

Brazil News



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Editorial

The Cold War

The Cold War was “a constant non-violent hostility (as opposed to a “hot,” or shooting, war) in the last half of the twentieth century between the United States and the Soviet Union” (AHD).

The Cold War is said to have started after the Second World War. Actually, it started during the war and is a curious chapter in world history.

The three national leaders who conducted the Allied war effort were strange bedfellows indeed. Let's notice:

Joseph Stalin, Supreme Commander of the Eastern Front, was the disciple and hand picked successor of Vladimir Ilich, alias Lenin. A ruthless, despotic leader, he had but one ambition in life: to sow the seeds of communism wherever and however possible. In an incredible act of gullibility, he signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler at the onset of the war and furnished him with raw materials and weapons that later would be used against his own nation.

Franklin Roosevelt, assumed the presidency of the United States during the worst of the Great Depression, after defeating Herbert Hoover at the polls. With the agony of the First World War still fresh in his mind, together with the heavy burden of domestic woes which now rested on his shoulders, he was determined to avoid foreign conflict at all costs. This approach may have made good sense domestically, but it proved to be very myopic as he looked across the Atlantic. When Germany invaded Poland he made sure the world knew that America would remain neutral. If instead he would have joined Great Britain and France in their effort to aid Poland, the Second World War might have been averted.

Winston Churchill is the true hero of the Second World War. Only he recognized Hitler for what he was and many times was a lonely voice crying in the wilderness. With a lesser leader Great Britain would have surely succumbed to the swarms of

bombers that nightly crossed the Channel and dropped their fiery payloads on London.

It was these three men who during the heat of the conflict carried the destiny of the world on their shoulders. Though Roosevelt was a latecomer in the European theater, he received a double dose by having to fight a second war in the Pacific.

Hitler's attack on Russia was welcome news to Churchill, for it meant that part of the enemy forces would be diverted to a second front. Stalin, on the other hand, found no comfort in seeing his country overrun by Panzer units. America entered the war and it soon became evident that unless England, Russia and America joined hands, fascism would be the new world order.

The threat was so dire that these three leaders, each so different from the other, began thinking, planning and working together. During the time in which Hitler's armies were running wild, adding conquest to conquest, country to country, carving an empire out of neighboring nations—including Russia, Stalin proved himself a valuable ally, at times appearing almost lamb-like in his dealings with Roosevelt and Churchill. Protocols were signed that allowed for conquered nations, once liberated by the Allies, to determine their own political future, which was supposed to mean that neither communism nor capitalism would be forced upon them.

As the tide of the war began to turn and the question wasn't if Germany would be defeated, but when, a definite change was noted in Stalin. As countries were liberated by the Allies, he brazenly imposed his form of government—communism—on the liberated peoples. By the time the war was over, it was evident he didn't have the slightest intention of keeping one single item of the agreements signed at Yalta.

This was the beginning of the Cold War, “a constant nonviolent hostility” that was to continue for more than 40 years.

Expressing his feelings for “a new unity in Europe”, Churchill summed up his appraisal of the Soviet aim. “I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines.”

Today, over 50 years since the end of World War II, we must tip our hats to Sir Winston Churchill. The Russians did not desire war. They wanted to indoctrinate, to proselytize, to convert the world to communism. But they did not want war.

The missiles? All the thousands of nuclear warheads pointed toward the free world, what were they all about? They were meant to threaten, not to kill (although they certainly would have used them, had they been forced into a corner). The Russians are not a fanatical people, they're not a dumb people. They knew all the time that there would be no winners in a Third World War. No, a nuclear war would have been a “hot” war in the most literal sense of the word. They wanted a “cold” war—a “non-war” that would get them what they wanted without an open fight. The Russians didn't want war any more than the Americans did.

Many of you readers have vivid recollections of the Cold War. You remember the bomb shelter days, when people would build shelters in their back yard and stock them with non-perishable foods. You remember the public buildings with designated areas

in which to take shelter in case of nuclear attack. You remember the uneasy feeling that permeated the air during times of international crisis.

In another of the ironies of life, it took an actor from Hollywood to see through the Russian mentality and implode communism, thus bringing an end to the Cold War. This man, President Ronald Reagan, understood that for communism to spread there couldn't be a nuclear war, but only the threat of war. So why not play their game? In his so-called Star Wars defense system, Reagan proposed building a space based defense system that would destroy enemy missiles shortly after launch. Or put differently, he proposed a system that would destroy their threat. With their economic system in tatters after years of communistic rule, Russia realized that to build a deterrent to the Star Wars defense system would do to their economy what the first atomic bomb did to Hiroshima. They threw in the towel.

Perhaps we are being nationalistic if we place the blame of the Cold War on the Soviet bloc, on what President Reagan called the Evil Empire. And yet the passing of time vindicates that judgment. After the Berlin Wall fell, how many capitalist countries turned communist? How many communist countries turned capitalist? Communism didn't need to be destroyed. All it took was a little coaxing from President Ronald Reagan and it auto-destructed.

So what was gained through the Cold War? Absolutely nothing. What was lost? Many lives, half a century of progress in communist nations, deprivation and untold heartaches, not to mention the Gulag and millions of brutal deaths.

All of that is history, including the Cold War. At least we hope so. But lessons can be learned.

We Mennonites are a non-resistant people. If asked what that means, we tend to explain, "Well, we don't believe in going to war." The answer is correct, but superficial. More correct would be, "We don't believe in using force." Even more correct would be, "We believe that as citizens of the Kingdom of Peace, we should love everyone, which precludes the use of force or of going to war."

We aren't non-resistant because we don't believe in going to war. We don't go to war because we're non-resistant. There is a world of difference between the two. There are atheists who refuse to go to war, but are anything but non-resistant. Hippies refuse to go to war. Woodstock is full of people who are totally opposed to war.

If being opposed to war isn't proof of non-resistance, then what kind of proof do we need?

Non-resistance, true non-resistance, in a nutshell, is a "non-warring" will, a peaceful will, a submitted will. Such a will is proof of true non-resistance. Man can make himself willing to not go to war, or even to give his life for another, but no man is able to bring his own will into subjection without divine help.

We refuse to enlist in the Army. We refuse to defend ourselves against intruders. We refuse to go to law. Can we do all that—and more—and not be non-resistant?

Indeed we can.

All we need is a cold war of wills, which means that we don't actually go to war, but desire the fruits of war.

Back in the war days some C.O.s were investigated by federal officers or were asked to testify in court as to their faith. (The Diary of Noah Leatherman relates such an experience—and should be read by all, especially the youth.)

That experience, and others, were the result of refusing to take part in a “hot” war. So far as I know, no one has ever been arraigned in court for refusal to take part in a cold war, or more specifically, for rejecting war, but desiring its fruits.

So let’s just imagine what it might be like. Remember that we are in the year of 1999 and that authorities have at their disposal very sophisticated surveillance equipment. The king of Syria was told by a servant that “Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed chamber.” This is an apt description of modern intelligence.

We’ll call the brother on the stand Menno Nite. Court is in session and he is being questioned by the District Attorney.

D.A.: Mr. Nite, you claim to be non-resistant. Is that correct?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A.: Could you tell this court just what that means?

Nite: Yes Sir. It means that we...

D.A. (interrupting): “We” who?

Nite: We, the Mennonite people.

D.A.: And you feel your belief accurately represents that of the Mennonite people?

Nite: Yes sir.

D.A.: Please continue with your answer—in the first person singular.

Nite: Yes sir. It means that I feel it is contrary to Christ’s teaching to use force, either to defend myself or demand my rights.

D.A.: Could you give this court an example of how this works?

Nite: Yes Sir. Let’s say that someone accuses me of something I didn’t do and takes me to law. Christ says that if someone sues us at law and takes our coat, we should give him our cloak also. On the other hand, let’s suppose that someone injures me or does me damage, I feel it is wrong to use to the law to gain my rights. In fact, I feel like I have no rights.

D.A.: You take Christ’s teachings literally, is that correct?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A.: Would you like for everyone to believe and live as you do?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A.: Would you like for everyone to know how you believe and live, even your enemies?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A. Are their exceptions to your belief? Do you feel that there are occasions in which you could set your belief aside?

Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: At the beginning of this session you affirmed that you would tell only the truth and acknowledged that failure to do so would subject you to the laws and penalties of perjury. Do you at this point wish to retract anything you have said?

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Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: Very well. We shall proceed. During the last six months, have you been defrauded by anyone?

Nite (a surprised look on his face): Well, not really.

D.A.: A yes or no answer, please.

Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: Did anyone try?

Nite: Well, I suppose you could say...

D.A. (sharply): Yes or no, please.

Nite (looking down): Yes Sir.

D.A.: Please tell this court about it.

Nite: Well...ah...a fellow came into the neighborhood sometime ago...

D.A. (interrupting): How long ago?

Nite: During the first week of December.

D.A.: Please continue.

Nite: This fellow came into our neighborhood and said he was buying used machinery. We trusted him because he said he had bought machinery from a number of Mennonites in a neighboring state and told us their names. So some of us sold to him and we got paid with checks. It happens that he loaded after banking hours so we didn't find out until the next day that the checks were hot.

D.A.: Please continue.

Nite (flushing): Well...uh...a half dozen of us decided to go see him...and see if he would make the checks good... or return the machinery. So that is what we did and he agreed to return the machinery.

D.A.: It was as simple as that?

Nite (squirming): Well, naturally we had to find out where he was taking the machinery...

D.A. (interrupting): Just for the record, what piece of machinery did you sell to the man?

Nite: A fairly old tractor.

D.A.: I see, so this man bought your old tractor with a hot check—shall we say, he stole it—and when you found out what had happened, you went after him, is that correct?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A. (turning to the stenographer): Miss Hill, please read Mr. Nite's testimony where he tells what he would do if someone injured or did him damage.

Stenographer (reading): "...let's suppose that someone injures me or does me damage, I feel it is wrong to use the law to gain my rights. In fact, I feel like I have no rights..."

D.A.: Now, Mr. Nite, this court is very interested in knowing a few more details. How did you find out where the man who stole your machinery was from?

Nite: Ah, well, I, together with my friends who also lost machinery, went to see a lawyer...

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D.A. (interrupting): A lawyer, did you say?

Nite (flustered): Yes Sir. You see...

D.A. (in a thundering voice). Yes, this court wants to see. Please proceed.

Nite: Well, we looked up this lawyer, just to see if he had any suggestions. We told him how we believe because, well, like I say, we wanted to know if he had any suggestions.

D.A. And did he?

Nite: Well yes, he wanted to call the police, but we told him that was sort of off bounds for us. So he asked us if anyone had noticed the license plate. I had, so I told him what it was. He excused himself and about 15 minutes later came back and told us the fellow who got our machinery had done this before and that if we would sign a warrant, the police would have him in jail within an hour. I told him that would go against our believe, but that maybe he could just tell us where the man had his headquarters so that we could go talk things over with him.

D.A.: And then you left your lawyer?

Nite: Well, no. We asked him a few more questions.

D.A.: For example?

Nite: We asked him what the law said about this kind of thing.

D.A.: Curiosity, I suppose, this thing about wanting to know what the law says. Please proceed.

Nite: Well, since we now had his address, six of us drove up to his place to have a talk with him.

D.A.: And after a friendly chat he readily agreed to return your machinery, is that it?

Nite (visibly miserable): No Sir, not exactly...

D.A.: This court would like to know exactly what took place. Remember, although you have not sworn to tell the truth, you are subject to the same laws and penalties of perjury. In your testimony you mentioned that you wished that everyone knew how you believe, even your enemies. Did you tell this "enemy" how you believe in your friendly chat with him?

Nite: No Sir.

D.A.: And why not?

Nite: Well, I guess...ah...

D.A.: Need some help? (thundering) Did you tell your five friends, as you were walking up to the front door of the house where the machinery thief lived, "Now, we don't have to let him know we're non-resistant. He may not know, so let's try and scare him a little"? Did you say that?

Nite: Yes Sir.

D.A. Tell this court about your friendly chat with the man who stole your machinery.

Nite: Well, Sir, I guess it wasn't so friendly...

D.A.: You guess?

Nite: No Sir. It wasn't friendly. The man was shocked to see us. Apparently someone had told him we were non-resistant, so he didn't expect any problems. When we told

him we could have him in jail in 30 minutes and that we knew about what his sentence would be, he offered to return our machinery.

D.A.: And you accepted?

Nite: Well, yes, except that we told him that since he knew where to get the machinery, he could take it back. We would follow him in our van...

D.A.: Let's suppose you're bluff wouldn't have worked. Then what would you have done?

Nite: In that case we would have had to let him have our machinery.

We now step out of the courtroom. We have heard enough.

That, folks, is a cold war. We don't actually go to war, but we covet the fruits of war. And often get them.

If time goes on another one hundred years we Mennonites will be staunchly non-resistant on "hot" wars. But what about cold wars? Forget the hundred years. Today. Yes, today, are we really as solid as we think we are in our non-resistant stand?

The court case you just read is imaginary. Turn your mind to real life happenings. Examine your own life. Ask yourself: Do I have a non-warring will, a peaceful and submissive will? Or do I covet the fruits of war? ▲

Linguistics

The Ten Commandments for Learning a Foreign Language

First Commandment. Love your mother tongue. Treat it as a close friend, as a spouse, but never as a slave. Appreciate the beauty of your mother tongue, its nuances. Read poetry, at least occasionally. Never miss *Toward More Picturesque Speech* in the *Reader's Digest*. Someone who doesn't love his mother tongue will hardly see the beauty of another language.

Second Commandment. Learn how to use your mother tongue. When you buy a new microwave oven, a new tractor or a new hot water heater, you study the owner's manual to learn how it's supposed to work. Do the same with your first language. Study grammar. Someone who hasn't mastered the grammar of his mother tongue will never master the grammar of a second language.

Third Commandment. Learn to express yourself in an organized way—both in speech and writing. Someone who bumbles along in his native tongue will make a perfect clown of himself in a second language.

Fourth Commandment. Be interested in others. Not the Dale Carnegie type interest, but a genuine interest. See others as a page in an encyclopedia. Study that page and it will enrich your life. Someone who doesn't find his fellowmen interesting will have little motivation to learn a second language.

Fifth Commandment. Cultivate the habit of listening carefully when others speak in your native tongue. This habit will pay rich dividends when learning a foreign language. Pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, all are learned or enhanced by careful listening.

Sixth Commandment. Remember that language and culture are Siamese twins. You can't detest the culture and love the language. They are as inseparable as Siamese twins that share vital organs. The person who loves the culture will want to speak the language.

Seventh Commandment. Adapt your learning to your gift. Some can learn to speak and write correctly. Most can speak better than they can write. Some find it easiest to pick up the "street" version of the language. Great. Their grammar may not be perfect, but they communicate with ease. To each according to his gift.

Eighth Commandment. Regard a second language as an investment. It takes a lot of hard work to make enough money to buy a quarter of ground. It takes a lot of time and effort to learn a second language well. No one sits around expecting the deed to a quarter section of ground to come floating in on the breeze. Similarly it is virtually impossible to effortlessly learn a second language well.

Ninth Commandment. Remember that a second language is a lifetime project. Contrary to our native tongue, which we don't forget, our second language wants to slip away through inactivity. Rare indeed is the one who learns a second language as well as his native tongue. For most of us, learning a foreign language is a lifelong project.

Tenth Commandment. Don't forget God. Last but not least. God is interested in helping you learn a foreign language. God is interested in showing you where and how to use your foreign language. God wishes to be glorified through the second language you have learned. What more do you want?

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To Brasil by Van

by Rufus Schrock

Crossing the Andes

Soon after we left the restaurant, we were climbing dry mountains, circling over and around. When we got on the right side of the hill, we could see the ocean. Soon things leveled out and we were on good, level road along the Pacific Ocean.

I will write a few quotes from the girls' writings:

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“June 16. We spent some time chasing crabs. We finally cornered one in a hole. Boy! Was he big! We all came back and I tell you what, that was some hard climb. I took another shower and now we are on our way again. 12:00 a.m. We didn’t have any breakfast and now we are hungry, looking for a place to eat. I think everyone of us are hungry and thirsty.

“We are now at a restaurant called Mi Analy. For dinner we had beef, rice and butter beans. It was good.

“2:00 p.m. Now we are on the Andes. We can see the Pacific Ocean from up here. It is awesome! My, these mountains are dry. Not many green things at all. It is 6:10 p.m. and we are in a desert and you are missing out. There is nothing, not a thing, but sand, sand and more sand. It looks like it could go on forever.”

Here is another quote:

“9:48 p.m. We have passed a very interesting day. This morning we had service by the Pacific Ocean, picked up a man and he helped us through a town, stopped to have singing service this evening prayed on a sand dome.”

We stopped this evening for gas and got supper later. At the restaurant we made friends and they were quite eager to help us. These two guys that were eating at the restaurant together with us were frozen fish haulers. They were leaving for Lima, which is a 12 hour drive and when they learned that we were going there too, they offered that we could follow them. This turned out to be a hectic night with about everyone’s stomach turning watery.

We drove through the day and in the night. At three in the morning we stopped at a filling station to wait for it to open in the morning. The next day around noon we arrived in Arequipa, the place where we head East over the Andes. We’ve been on the go for a good while now, we stopped for dinner. While we ordered our food an unkind gentleman knocked the lock out on the driver’s side of our van, but somehow got spooked and left before he did any more damage. Surely someone was praying for us.

After we ate and got us some more money from the bank, we were again heading out into the unknown, as many times before, only this time the unknown proved to be extraordinarily rough. We came to the end of the asphalt in less than an hour and the road got so bad it was just plain bad all the way. Rocks and pits and mountains and dust so fine it would penetrate your skin. I drove slow, but not nearly slow enough. The roads were narrow so if you saw someone coming, you would look for a spot to pull over to let him by, which too was no problem because everyone was going about eight miles per hour, except me, and I should have been going five.

By dusk the van started to drag or scratch bottom for any little nothing, compared to what we were used to. I got out and to our dismay we were almost flat on the passenger side, both front and back. We hailed a passing truck to see if he could give us a hand. He knew of a little tire shop a little ways down the road, so I loaded one of our flats and went with him. The fix-a-flat man was out, plus he was not equipped to fix tubeless tires. The driver gave me a few of his burn-on patches and told me that I maybe could get some help at the little restaurant we had passed a little ways back.

By not it was completely dark. Rolling the tire by hand to the van made me so tired that I tried carrying it, but that too was very exhausting. It had not yet dawned on my dim brain that there might be something wrong beside me not feeling good. So after trying and retrying my method of carrying my load, I remembered that I had one extra tire back with the van, so I tossed this one beside the road in the darkness and walked empty handed.

I remembered that at the little restaurant I had seen a mountain vehicle. The thought that they might help us gave me new hope. All this time my family was waiting in the vehicle, flashers going.

When I got to the restaurant, I explained my plight to these guys and they offered to help for a price. These police recognized me from a few hours earlier when they had stopped me to see who and what I was. Now they carry me back to the van to remove the other tire and see if somehow we could fix it. It was getting later and the later it got, the colder it got. The more exhausted I got, the less cold I could take, until at the later hours I was really cold and uncomfortable, as the night drew on. The men had my tire in the middle of the floor in the restaurant, as they worked on it, trying to fix it by burning a tube patch on the tire, without tools to work with.

These mountain police wanted to go get the tire I had left beside the road, so we went out again, looking in the dark to retrieve this burden I had left behind. It's amazing how tired you can get in this thin air.

It was so cold that my ears turned to potato chips. This Indian woman came up to me wanting to sell some of her goods, wool blankets, pull-over caps and things. I bought a cap, only I needed a big coat too. Seems like the people don't even think about making a fire to keep warm, neither do they close the door. They just pile on more clothes.

After ever so long we gave up on one of the tires and took the one we got fixed to the van. The police stayed until I had the wheel back on and ready to go, except by then the flashers had run the battery down, so we had to use jumper cables. All part of travel, I suppose.

After we got the van going, we went to the restaurant where we stayed the night because of the sincere advice of those who knew and told us that this was not a place to travel at night. We settled down for what was left of the night. In the morning I was too sick to drive or care, so Flora drove, though she still was a little hyper. There are always people with tire problems along this way as it seems, so there are little huts all along to fix tires. We stopped at the next one that seemed like it might be able to help us. Before he was done, I climbed back in the van bed because that was the only thing I felt like doing, Mark was sick too, but he helped the guy and they got us going. Flora drove for another hour or so, when this loud explosion occurred along with a display of dust. So we were down to the last straw.

We put our last tire on and by now I was feeling better, so I relieved Flora. We crept along at about five miles per hour for the next five hours. Then the roads improved to where we sped to 30 miles per hour. As we went along, we stopped a few times to

air our tires back up. We had a tire pump along. About half way over we came upon another restaurant and had us a fairly decent meal. I quickly went out to the van and got a short nap.

By now we had something else to fix. As we descended, our brakes sounded more and more metallic. Makes your skin crawl. By evening we were at the bottom of the mountain, where we hit blacktop and civilization. We had a guy put us a tube in one of the front tires, then the other one too, because by that time it was going down too. In the meantime we ate a very decent supper and were one thankful bunch. ▲

Remembering Out Loud

by Sylvia Baize

Growing Up in Brazil

Just up the hill from our place, above our pasture, there was a cemetery—right beside the road where the doorless truck went by that I told about last month. We would go up to this cemetery every now and then to see if anything interesting could be found. Oh! Did we every have fun in that cemetery. The best was after Memorial Day, when we would find plates with food, beer bottles, vases with fake flowers, even silverware, on the graves. We would rearrange the vases, break the beer bottles and throw out the food that the birds hadn't already eaten. The people who left the food there seemed to think the dead would eat it. If they happened to come back after we had done our little thing, they must have felt sure there were a hungry bunch of dead in that cemetery.

The only time anyone took care of the cemetery was when they came to feed the dead. The rest of the year it was overgrown with tall weeds. In the dry season they would shrivel up for lack of rain. It was when the weeds were tall and dry that Sandy, a couple of other girls, and I decided to hike up to the cemetery to see what there was to see.

We purposely told no one about this little excursion, as we didn't want the boys to hear about it and invite themselves along. So we went up the hill having ourselves a good old time, laughing and hollering, happy to have slipped past the boys.

We were nearly to the cemetery when we heard an unearthly bang and a war whoop. We screamed and turned tail, running as fast as our legs would carry us—until we heard my brother Carlos laughing his head off at us.

The joke seemed to be on us, that is until suddenly smoke started coming up out of the dry weeds. The firecracker he scared us with set the weeds on fire. He started stomping around like crazy, trying to put the fire out. Did we ever laugh, because now the joke was on him.

Up above the gravel pit there was a crossroads. Lucas and I often rode horse along these roads. One day as we approached the crossing, we saw something on the ground.

We galloped our horses up to the spot. There, laid out on a black tablecloth, were clay plates and beer bottles full of beer. In the center was a roasted black chicken. Lucas said that devil worshippers had done that. He said too that they might still be around, so we set our horses to galloping as fast as they could go.

When we got home we told Mom about it and she didn't seem frightened at all. So we headed back over to the picnic site. First we gathered all the big clay plates and set them aside. Then we got on our horses and had them stomp on the beer bottles and chicken on the cloth. There wasn't much left when our horses finished.

Mission accomplished, we picked up the plates and headed for home. We gave my mom the plates and she set them under her plants on the porch. They worked really perfect for this.

We roamed all over those woods and pastures and many a beautiful spot we found. Sometimes we would go way out beyond our land into places where humans didn't normally set foot. We got to see nature just as God had created it, lovely and pure, unmarred by man.

We loved these jaunts and would take every opportunity we could to go discover these places. One day Lucas, Rosemeire (a girl who was staying with us) and I saddled our horses, packed us a lunch, told Sandy of our plans (folks weren't at home), and headed out. We rode and rode until we came to the very top of a hill. We didn't dare go down the other side with the horses, as it was full of loose rock and very steep. So we tied them to some small trees and started going down. It was really treacherous.

Lucas offered to help us girls. He would throw out his horse whip and we would grab hold. Then he would keep a firm footing while we cautiously inched our way down.

I don't know how Rosemeire got to the bottom, but as for me, I lost my grip on the whip and went rolling down the hill. Once I reached out for a low hanging branch to stop me, but it broke and down I rolled. I finally stopped up against a tree trunk, a little bruised, but laughing merrily.

We walked on down into the valley and saw a lovely meadow spread out before us. We sat down and had our lunch, then checked a few more places out and finally, all tuckered out, climbed the hill—at an easier place—and returned to our horses.

We rode home exhausted, but refreshed, after a wonderful time right in the heart of God's creation, far, far from the rushing world. ▲

Paraguay

Hit By the Crisis

All Brazilians, in one way or another, have been affected by the crisis. For many this effect has been more psychological than palpable. In other words, the fear of what might happen has been worse than what has really happened on ground level.

Paraguay is a different story. This little dime store country is in the corner, hanging to the ropes for dear life, while the Brazilian crisis continues to pummel it's economy.

One third of Paraguay's GNP of nine billion dollars is generated in the city of Ciudad del Este, just across from the city of Foz do Iguacu on the Brazilian side of the border. That is, it used to be.

In BN 51 we reported on how that Brazilians flock across the border in droves to purchase cheap imported goods to be resold over all of Brazil by camelós, that is, in booths along the street, in inconspicuous shops, and of late, in camelódromos—mini-malls filled with camelós.

The products purchased in Paraguay range from second class to defective, and some are outright hoaxes. There is a chance that when you return a defective product still under warranty, it may be given a lick-and-a-promise repair job—if any—and sent to Paraguay.

The legal limit for sacoleiros, as those are called who cross the border into Paraguay to purchase goods to be resold in Brazil, used to be US\$250 per person, but recently was reduced to \$150 by the Brazilian government. (As can be imagined, many sacoleiros buy way beyond their legal limit). That was a low blow for Paraguay, but the worst was yet to come.

Since the dollar is the universal currency in these transactions, the devaluation of the real, when the exchange rate jumped from 1.21 to a high of 2.23, hit like a typhoon. A product that sold for, let's say ten dollars, cost 12 reais and 10 centavos, suddenly was costing 22 reais and 30 centavos. It's true that Paraguayan merchants used lower exchange rates (in fact, they were often negotiated on the spot with perspective buyers), but even so the price of their products skyrocketed.

This is chapter one of Paraguay's woes. Chapter two is that the immense lines of busses, cars and pickups filled with sacoleiros headed toward Paraguay have been replaced by lineups, up to four kilometers long, of Paraguayans coming to Brazil to buy groceries and other items, which, with the new exchange rate, are now much cheaper than in Paraguay.

Ciudad del Este's commercial district is taking on the appearance of a ghost town. Until this crisis it occupied third place, after Hong Kong and Miami, in the ranking of the distributors of small consumer goods.

It's incredible that a country, even a dime store country, would sit around twiddling its thumbs, knowing that one third of its GNP was concentrated in the commercial district of one small city that at places doesn't so much as have a sewage system. Industry is practically nonexistent in Paraguay. Basic items like toilet tissue and matches are imported from Brazil.

Not only are Paraguay's woes commercial, but political as well, which you will have been following in your daily papers.

But there is reason for optimism in Paraguay. No matter how bad things get, they won't be all that bad because the place isn't big enough to come up with something really bad. ▲

The Crisis

A Few Yellow Lights

We reported last month that on Brazil's economic panel all the little lights were bright red. Well, that's changed. There are now a few lonely yellow lights flickering in the sea of red.

What has happened to bring about a turn for the better?

To begin with, Brazil has complied with all the requisites set forth by the World Monetary Fund, including a package of reforms approved by Congress and sanctioned by the president. This not only opens the door for a massive bailout from the WMF, but also convinces investors that Brazil is doing its homework.

It was feared that inflation would go on the rampage again, but everything indicates that won't happen. In fact, no one even talks about the 30% per year scenario anymore. It is hoped it will stay in the neighborhood of 15%, and maybe, just maybe, end up being a one-digit number.

The hemorrhaging of monetary reserves has been halted and foreign investors will soon return. In fact, as they become convinced that the currency exchange will continue to be controlled by supply and demand, they will return in numbers.

With the new exchange, Brazil's products are very competitive on the world market.

All this is positive and can be listed as yellow lights. Where, then, is the danger? In a world crisis. It wouldn't have to be all that serious to send Brazil tumbling over the edge. At this point it doesn't have sufficient strength to outride a storm. ▲

Agriculture in Brazil

Looking Ahead

Now a word to you farmers. Joelmir Beting, a leading Brazilian economist, has this to say about the worldwide agricultural situation.

“With capital, talent and common sense, a lot of common sense, and with Brazil's climate and available land, it has everything to be an agricultural superpower in the 21st century, repeating what American agriculture did during the 20th century. We can expand two ways. The first is the horizontal expansion of our tillable land, due to the enormous acreage of virgin soil that still can be opened. The second is vertical expansion, that is, by increasing the productivity of the land already in production.

“Americans and Europeans can no longer expand. Their land is all taken up and their technology is top of the line. Also against them are the 165 billion dollars of annual subsidies on both sides of the Atlantic. Should these subsidies be eliminated, farmers would have to up their profit margin through the use of technological breakthroughs, like genetic engineering. But we must remember that these same advances will immediately be available to us here in Brazil.

“Up until the middle of the 50s, our humid tropical climate was against us. It was a sure ticket to plant diseases and weeds. For that reason agriculture was concentrated in the temperate zones. But with modern technology, the tristes trópicos—sad tropics—ended up transforming the sour lemon into sweet lemonade. Brazilian scientists have further contributed to this progress by developing new varieties of seeds and improving strains of zebu cattle for tropical conditions. What we see is an explosion of grain and cattle in the central part of the country, and in the Northeast, an explosion of irrigated garden farming.

“Let’s notice Norman Borlaug’s conclusion in a study made in 1972. He says that without cutting a single tree out of the Amazon jungle, Brazil still has enough land to produce 400 billion dollars worth of crops annually.

“In terms of rural economy, we are presently utilizing only one twentieth of our potential. It’s as though Nature has signed a check for Brazil that can be cashed in the not so distant future. The 11 billion mouths that will exist on the earth in 2030 will need the production of this sleeping giant.

“Brazil has one fourth of all the undeveloped farm ground on the face of the earth. Oh, how I would like to be my own grandson!” ▲

This & That

We received a clipping out of the February 11 Mennonite Weekly Review, from Mrs. Lloyd Dyck. The article tells how the Evangelical Mennonite Church in Mozambique began in 1991, after several men “came across an evangelistic pamphlet from a Brazilian Colony of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. This group is commonly known in North America as Holdeman Mennonites.” It says that Holdemans “offered them affiliation but stipulated several rules. Radios were prohibited, as were photographs, and civil servants and members of the police could not be church members. As Mozambique was at war, radios were an important source for information. Several of the people...were civil servants. They decided not to join this Mennonite group...”

On March 3 Nelson & Ruth Unruh had a girl, Breanna Jo.

On the 3rd the youth got together and planted pasture grass starts for Mark Loewen.

Paul & Shirley Koepl and son Ronald were here for a couple of weeks to keep their visas up, and of course to visit friends and relatives in Brazil.

Mark Loewen spent March 5–8 at the Pirenópolis Congregation giving the course “Christian Home & Child Training” to the members there.

The Arlo Hibner family and Marcia Loewen spent the March 7 weekend at the Boa Esperança Congregation in Mato Grosso.

We had some interesting visitors on the Colony. Roger & Anna Lee Berry from Missouri are writing a Social Studies book on Latin America and were touring a number of countries. I understand they have written other textbooks.

Brazil 16 News

Marlys Wickey from Inman is here visiting her mother, Mrs. John Penner, and other relatives.

The Craig Redger family spent several weeks here. When they left the Steve Redger family came to spend a month.

Those going to the Annual Meeting this year were: Dea. John Unruh, Dea. Harold Holdeman, and Min. Elias Stoltzfus & wife Colleen.

On the 20th there was a field day on the Paul Yoder farm. After making their presentations, the company, Agro-Tec, served a most delicious churrasco. That is another plus that can be listed for Brazilian agriculture.

Kindergarten season is here. At the Rio Verdinho School, Marcia Loewen has three students. At the Monte Alegre school, Keleda Loewen has four students.

Wake up folks! In BN93, Brazil was listed as a nation with 150 billion souls. Not a soul from N America wrote or called to ask if, with a world population of 6 billion, the editor of BN might be needing a vacation. ▲