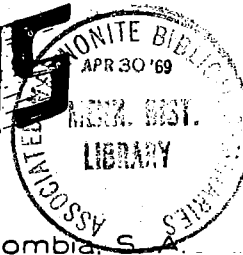


APRIL 1969

NUMBER FIFTY-THREE

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

### EVANGELISM-IN-DEPTH IN RETROSPECT

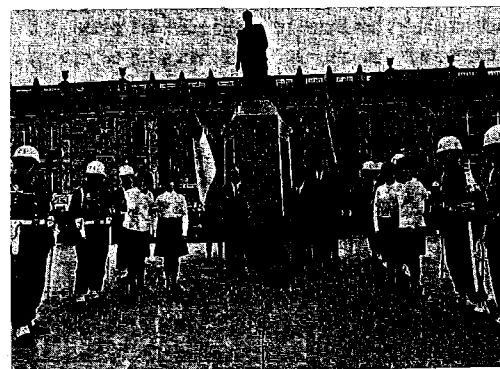


Bogota wasn't expecting it. Winding off the Avenida de Lima, the parade suddenly filled the width of Seventh Avenue, the capital's main street. Onward went the head of the parade, passing the statue of Colombian patriot Francisco Jose de Caldas the old plaza of Santander and the Cathedral of the Snows. Still more marchers entered the street. Each carried his Bible; many carried banners. The stirring strains of "Onward Christian Soldiers" filled the Cathedral of San Francisco, Bogota's oldest church dating from 1555. By the time the parade had reached its destination, the Plaza of Simon Bolivar overlooked by the National

Cathedral, the government buildings and the archbishop's palace, over 30,000 people had joined in Evangelism-in-Depth's climax to the year's activities throughout Colombia, and had written a new page in the history of Colombian Christianity.

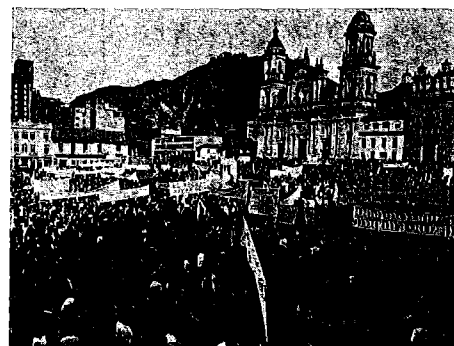
After a floral offering was placed at the statue of South America's great liberator, Simon Bolivar, Aristobulo Porras, the national president of Evangelism-in-Depth, presented greetings from the Colombian evangelical community to the president of the Republic, Carlos Lleras Restrepo. "We are very grateful," said Porras, "for the climate of religious liberty that reigns in Colombia, under which thousands of Christians in Colombia can be reunited." In his speech, Porras recounted the struggles and hardships which the Colombians had overcome to arrive at their present democratic structure. He urged the government to reconsider and revise the concordat and mission agreement which the country has with the Vatican. "The Concordat," he continued, "is an anti-democratic device which relegates more than half a million Colombian Protestants to second-class citizenship."

Overlooking the multitude which completely covered the large plaza and overflowed onto the steps of the National Cathedral, this distinguished church leader called upon the president of the nation to continue his economic transformation in Colombia, and pledged the coming of a profound spiritual change, the inner transformation of the Colombian people, through the gospel of Jesus Christ. At this point the spectators began shouting, "Viva Colombia!" "Viva the Gospel!" "Viva Jesus Christ in Colombia!"

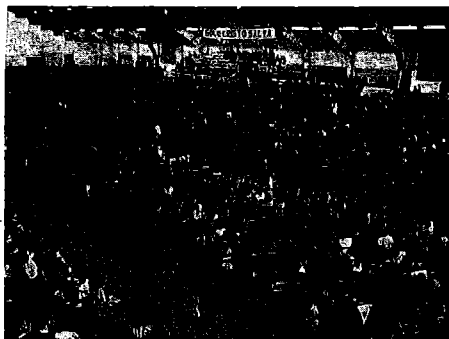


Press reaction was favorable. One television commentator said that, with the exception of the Pope's visit to the city in August, the Catholic Church had never been able to arouse such a multitude of people in a public display of faith.

But the parade had been the capstone of a great year-long effort. In thousands of villages strung up and down the three Andean ranges, in small hot fishing hamlets along the coast, in the vast Colombian plains and jungles, and in the cities, Colombian evangelicals had been striving toward a spiritual revolution.



Although statistics are still being compiled, evidence is strong that at least 90,000 people across the country received formal instruction on visitation and evangelism. Countless homes in the nationwide visitation program were visited. There were evangelistic campaigns in each church, regional campaigns, and finally in December the grand national campaign in Bogota at the exposition grounds of the city when over 1600 decisions were registered during the two weeks of services.



Evangelism-in-Depth's strategy is that entire nations can hear the gospel if every Christian prepares himself to bear witness and takes seriously his Lord's command to "Go...to every creature." It launched its program of training and mobilizing Christians to take the gospel to where the people are, and made special efforts to reach children, young people, university students, factory workers, prisoners, and the elite. Extensive use was made of all media of modern communication, including the press, radio, television and films, all under the direction of a national committee representing nearly all the churches and Christian organizations of the country.

The General Conference Mennonite Mission in Colombia had set aside 1968 for full participation in the campaign. Two workers, Janet Soldner and Jerry Kagele, gave their services full time on the national level. Both missionaries and national church leaders devoted attention to the program in their local area, besides serving on regional committees and developing special areas of witness, such as literacy work and ministry to prisoners, the sick and children.



Although it is too early to evaluate properly, it appears that 1968 was just a beginning. Evangelism-in-Depth did not end with the laying of the wreath at the statue of Simon Boliver. Now the new converts will be helped in their spiritual development by the churches. The opportunity for a continued evangelical witness in this country, the most Catholic in all Latin America, is wide open. Without looking back on the dark days of persecution during the last decade, but also without forgetting them, it appears that Colombia's church is gradually emerging as a respected exponent of a true Christian witness in its community.



#### DENTIST VISITS CHURCHES

During ten days Dr. and Mrs. C. C. Wyse of Wayland, Iowa, brought free dental care to close to 400 people from areas surrounding our Colombian Mennonite churches. Janet Soldner accompanied the dentist and his wife on a tour of the churches at Bogota, La Mesa, Cachipay, and Anolaima, where the dental clinic was set up in Sunday school rooms or in private homes. Not only church members, but also people from the surrounding community came to receive help given as a demonstration of the love of Christ.

#### GOODWILL CARAVANS OPEN NEW WORK

Two goodwill caravans have been conducted in communities near Anolaima in an effort to follow Christ's example of ministering to man's total need--physical and spiritual, and to lay the groundwork for a new church.

Taking advantage of Dr. Wyse's presence and his desire to serve the Colombians, a dental caravan was taken to Reventones and Corralejas in January. Besides the dentist, his wife, and Janet Soldner, both nurses, Jake Dyck, George Ediger, and several Anolaima Christians went along to diversify the ministry. While the dental clinic was set up in the government Hygiene Center, others gave free veterinary help outside, taught literacy classes, distributed literature, and witnessed to the Christian faith. Thus an opening wedge was made by the gospel into a fanatical, closed community.



On March 1 a group of eight returned for a second caravan, this time including the Anolaima doctor. While he and the nurse from the health center attended ninety-five patients, other workers ministered to the crowds lined up at the door waiting their turn. The pastors of the Cachipay and La Mesa churches aided the Anolaima group in sowing the seed for a new church in Reventones. A growing interest in the gospel was apparent, and some have invited the group to return to hold services in their homes.

#### HABEGGERS IN CALIFORNIA

After one year of furlough in which Howard and Marlene Habegger did extensive itineration throughout the churches, they recently moved to California. Howard has been granted an extended furlough for study and is working on his doctoral degree at the School of Theology at Claremont with secondary courses in Latin American Studies. He continues to travel for special speaking engagements representing the Commission on Overseas Mission. His week-end itineration will take him into many of the churches of the Pacific District Conference. The Habeggers are living in Upland, California, and are attending the First Mennonite Church of that city. Marlene is the director of the adult choir and the family participates in the various ministries and activities of the church. The children are attending the Upland elementary and junior high schools.





#### STEP FORWARD IN LEADERSHIP TRAINING

After more than a year of planning by missionaries and the Mesa Directiva, the governing body of the Colombian Mennonite churches, a new program was launched in January to train church leaders. At present it is referred to as the "Decentralized" Bible School."

Twelve students are enrolled from the three closely located churches of La Mesa, Cachipay, and Anolaima. The six men and six women are a fine representation

of older church members and young people, ranging in age from 17 to 55 years. All have shown a sincere desire to study the Word of God and to prepare for more effective service. During this first trimester two courses are being taught, "Orientation to Bible Studies" by Jacob Dyck, Cachipay pastor, and "The History and Composition of the New Testament" by Margaret Ediger of Anolaima.

This Bible School is designed to reach dedicated Christians who desire to prepare for service but who cannot--due to their work or families--take off several years for study in some centralized institution of biblical studies. Instead of sending the students away to study, the Bible School is brought to the local churches, thus reaching the students in their home setting where they can continue their work or secular studies and serve where possible in their home church.

One hour of instruction in each of the two courses is given weekly. During the rest of the week the students study on their own using texts and coordinated manuals to guide them. We hope to teach six accredited Bible School courses during 1969 and to complete a regular three-year program in five years.

The idea of the decentralized Bible School did not originate with us. During the last twenty years an increasing number of institutions have been offering extension courses in North America. The program seems to be peculiarly suited to Latin America. For example, the Presbyterians in Guatemala, who formerly had an average of 10-15 students in their seminary, decentralized their institution in 1962, and by 1966 had 143 students studying the same courses in various church centers. They offer the courses on the elementary, high school, and college levels. They are presently supplying the majority of the prepared manuals we are using to initiate our program. Other manuals have been prepared by the Mennonite Brethren in Cali, Colombia, who are also in the process of decentralizing their Bible School.

We trust that this new venture will prove to be a powerful arm of the church by providing better-trained leadership for our churches and by making available to all the possibility of preparing for Christian service.

#### REIFF-NEUENSCHWANDER

Bertha Mae Reiff returned to the United States in December, after teaching here two years, to become Mrs. Denver Neuenschwander. They were married in the Eden Mennonite Church in Schwenksville, Pennsylvania. They are currently living in Monroe, Indiana. Denver is employed with Liechty Bros. Plumbing and Heating firm and Bertha Mae plans to do some substitute teaching in addition to her homemaking responsibilities. Their many friends in both Colombia and the United States wish them God's blessing upon their lives as they continue to witness and serve where they live.



#### RECENT EVENTS IN COMMUNITY WORK

The recently acquired D7 bulldozer was officially dedicated on December 2, 1968. The service took place in the town's central plaza, on a Sunday morning when people from far and near came to do their weekly bargaining and shopping. The U.S. ambassador gave the program a boost by attending the dedication service, since the machine has been donated by the U.S. Agency for International Development.



The bulldozer has completed about 3½ miles of new road in the vicinity of Cachipay. The machine is being operated by young Colombians, trained by Pete Harder in a program that is creating interest and proving to be an asset to community development.



The U.S. Embassy is planning to make a colored film of the pilot project for use in improving U.S. - Colombian relationships. Due to the success of this venture, the community action groups are negotiating on their own, and have purchased another D7 dozer, which is now improving the road from Cachipay to the Colegio Americano, whose cobblestones have become famous over the years.

The Rural Cooperative of Cayunda was officially dedicated on January 11. There are now sixty members, and in the near future, the new building will be operating as a general store in addition to the present fruit receiving and packing program.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF BOGOTA

Bogota, capital of the Republic of Colombia, is one of the fastest growing cities of Latin America. In less than fifteen years its population has doubled and today counts 2,153,832 inhabitants. Along with its population growth one notes a rapid urbanization development characteristic of any twentieth-century metropolis trying to keep up with the times. This same fact is a parable of what Bogota needs in a spiritual sense. Shouldn't we be concerned with a growth that is basic and necessary now and that counts for eternity?

During the recent Evangelism-in-Depth campaign in Bogota about 1,700 persons made decisions for Christ. Yet, what is this compared to the over two million inhabitants of the city? It is true, there are about seventy preaching points and organized churches at present in Bogota. Among these is the Mennonite church located in the south part of the city. However, of the 470 city suburbs there are hundreds without a gospel testimony. There could well be 470 churches! This is the challenge of Bogota for Rev. Armando Hernandez and his wife, Eunice.

In January the Hernandezes moved to Bogota to contribute to the extension of the gospel in the "Athens of South America." Looking to the future they comment, "We are here to announce the message of God's power to change life and to bring light to those in spiritual darkness. In whatever way possible -- by radio, through literature, personal contact, etc. -- we are here to announce the good news. We pray that the Lord will guide us in this work for His honor and glory."



### PASTORAL CHANGES

On Sunday, January 19, Rev. Jaime Caro was installed as the second pastor of the Mennonite congregation in Ibagué. Glendon Klaassen, executive secretary of the Colombian Mennonite Church Association, officiated. Formerly pastor of the La Mesa church, Rev. Caro comes to Ibagué with considerable pastoral experience. During 1968 he and his wife, Disney, studied at the United Biblical Seminary of Medellín. Since its beginning in 1965 the Ibagué congregation has grown steadily. During the four years Rev. Armando Hernandez directed the work there. We praise God for His blessing and are optimistic concerning the future of the Ibagué church.



May will bring a change in two other churches, Cachipay and Anolaima. In 1967 Jacob and Helly Dyck, after graduating from the Mennonite seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay, came to serve the Cachipay congregation. After completing two years of service in Colombia, they are returning to their native country, Paraguay. They have accepted the call to a church in Itacurubi near Asunción. Luis and Mery Rodriguez will assume the pastoral responsibilities in Cachipay of which church both are members. Luis has served the church before and Mery is a teacher at the Cachipay school.

At the end of May, Anolaima will also say farewell to George and Margaret Ediger and their children, David and Judy. They came to Colombia in 1965 after a year of language study in Costa Rica. In 1966 they began their work in Anolaima, and since then have witnessed extraordinary growth in church membership. In 1968 a new temple and Sunday School were dedicated. Luis Lugo, a young man from La Mesa, will pastor the Anolaima church while the Edigers take a year of study at the seminary in Elkhart. Janet Soldner will also help in the Anolaima work, assisting mainly with the women's and children's work, as well as carrying on adult literacy work.



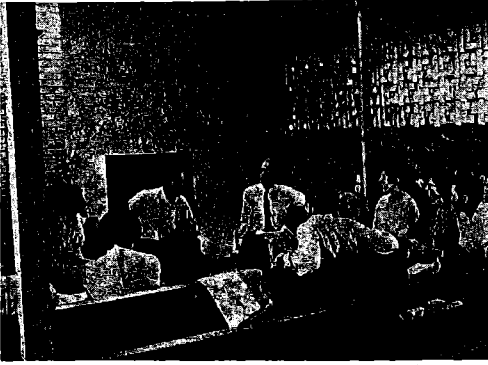
### SCHOOL BELLS RING

January marked the opening of another school year. Colegio Americano (Cachipay) has an enrollment of 65 students. The teachers, Fanny Gomez (directress), Mery Rodriguez, Julia Schutz, and Victor Vargas are looking forward to another interesting and exciting year. Julia rejoined the Cachipay staff after spending a year teaching in La Mesa and a year of study at the Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.

Colegio Menno in La Mesa became a four-room school this year, again under the direction of Vernelle Yoder who also teaches two grades. Three Colombian teachers, Ana Pedraza, Virginia Terreros, and Otilia Garzon, teach the remaining three grades.



Cachipay teachers



#### SHELLY'S SIXTH VISIT TO COLOMBIA

The mission staff was happy for the recent ten-day visit of the Executive Secretary for the Commission on Overseas Mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church, Rev. Andrew Shelly of Newton, Kansas. At an all-day meeting with all missionaries and voluntary service workers, he reminisced about his previous five visits to Colombia and shared some of his observations. The staff found it an inspiration and help to have with them this veteran on missionary affairs to share and counsel with them as they dis-

cussed various concerns of the work here. He also shared with the mission staff some of the changes in the constitution of the General Conference Mennonite Church and its implications.

During the following days he personally visited each worker at all six churches and spent considerable time in private discussion with the missionaries, voluntary service workers and national leaders. Three churches also had the privilege of having him preach in their pulpit. As workers here, we greatly value the concern and counsel of Rev. Shelly, and trust that his seventh visit will not be too far in the future!

#### VISITORS OF INTEREST

The LaVerne Rutschmans left Montevideo, Uruguay, in December by car, expecting to arrive in the U.S. sometime in spring. En route, they stopped in Cachipay the first week of February and spent time visiting the local churches and renewing old acquaintances. LaVerne and Harriet are among the pioneer missionaries to Colombia, having served here from 1947 to 1955. They, along with their five children, have courageously traversed the South American and Central American countries in a model A Ford.



Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Schmidt of North Newton, Kansas, were recent visitors in Colombia. The Schmidts were on their way home after spending several weeks in Paraguay where they had been serving at the Kilometer 81 leprosy center. Dr. and Mrs. Schmidt have many friends in Colombia and were perhaps further prompted to stop in Colombia by the fact that Dr. Schmidt is a member of the Commission on Overseas Mission. They were able to visit the Bogota church, the Cachipay church, the Anolaima area, and also to get a brief glimpse of the Cachipay Community Development program, before leaving for Mexico City, the last stop on their trip before arriving in Wichita.



Dr. and Mrs. Melvin Gingerich made a brief stop at each of the six Colombian Mennonite churches in January. Dr. Gingerich is an archivist of the Mennonite Church and is presently making a world tour, together with his wife, in the interest of various mission boards and Mennonite publications. As an archivist, he is mainly interested in the documents and records of Mennonite mission work throughout the world. He also seeks to find possible writers for historical articles and to offer his advice on record management to church leaders and secretaries.

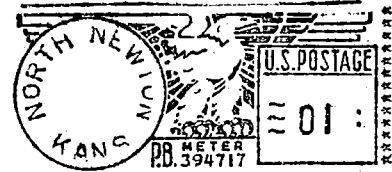




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#### PRAISE AND PRAYER

- PRAISE GOD for the ten new believers in Anolaima who were baptized on January 31, many of whom were won to the Lord through Evangelism-in-Depth on the local level.
- PRAISE GOD that the Gene Claassens have been secured for community work in Cachipay.
- PRAISE GOD for the acquisition of another bulldozer to help in road development in the Cachipay area.
- PRAISE GOD that jail services in La Mesa have been resumed.
- PRAISE GOD for Rachel Anita, born to Liz and Steve Pankratz on December 10, 1968.
- PRAISE GOD for Marcella Ann, born to Reitha and Glen Klaassen on January 24, 1969.
- PRAY for Rev. Armando Hernandez and his family as they begin a new work in Bogota, and enter into the responsibilities in the Extension Seminary being initiated in Bogota this spring.
- PRAY for the new leaders being trained in the community development program and the Decentralized Bible Institute.
- PRAY for the new pastors taking over the churches: Jaime Caro in Ibague, Luis Lugo in Anolaima, and Luis Rodriguez in Cachipay.
- PRAY for Janet Soldner and her father as they grieve the loss of their dear mother and wife.

#### CHANGES OF ADDRESS

George and Margaret Ediger - 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, Indiana 46514  
Howard and Marlene Habegger - 514 A North Campus Ave., Upland, California 91786  
Denver and Bertha Mae Neuenschwander - Route 1, Monroe, Indiana 46772  
Janet Soldner - Anolaima, Cund., Colombia, S. A.

