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NUMBER EIGHTEEN

THIS IS A
CALL TO PRAYER
FOR
THE LORD'S WORK
IN
COLOMBIA

COLOMBIAN NEWS



Cachipay, Cund., Colombia, S. A.

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

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WE CELEBRATE OUR TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Anniversaries are happy days, --- and May 30 (Ascension Day) was no exception. Ten years ago, about 50 people gathered in Cachipay to dedicate a new work to the Lord that had been begun by Miss Janet Soldner, Miss Mary Becker, and Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Stucky. This year about 500 evangelical believers and well-wishers came to thank God again for His goodness and for the work that He has wrought.

For days and weeks before May the 30th it had rained almost continuously. Rain would make the celebration so difficult! The children at the school in Cachipay said: "We must have faith. Perhaps if we all have a little faith, the sum total of our faiths will amount to that of a mustard seed, and the Lord will grant us a nice day for the 30th." Miraculously, the 30th turned out to be a perfect day, and people (instead of rain) "poured" in from the surrounding towns and cities.

Special programs had been prepared for the morning and afternoon. Dr. Hector Valencia, (husband of the former Mary Becker), outstanding youth leader, rector of the large and important Presbyterian School in Bogota, and president of the Confederation of

Evangelicals in Colombia, gave the principal address in the morning. Dr. Robert Lazear, influential and much-loved missionary of the Presbyterian Church, gave the afternoon message. The U. S. Embassy was represented by Mr. Richard Poole.

Special features of the meetings were the unveiling of a bronze plaque in commemoration of the founding of the school and home for needy children, the laying of the cornerstone of a new chapel at the school, and the dedication of a small swimming pool that had been given as a gift by the Union Church of Bogota.

Ten years have brought many happy changes and advances, and the Lord has graciously blessed. Other missionaries and workers have joined the staff in the persons of Mr. and Mrs. LaVerne Rutschman, Miss Alice Bachert, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Keiser, and Miss Vernelle Yoder.

During this time a small farm has been purchased, and a school, dining hall, two dormitories, a shop, a laundry, and a clinic built. A new chapel is in the process of construction. This property has been the headquarters of our mission activities, and the home for the children whose parents suffer with leprosy, and of other needy children. The work is carried on in cooperation with the American Leprosy Missions, Inc.

The home and school increased from 22 to 80 children. A large percentage of those who have been with us have made professions of faith in Christ as their Saviour. The school has been officially granted a license to operate by the Ministry of Education.

In the field of evangelism, the Lord has also blessed so that over 130 have followed Christ in baptism, and congregations have been organized in Anolaima, La Mesa, and in Cachipay. There is also a student congregation in El Recreo, the school-home. The Word has also been preached in San Javier, La Esperanza, La Florida, and San Joaquin. The average weekly attendance at the services is about 250 people.

The Mennonite Church Association was organized in 1952 and has been active in the direction of the national churches. The churches in Anolaima and La Mesa are on mission-owned property, while the Cachipay church has already bought their own building and lot.

Two fine young men have studied for the ministry and have been licensed to preach, and they are active in the work and direction of the churches. A third young man is preparing himself for Christian service. One of our first girls has now finished secondary school and is this year heading the school at Cachipay. She has a very fine testimony. Others are studying to be teachers.

There is yet much to be done. It is our prayer that God will send upon us here a great revival, and that He will call out a great number for His name and glory.

COLOMBIAN DICTATOR FALLS

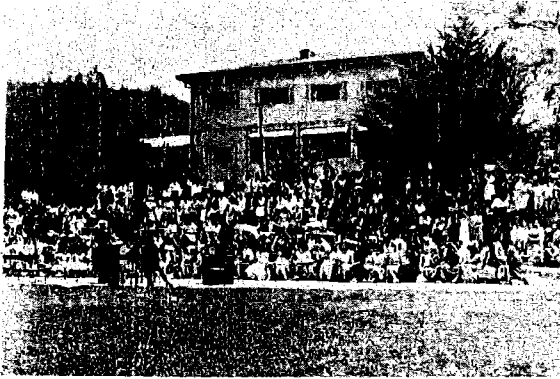
Governments in Latin America change with frequency---sometimes by peaceful means, and often by revolution. On May 10, the government of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in Colombia fell because of popular demand---the country had gone on a sit-down strike. The people could no longer stand the violence and corruption in high places, and by declaring a general strike, they forced the dictator to fall.

At the present there is a five-man military committee in charge of the government. They have appointed civilian ministers and have guaranteed free elections.

People in Colombia have been earnestly desiring liberty of press and speech, and

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MENNONITE MISSION OF COLOMBIA



Part of the group in attendance at the tenth anniversary celebration

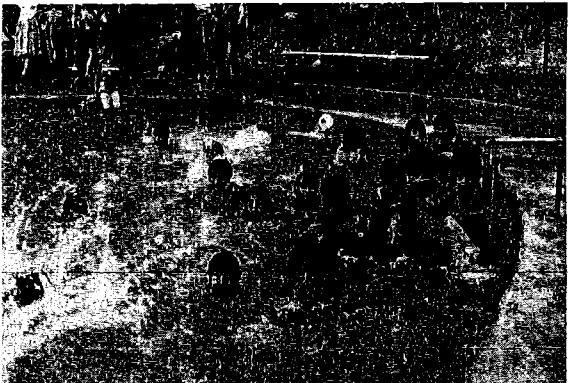


Bronze plaque in commemoration of the founding of the school in Cachipay, "Dedicated to the Glory of God."



Arthur Keiser laying the cornerstone of the chapel at the school

Lower left: Swimming pool given by the members of the English speaking Union Church of Bogota



Lower right: Miss Janet Soldner, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Stucky, Mrs. Mary Becker Valenciathe first four Mennonite missionaries in Colombia



many also desire liberty of religion. There is reason to believe that things will begin to ease up, and that genuine liberty will be given. Liberty of press and speech have already been granted, and we pray that God may allow religious liberty also to be forthcoming.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE WORKERS DEDICATE TIME TO MISSION

With the arrival of the summer months, it is always our joy to look forward to the coming of young people who have dedicated their time and service to the work of the Lord among us. This year we are happy to have Miss Tina Dueck of Manitoba and Mr. Dwayne Armstead of Minnesota. Tina has been giving her time to sewing for the school, and Dwayne has been busy with tree surgery in an attempt to save the many diseased citrus trees on the farm.

This brings to twenty the number of young people participating in this program in the seven years since it was started, and the blessings have been reciprocal, bringing new experiences and challenges in their lives and blessings to us.

SERVICES IN SAN JOAQUIN ORDERED CLOSED

On June 2 more stones than usual were thrown during the church service in San Joaquin, and one woman in attendance was struck in the face, causing an open wound.

A few days later the chief of police forbid the meetings to continue, saying that the fact that a person was injured was proof that we were disturbing the peace....this in spite of the fact that she was in attendance at the meeting and had made no resistance to the attack.

An appeal has been made to the governmental offices in Bogota to grant permission to resume the services, but as yet no answer has been received. In the meantime the Christian who has rented us the room for the gatherings was forced to sell the house, so that we will have difficulty in finding a place to meet again if permission is given.

Humanly speaking, it looks like defeat. The people say, "See! The powers that be have won out." We know, however, that the work is the Lord's, and that "surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee." Many in San Joaquin who before knew nothing about the Gospel, or who hated and feared the Protestants, have become sympathetic. The violence of the crowd was in contrast to the peacefulness of the evangelicals. Even though few attended the services because of fear, interest was awakened, and the seed was sown in many hearts....perhaps to bear fruit at some later time. Who knows but that among those who threw stones there was someone who may someday, like Paul, carry the Gospel courageously to others.

The first presentation of the Gospel in many small towns in Colombia has been met with just such violence as we have seen in San Joaquin. But in time, in some of these villages, people have lost their fear and hate as they have witnessed the testimony in the lives of those who follow Christ. In past years such opposition was experienced in Anolaima and La Mesa where we now have established churches....and where there is now almost no violent opposition. We pray that the people of San Joaquin may have another opportunity to meet freely to worship God.

EPIDEMICS.....AND MORE EPIDEMICS

We know an epidemic was on the way when it was discovered that a boy returning

from vacation had such a light case of chicken pox that he did not even realize what he had. Sure enough! Just two weeks later it began. The first day twelve boys were broken out. But that was just the beginning, and everyday there were a few more. To make matters more interesting, an epidemic of mumps began at the same time; so in one day alone there were 21 cases of chicken pox and 7 of mumps.

But all things are better with a bit of variety.....or are they? Anyway, for the sake of variety, there were a few cases of pink eye, too..... and some of influenza. Perhaps it all goes to make a nurse's life interesting. If it does, then our nurse, Janet Soldner, should have had a very interesting life for about two months. Most of it has passed now, but there are still a few cases of mumps to remind her that life in a children's home is never dull.

PULPIT EXCHANGE

Upon the invitation of the young people of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Pereira, Arthur Keiser brought a series of special messages to them in June, and reports a fine response both among the youth and the adults.

On July 8, Francisco Arboleda, pastor of the Pereira church, journeyed to Cachipay for a week of meetings in our churches. We are happy for the friendship and fellowship that exist among the mission groups in Colombia as expressed in this sharing in one another's work and program.

THIS AND THAT

We are anticipating the first Mennonite retreat to be held for the members of our churches and for others interested in the Gospel from the nearby communities. The school-farm offers an ideal location for such retreats, and other church and mission groups have taken advantage of these facilities. Three days will be spent in worship and Bible study, ending with the annual conference of the Mennonite churches in Colombia on July 27.

Jesus Antonio Sandoval, a young man of the Anolaima congregation, has expressed the leading of the Lord to preach the Gospel. In June he began his studies in a Bible Institute in Bogota in preparation for this service.

Welcome visitors in our midst were Dr. and Mrs. John Schmidt and family, en route to their work among the lepers in Paraguay. We were happy for such a delightful visit and for the privilege of hearing of their work. Dr. Schmidt contributed of his time to examine the children of leper parents who live with us in Cachipay.

We are looking forward to the arrival in early August of Mr. and Mrs. Francisco Lievano who will hold special meetings with the children and in the churches. Rev. Lievano is an enthusiastic young evangelist who gained the love of the children and the church members in a previous evangelistic campaign in this region three years ago.

Traveling from Barranquilla to Cachipay for the tenth anniversary celebration was Miss Alice Bachert. Since the beginning of the year she has been living in Barranquilla, but plans to return to this interior region soon to open a new work in a small village close by.

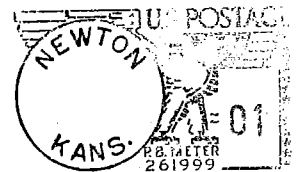
It happened again! The night of May 30th, as we rested after a day filled with blessings, robbers visited the school, taking two sewing machine heads. What they didn't know was that neither one was inworking condition; so the loss to us was very small.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

THANK HIM for the beautiful day we had for our tenth anniversary celebration.
for the greater civil liberty that Colombia has enjoyed since the dictator
has been over-thrown.
that the school in La Mesa has been able to continue to operate even though
it has still been impossible to secure a license.

PRAY that the new liberty may extend to greater religious freedom to preach
the Gospel in Colombia.
for Jesus Antonio Sandoval as he begins his studies in the Bible Institute
in Bogota.
for Armando Hernandez as he finishes his studies in the same institute.
that the Calvin Flickengers may secure visas to enter Colombia.
that the seed sown in San Joaquin may bear fruit.
for the children who are continuing their study in other schools in
preparation to serve in the work of the church.

Colombian News
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