands a very good chance of being reelected.

Now for the good news. I am almost the proud owner of a little kitten. Joan Unruh called me and said their mamma cat had a batch of kittens. They're part Siamese. Since Joan is my cousin, I am waiving the \$5.00 pickup fee. It is a boy and so I will probably name it It. It is different, is it not?