The Mennonite Colonies in Paraguay.
Origin and Development

Jan M. G. Kleinpenning
Ibero-Bibliographien 5


Die IBERO-BIBLIOGRAPHIEN können auch über die Homepage des IAI im PDF-Format heruntergeladen werden: http://www.iai.spk-berlin.de

El Instituto Ibero-Americano (IAI) en Berlín es una institución de orientación interdisciplinaria que se ocupa del intercambio científico y cultural con América Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal. Alberga un archivo de conocimiento del que forma parte la biblioteca especializada en el ámbito cultural iberoamericano más grande de Europa. Es, además, un lugar de producción científica, transmisión de conocimiento y desarrollo cultural. La especial combinación de centro de información, centro de investigación y centro cultural hacen del IAI una plataforma para la cooperación y un catalizador para el diálogo tanto intercultural como transcultural.

La serie IBERO-BIBLIOGRAPHIEN publica en intervalos periódicos bibliografías selectas de los fondos del Instituto Ibero-Americano sobre diferentes temas. Las signaturas de la biblioteca se encuentran al final de los asientos bibliográficos. Se puede solicitar los materiales “in situ” a través del préstamo interbibliotecario.

La serie IBERO-BIBLIOGRAPHIEN puede ser telecargada en el formato PDF de la página Web del Instituto Ibero-Americano: http://www.iai.spk-berlin.de

Redaktion dieser Ausgabe
Peter Altekrüger
Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut
Potsdamer Straße 37
10785 Berlin
Telefon: 030 – 266 45 2000
Telefax: 030 – 266 35 1550
http://www.iai.spk-berlin.de

1. Auflage 2009
© Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Potsdamer Straße 37, 10785 Berlin

ISBN 3-935656-32-7
Contents

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................. 4

2. Overview of Mennonite colonies in Paraguay ........................................................... 5
   2.1 The Mennonite colonies in the Chaco ................................................................. 5
   2.1.1 The foundation of Menno .............................................................................. 5
   2.1.2 The foundation of Fernheim .......................................................................... 7
   2.1.3 The situation in the early 1930s ................................................................. 8
   2.1.4 The foundation of Neuland .......................................................................... 10
   2.1.5 The development of the colonies ................................................................. 10
   2.2 The Mennonite colonies in eastern Paraguay ............................................. 17
       2.2.1 Friesland ...................................................................................................... 17
       2.2.2 Volendam .................................................................................................... 19
       2.2.3 Bergthal and Sommerfeld ............................................................................ 20

3. Bibliography of Mennonite colonies in Paraguay .................................................. 21
   3.1 About this bibliography ..................................................................................... 21
   3.2 General Works ................................................................................................. 22
   3.3 Migration to and from Canada, Canadian Mennonites .................................. 34
   3.4 Migrations from Russia; Russian Mennonites .............................................. 35
   3.5 Menno .................................................................................................................. 36
   3.6 Fernheim ............................................................................................................. 37
   3.7 Neuland .............................................................................................................. 38
   3.8 Two urban centres: Filadelfia, Loma Plata ................................................... 39
   3.9 Colonies in Eastern Paraguay .......................................................................... 39
       3.10 Friesland ............................................................................................................. 39
       3.11 Volendam ....................................................................................................... 40
       3.12 Sommerfeld and Bergthal .............................................................................. 40
       3.13 Mennonites in Asunción .............................................................................. 40
       3.14 Economy; Cooperatives .............................................................................. 41
       3.15 Arable farming, livestock production and forestry; ecology .................... 41
       3.16 Transport; the Trans-Chaco Road ............................................................... 42
       3.17 Education ........................................................................................................ 43
       3.18 Health and health care .................................................................................. 44
       3.19 Mennonites and the Chaco War .................................................................. 45
       3.20 Indians and Mennonites .............................................................................. 45
1. Introduction

During the period 1927-1948 German speaking Mennonites from Canada and Russia successfully established three colonies in the Paraguayan Chaco and four villages in Eastern Paraguay.¹ Their colonisation activities have drawn world-wide attention and have led to a surprisingly large number of publications, mainly written by Mennonites residing in Paraguay or elsewhere. Other researchers, however, have also made an important contribution. The large body of writings justified the composition of a special Bibliography. With over 700 titles this new bibliography is the largest one made up to now, but it is certainly still incomplete.

In compiling the Bibliography I made use of already existing general and specific bibliographies (see below), of bibliographical references made in important publications and of the catalogues of several important libraries: the Instituto Bíblico in Asunción, the Library and Archive in Filadelfia (Chaco), the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle in Kirchheimbolanden (Germany) and the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut in Berlin.

I am most grateful for the valuable help given by Gary Waltner, director of the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Peter Altekrüger, library director of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, and Henk Hack, who made many volumes of the Mennoblatt available to me. I am also grateful to Mr. R. R. Symonds (Bromley, UK.) for having corrected the English, and to the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut for their willingness to include the Bibliography in their series Ibero-Bibliographien.

Odijk, Netherlands, February 2008
Jan M. G. Kleinpenning

¹ During the period 1966-1983 more colonies were established in Eastern Paraguay by Mennonites from Canada, the United States and Mexico, including some larger ones like Rio Verde and Durango with 2,774 and 2,906 inhabitants, respectively, in the mid-1990s, and about ten smaller ones with no more than 100-200 inhabitants each. Very little has been written about these colonies and they were left out of account when I compiled this Bibliography. For more details see Ratzlaff, Gerhard: “Die konservativen amerikanischen Mennoniten in Paraguay”. Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kultur der Mennoniten in Paraguay, 1, November 2000, pp. 28-38, and Schröder, William/Hubert, Helmut T.: Mennonite Historical Atlas, pp. 151-152 (Winnipeg 1996).
2. Overview of Mennonite colonies in Paraguay

2.1 The Mennonite colonies in the Chaco

In the early 1920s Canadian and East European Mennonites showed a serious interest in settlement in the western part of the Paraguayan Chaco as then defined. The Paraguayan government played along actively with this interest, since it was worth something to it to have the Chaco further populated because of the growing conflict over ownership with Bolivia. Law 514 of 26 July 1921 gave far-reaching rights and privileges to Mennonites (and their descendants) who wished to settle in Paraguay as farmers, so that they could lead there the religious, cultural and economic life which they could not lead elsewhere or could do so only with difficulty. They were exempted from military service in both peace and war, were granted complete freedom of religion and worship, the right to establish and manage institutions for teaching their own language (an old German dialect) and their own religion, the freedom to make their own social provision for widows and orphans (Waisenamt) and the right to regulate their own mutual fire insurance etc. In addition, they were granted exemption for 10 years from import duties on all the goods needed for the establishment and development of the colonies, and from national and municipal taxes. They were granted a large measure of administrative autonomy and allowed their own structure of law and order. No restrictions were placed on the immigrants themselves: all Mennonites would receive the right to settle in Paraguay, irrespective of their age and physical or mental health. The rights and privileges also applied to Mennonites who arrived individually and then settled with a group of co-religionists in Paraguay.2

2.1.1 The foundation of Menno

The first Mennonite settlement was Menno colony (Fig. 1). It was established by a group of conservative Old Colony Mennonites from the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan in Canada.3 These immigrants, whose parents had migrated from Russia to Canada in the 1870s, felt that their religious freedoms were being threatened in Canada, because the Canadian government, as part of its assimilation policy, no longer wished to allow ethnic minorities to use their own language and give instruction in their own religion in schools. They had been looking for a new home for a number of years prior to their decision to come to Paraguay. Their choice ultimately fell on Paraguay, because this was the only country that was willing to offer the desired guarantees for their development.

Those who decided to emigrate sold their land in Canada in 1926 to the Intercontinental Company in Winnipeg (property of Samuel McRoberts and Robinette of New York). Part of the purchase sum was paid in cash, and part in the form of land in the Chaco, where McRoberts had bought 323,700 acres (131,001 ha) from the Carlos Casado Company in 1921. The colonists had to pay a price of five US$ per acre for this. In order to be able to operate flexibly, the Intercontinental Company established a subsidiary company in Paraguay: La Corporación Paraguaya, in which President Eligio Ayala (who was interested in colonisation of the Chaco) also had a considerable financial interest. On 29 October 1926 the Corporación was officially recognised as a colonisation enterprise and as the Mennonites’ representative. It supplied them with the necessary land in the Chaco (at a suitable profit) and had the task of preparing and developing the settlement.

The Canadian Mennonites acquired a total of three blocks of land with a combined area of 55,827 ha at a price of 689,602 US$. The colonists from Saskatchewan settled on the first block (7,403 ha), those from the “West Reserve” on the second (6,117 ha), and those from the “East Reserve” on the third (42,307 ha). These blocks formed part of a larger area acquired by the Corporación Paraguaya from Compañía Carlos Casado Ltda at a price of 1.25 US$ per acre and which was officially registered in the corporation’s name on 20 August 1928.

---

2 See Departamento (1933) for the full text of the Law.
3 The name “Old Colony” refers to the fact that these people stemmed from the oldest Mennonite colony – Chortitza – in Russia.
Fig. 1: Mennonite Colonies in Paraguay

A total of 279 families, comprising 1,765 persons, left Canada for the colony of Menno. The site of the settlement was extremely isolated. From Puerto Casado, about 300 kilometres north of Asunción on the Paraguay River, the immigrants had to board the narrow-gauge Casado railroad and travel 145 kilometres westward. From the terminal point of the railroad another 90 kilometres had to be travelled either by oxcart or on foot to the land which they had purchased.

While the group arrived in late December of 1926, the actual settlement could not be undertaken until late in 1927, because the land had not been surveyed and no wells had been dug. Many settlers did not get onto their own land until the April of 1928, some 16 months after arrival. For over a year they had to camp in tents or in other temporary shelters at Puerto Casado or at points along the way. 147 persons died in a typhoid epidemic and 355 were so disappointed that they decided to return to Canada rather than endure the difficulties they were certain to face in attempting to settle in the Chaco. The result was that approximately 1,400 of the immigrants decided to cast their lot with the more courageous and stay. They remained to prove that a foreign ethnic group could come to Paraguay and make a success of colonisation in the most unpromising of all its millions of unsettled hectares. In 1932 there were 255 farms in the Menno colony, each with an area of 80-200 ha.4

2.1.2 The foundation of Fernheim

The early members of the Fernheim immigration group were among those fortunate enough to leave Russia with official permission during the later 1920s. All of them had experienced the hardships and agony that accompanied the post-World War I years - first the violence and bloodshed of the Revolution, later the agonies of famine and, still later, the terrors of expropriation and flight. When they escaped Russia, they had no goal other than to get out of Russia into Germany, where they were temporarily housed in camps for from several months up to several years. The majority did not have the means to emigrate elsewhere.

Their co-religionists in the United States and Canada became interested in their welfare, as did the German government. Both made efforts to assist them in finding new places of settlement. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), which is the cooperating service agency of all American Mennonites, undertook to give direct assistance. Because this agency knew of the settlement of the Menno colony in Paraguay, it occurred to members of the committee to investigate immigration possibilities to that country for the recent escapees from Russia as well. All of the Fernheim group would have preferred to migrate to Canada or to the United States, where they had many co-religionists and blood relatives. This was not possible, however, and so other countries had to be sought out.

After some study of the matter, on January 25, 1930, the MCC recommended that the Fernheim group should settle in the Paraguayan Chaco. They knew that earlier Canadian Mennonites had migrated there. However, the MCC leaders did not know what terrible hardships and untold difficulties the Menno colony people had encountered. A second and major reason why the MCC recommended Paraguay was because it still guaranteed permanent and absolute religious freedom for the particular beliefs which Mennonites had always cherished. Other attractions were cheap land and the challenge of a pioneering experience in a new country. The possibility of settling in a closed community and living their lives in peace according to the dictates of their own conscience was not the least of the attractions to these revolution-weary former citizens of the Soviet Union.

Purchase of approximately 16,000 hectares of land was arranged at the unreasonably high price of 8 US$ an acre, 3 US$ an acre more than the Menno colonists had paid several years before. The sellers later reduced the price to 3 US$ an acre when they found that the settlers were totally unable to pay the original price. Ultimately, the MCC bought the land from the Corporación Paraguaya and sold the land to the Paraguayan immigrants for 0.40 US$ an acre (1 US$ a hectare).

The Corporación Paraguaya organised the Mennonites’ crossing, but the costs were borne by the German government, which paid out a total 773,000 Reichsmarken without claiming it back. On April 26, 1930, the first Fernheim immigrants reached their land. The total settlement, however, took two years to complete. The land had not been surveyed prior to their coming, but this survey was undertaken within several weeks of their arrival, thus enabling them to settle their home sites in a relatively short time. The original group in 1930 numbered about 1,500. Altogether, however, 383 families

---

(comprising 2,009 persons) came to the Chaco from Russia and Poland in 1930-1932. This figure takes into account births and deaths during the voyage. A small group of 57 persons came directly from Poland and another group came directly from eastern Siberia, but by far the majority arrived via Germany.

The Fernheim colonists, in comparison with their neighbours in the Menno colony, were much more progressive at the time of settlement, probably due to greater variety of contacts with the European urban-industrial culture. As a result, they found themselves severely frustrated in the isolated heart of the Chaco. There was great dissatisfaction during the early years of settlement with their seemingly hopeless economic and social situation in their isolated surroundings. This dissatisfaction manifested itself in a steady stream of emigrants who left the colony either for Asunción or for the neighbouring countries of Argentina and Brazil or possibly for Canada and Germany. In August 1937 a group of about 700 Mennonites (135 families) left for the area of Villa del Rosario in Eastern Paraguay, where they founded the colony of Friesland (40 km southeast of Villa del Rosario) (see Section 2.2). For the most part, however, the Fernheim group settled down.5

2.1.3 The situation in the early 1930s

Up to 1931, a total of 24 villages had been founded: 13 villages with Mennonites from Canada in the colony of Menno, 11 with Mennonites from eastern Europe in the colony of Fernheim. They were all given explicitly German names, as appears below.

Table 1: Villages within the Colonies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menno</th>
<th>Fernheim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halbstadt</td>
<td>Chortitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weidenfeld</td>
<td>Bergtal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnadendfeld</td>
<td>Osterwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldheim</td>
<td>Blumengart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schönental</td>
<td>Albergfeld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinland</td>
<td>Laubenheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strassberg</td>
<td>Schönwiese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lichtfeld</td>
<td>Kleefeld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schönbrunn</td>
<td>Auhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnadenheim</td>
<td>Rosenort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiesenfeld</td>
<td>Waldesruh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedensfeld</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedensruh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In early 1931, 228 families lived in the Canadian-German villages and 265 families in the Russian/Polish-German villages, giving a total of 493, with an average of 6 members, which means that the two colonies had a combined population of about 3,000 at 1 January. The settlements had a more or less closed character. Part of the land was situated near the houses; the remainder lay at some distance from the settlements. There was also land for communal use. Each colonist family had an average of about 40 ha for its own use. Thanks to the support of the Comité Central Mennonita and/or the German government and/or the possession of some capital of their own, all the families immediately had available the necessary equipment, such as harrows, ploughs, steel cables, cultivators etc. (Schallehn 1933: 332).

A favourable circumstance was that the soils in the central part of the Paraguayan Chaco were quite good for arable farming in various respects; they were fairly easy to work, permeable, well-ventilated, free of stones, flat as a pancake or gently undulating. The soil generally consisted of loamy sand, although there was sandy loam or true loam in some places. The true loams occurred where there were areas of forest. The forested areas were also suitable for arable farming after removal of the vegetation, which consisted of light timber species of a generally small diameter. Because each colonist received several hectares of open land, he could plough his land from the first day without having immediately to clear forest. The colonists later also started to clear “forest” soils. They generally did the clearing themselves; only limited use was made of the cheap labour of the Lengua Indians in the early years. The climate and soil were suitable not only for crop farming, but for the practice of cattle ranching (Unruh 1973: 105-106).

---

As manager of the agricultural research station on the properties of Carlos Casado, Kempski described the prospects for growing various crops. Water was present everywhere at a depth of 7-10 m; it was not fresh everywhere, but was suitable in all the villages for watering the cattle. Moreover, each village had fresh water wells and, where the fresh groundwater was insufficient, use was made of rainwater stored in barrels and reservoirs.

Kempski was impressed by the colonists’ industry and by what they had achieved in a short time. He was convinced that the colonists would prosper. In order to reduce production risks to a minimum, the farmers engaged in polyculture: they kept various kinds of livestock (pigs, cattle and poultry) and grew a variety of crops. For their own use they grew maize, millet, sweet potatoes, beans, chick peas, manioc and water melons. Wheat growing was considered possible in the future. Natural conditions were so good for this crop that Kempski considered it not improbable that the Chaco could become a serious competitor for North America. Sugar cane and groundnuts were grown for the market, but poor transport formed a serious bottleneck to marketing them.

In the early 1930s each village already had its own small school. The colony also had its own shops. Some small industries had already been established in the centre known as Filadelfia. Thus an oil press, a corn mill and a sawmill came into operation in 1932, but the capacity of the sawmill already proved to be too small by 1933. A cotton ginning plant was opened in 1936 (Kempski 1931: 324-326).

It is remarkable that Kempski did not take a negative view of what many regarded as the isolated location of the colonies. The rates of Casado’s railway were favourable, he argued, since they were 30 per cent lower than those charged on the Asunción-Encarnación route, and were also lower than those charged by various British lines in Argentina. The shipping rates were also favourable. The Compañía Carlos Casado provided transport from Puerto Casado to Asunción and Buenos Aires at reasonable prices in its own steamships. The Compañía also assisted the Mennonites in selling their produce advantageously. The previous owner of the estate - José Casado - wanted the colonists who had settled on his former property to become prosperous farmers. He wished them well. Many Mennonites therefore appreciated all that Vater Casado did for them, according to Kempski, who maintained close relations with the Casado enterprise (Kempski 1931: 326).

The more independent Quiring criticised the way in which Casado arranged the advantageous sale of the farm surpluses. In fact, the enterprise bought produce only occasionally in order to satisfy its own needs and did so at prices which left no profit for the farmers. The nearby industrial quebracho colonies also provided only a limited market. The only large market was in the capital, but that was situated 700 km away. Transport costs were high: the goods took 10-12 and sometimes as much as 15-18 days to reach the Casado railway. From that point transport was quicker, but only if the wagons were not needed for timber transport. If they were, waiting periods of a few days or even weeks were not uncommon. The costs of river transport were also high. The export of cotton was, in fact, profitable only when prices were high. Isolation was therefore certainly an adverse factor in the colonies’ existence (Quiring 1936: 118-120).

The farmers had to face other problems besides isolation. The climate was tolerable, but far from pleasant. A great part of the year was characterised by high to very high temperatures (up to above 40°C) and by long periods of drought. Some years were more than usually dry, such as 1930, with disastrous effect on man, beast and harvest. Illnesses also occurred. Certainly in the early years, when the farmers still had to clear the land and acclimatise themselves to the new environment, they led a very difficult pioneering existence.

Wilhelmy painted a very sombre picture. There was not one official body which provided the 4,000 colonists with a regular and reliable supply of indispensable provisions such as vegetables and fruit. Argentinean flour and dried meat formed the basic diet for several years, resulting in scurvy and degeneration of the bones and teeth. He therefore feared that the process of dissolution which had begun in 1935 and the departure of many families to Eastern Paraguay would prove to be unstoppable. He linked this with the conclusion that the suitability of the Chaco as a colonisation zone had its limits: these lay at the point where – due to the indifference of the state – the adverse natural conditions defeated the energy and endurance of man. Later developments would prove Wilhelmy wrong (Wilhelmy 1937: 1120-1123).
2.1.4 The foundation of Neuland

Neuland was the third cluster of villages founded by the Mennonites and the smallest of the three colonies. The members of the Neuland immigrant group came from Russia, but were already staying in Germany at the time of emigration because the German military government had resettled them from the Ukraine in 1943. The group comprised 641 families with 2,314 persons. Many of them had spent time in Russian concentration camps. Many had been forced to serve in the German army and others spent many months and even years in refugee camps.

The Neuland colonists would have preferred to go to Canada or the United States or possibly to some other country than Paraguay. But they could not enter Canada or the United States and there were no other countries acceptable to Mennonites or open to immigrants. In Paraguay the doors were still open. All of the privileges which had been guaranteed to the first settlers from Canada and extended to the later migrants from Russia were still promised to the Mennonite refugees of World War II. The international relief organisations were willing to help transport refugees from Europe to Latin America. The availability of free transportation across the ocean was a considerable factor for the Mennonite immigrants.

The first contingent of 299 refugees destined for the Chaco arrived safely at Puerto Casado on 1 March 1947, i.e. before the Paraguayan revolution interfered. About 1,200 refugees destined for Neuland were detained in Asunción and housed for several months in temporary quarters there. The Neuland colony was officially established on June 4, 1947. The colony centre – Neu Halbstadt – was about 50 km south of Filadelfia. 206 persons of the 2,314 who travelled to the Chaco stayed in Fernheim, 355 persons left for Canada, Argentina, Brazil or other countries and 1,713 settled in Neuland. An arrangement had been made by the MCC with the Fernheim colony to release 197,535 acres (79,942 ha) of its own land holdings for the new colony. The MCC could therefore provide the colony with 110,625 ha; each family was given 170 ha. After four years, 25 villages had been established; 22 of these had adequate water supplies, but 3 still lacked wells, which made them dependent on the other villages.

Of tremendous help to the Neuland immigrants were the international relief organisations, the MCC and the Fernheim and Menno colonists. Before the arrival of the new refugees, the older colonists had agreed as far as possible that each established family would shelter and maintain one refugee family until their new home could be built. This was additionally significant because in the Neuland colony 253 out of a total 641 family units were without husbands. They had been killed, captured, enslaved, or in some other way separated from their wives and families either in Russia during the agonies of the Soviet revolution or during the period of flight and the tragedies of World War II in Germany. In addition many of the old colonists provided transportation to the new colony homes and sent with them household goods and other gifts, which enabled the Neulanders to get a more rapid start. The Carlos Casado Company offered each of the immigrants one cow per family. These, however, were wild and untamed and often difficult to use as draft animals. A team of oxen was provided for each farm family.

Neuland had its share of disappointed settlers. The same factors that operated to attract the members of other colonies to Canada operated in Neuland. Between 1947 and 1958 a total of 255 families (867 persons) left Neuland. Most of these emigrated to Canada.

The Neuland Colony also endured disappointments and hardships (droughts, sandstorms, plagues, lack of water and isolation) but, as will appear in our final evaluation, it also became a successful colony. It was fortunate in having an outstanding leader throughout its years in the person of Oberschulze Peter Derksen.6

2.1.5 The development of the colonies

Together with the Japanese colonies and the German-Brazilian settlements in the Department of Itapúa, the Mennonite colonies in the Chaco are regarded as a prime example of successful foreign colonisation. Thus the Mennonites not only succeeded in surviving in the Chaco, but actually prospered there. In order to give an idea of their success, in the following section I will give a brief description of the situation in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

---

According to Table 2, a total of 5,783 Mennonite immigrants settled in the Chaco. The average number of children per family was between six and seven. It was not uncommon for families to have ten to twelve children, and a few families had as many as sixteen or eighteen children. The high birth rates and low death rates resulted in a steady natural increase: There were decreases due to emigration, mainly in Fernheim and Neuland and to some extent in Menno, but only in Neuland did this result in a decreasing number of inhabitants. In 1956 the three colonies had 8,866 inhabitants living on 1,216 farms; in 1965 the number had risen to 9,205.7

The Mennonites founded altogether 122 villages in the Chaco, 114 of which proved viable, while 8 had to be abandoned because of water shortage or other unfavourable conditions. With 68 villages in 1958, Menno was by far the largest colony. The Neuland Colony consisted of 25 villages and Fernheim of only 21. All the villages were small in size; in the late 1950s there was no village with over 40 farms and many even had fewer than 5, being hamlets rather than villages (Hack 1961: 71-73; Wilhelmy/Rohmeder 1963: 428).

### Table 2: Demographic development of the three Mennonite colonies up to 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Menno (1928)</th>
<th>Fernheim (1930)</th>
<th>Neuland (1947)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants in year of foundation</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>2,008</td>
<td>2,472</td>
<td>5,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants arrived later</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emigrants</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>1,431</td>
<td>3,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural increase</td>
<td>3,605</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>5,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants in 1956</td>
<td>4,333</td>
<td>2,524</td>
<td>2,009</td>
<td>8,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population gain or loss since foundation</td>
<td>3,030</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>3,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants in 1960</td>
<td>4,765</td>
<td>2,550</td>
<td>1,669</td>
<td>8,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants in 1965</td>
<td>5,140</td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>9,205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As agriculture was practised with increasing success, the Mennonites greatly expanded their landownership. The initial area of the land purchased from the Carlos Casado Company to establish the three colonies was 150,370 ha, but in about 1956 total landownership, in the form of cooperatives, had risen to 807,250 ha. Most of the land had been obtained with the financial help of the Mennonite Central Committee. In the late 1950s, 14,530 ha had been brought under cultivation: 6,571 ha in Menno, 3,383 ha in Fernheim and 4,576 ha in Neuland. (see also Tables 2, 3 and 4). The remainder had not yet been cleared or was in pasture land.8

The native trees were seldom usable for lumber. In 1958, the colony had 40,000 planted trees of all kinds. The average Menno farmer had a total of 69 planted trees: 34 paradiso or timber producing trees, 9 orange trees, and 25 other trees, such as banana, tangerine, oranges, grapefruit, guava and dates (Table 3; Fretz 1962: 85-88). Land use in the other two colonies was similar, as shown in Tables 4 and 5.

While arable farming could be practised quite easily, since there were soils which could be rapidly cleared and were fertile and almost completely flat, on the other hand, the farmers had to cope with wind erosion, droughts and plagues.

In the course of time, there was noticeable growth and improvement in the area of mechanisation. Although the size of the farm was small as a rule, there was an average of a light and heavy wagon per farm, three ploughs and three cultivators to every two farms, almost one planter per farm, and a harrow or a disc for one out of three farmers at the end of the 1950s. Mechanisation in 1958 also extended to modern implements or conveniences such as trucks, tractors, jeeps, radios and refrigerators (see Tables 2-4; Fretz 1962: 85-87).

Livestock production included cattle farming, horse breeding and keeping chickens and pigs. Tables 2-4 show the impressive growth of these sectors up to the end of the 1950s. Sheep farming remained relatively unimportant. The colonists started immediately with experiments to improve the natural grazing lands and found new grasses, including pasto Salinas, which were adapted to the

---

Chaco environment and enabled them to layout artificial pastures and to considerably raise the size and productivity of the cattle herd (Pidoux de Drachenberg 1975: 42-43; Plett Welk 1979: 97).

Table 3: Some basic data about the colony of Menno (1933-1958)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>1,535</td>
<td>1,851</td>
<td>2,312</td>
<td>2,940</td>
<td>3,852</td>
<td>4,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Crops planted (ha)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>3,090</td>
<td>1,416</td>
<td>2,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaffir</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>1,843</td>
<td>1,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnuts</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>1,550</td>
<td>2,647</td>
<td>3,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>2,074</td>
<td>3,765</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>14,446</td>
<td>22,078</td>
<td>25,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>1,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheeps</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>15,200</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>29,824</td>
<td>42,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Farm implements</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm wagons</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buggies</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ploughs</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>1,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>1,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrows</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshing machines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeeps and trucks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The marketing of produce was in the hands of the colony cooperative, which was founded in 1931 and included all the farmers. The cooperative was soon of crucial importance to the successful development of the colonies, because it did practically all of the buying and selling of producer and consumer goods for the colonists, took charge of the processing of agricultural products, was the colonies’ bank and offered financial help where necessary. As such it formed the heart of the economy (Plett Welk 1979: 95).

The cooperative processing industry included a wide variety of provisions: saw mills, flour mills, oil presses, cotton gins, dairy plants, slaughterhouses, carpentry shops, smithies, a small plant for extracting *palo santo* oil, tanneries and machines for collective use such as combines and linters (for separating the last cotton fibre from the seeds). These provisions had gradually come into existence and existed in all the three colonies in 1956, except that Neuland did not have a linter, carpentry and cotton gin, while Menno lacked a dairy plant. Unruh reported the absence of an installation to process castor beans. In addition, there were small private industries such as carpentry and cartwrights’ shops, smithies, plumber’s shops, tailor’s shops, tanneries, leather shops and brick factories. All these industries were mainly concentrated in the administrative centres of the colonies: Filadelfia, Loma Plata and Neu-Halbstadt.9 Most of the ample and excellent educational and health provisions were also located in these centres. The latter included 112 hospital beds in 1958 (Fretz 1962: 160).

---

9 Hack (1961: 131); Pidoux de Drachenberg (1975: 43); Plett Welk (1979: 96); Unruh (1973: 106).
Table 4: Some basic data about the colony of Fernheim (1933-1958)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>2,078</td>
<td>1,330</td>
<td>1,717</td>
<td>2,222</td>
<td>2,486</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crops planted (ha)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaffir</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>1,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trees (number)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>3,111</td>
<td>2,973</td>
<td>3,583</td>
<td>4,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangerines</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>1,395</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>1,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>2,040</td>
<td>5,519</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1,975</td>
<td>3,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapevines</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>1,141</td>
<td>1,432</td>
<td>2,635</td>
<td>2,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraíso</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>3,071</td>
<td>3,722</td>
<td>4,692</td>
<td>8,354</td>
<td>8,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic animals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>1,434</td>
<td>1,691</td>
<td>1,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>1,871</td>
<td>2,770</td>
<td>5,177</td>
<td>11,362</td>
<td>9,218</td>
<td>10,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>8,246</td>
<td>6,262</td>
<td>8,514</td>
<td>10,402</td>
<td>13,903</td>
<td>20,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farm implements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm wagons</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buggies</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plows</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrows</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trucks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Some basic data about the colony of Neuland (1948-1958)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>2,389</td>
<td>2,462</td>
<td>1,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crops planted (ha)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaffir</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1,066</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trees (number)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>6,333</td>
<td>11,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraiso</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>9,205</td>
<td>9,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic animals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1,715</td>
<td>1,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>7,437</td>
<td>8,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>11,361</td>
<td>13,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farm implements</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm wagons</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buggies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plows</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trucks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autos and Jeeps</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the beginning, marketing possibilities were severely hampered by the lack of good communications. There were no good roads or even no roads at all. The villages had to be connected by *picadas*. Goods from Asunción arrived by train at km 145 of the narrow-gauge line owned by the Carlos Casado Company. From that point (Fred Engen) they had to be transported to the colonies in ox or horse drawn carts. All citizens had to carry out one or more transports during the year and deliver the goods to the cooperative. Each journey took 1-2 weeks, during which time the drivers had to care for themselves at their own expense and had to cope with dust, heat, insects, inundated road sections etc. From the 1950s, the colonist could make use of machines to build relatively good earth roads and, gradually, a fairly good road network developed within and between the colonies. All roads were built without external help (Dürksen/Harder 1980: 55). The situation improved drastically when the Trans Chaco Road (*Ruta Transchaco*) was completed. This earth road from Asunción towards the Bolivian border was built with the assistance from the US Agency for International Development and reached Filadelfia, the urban centre of the Mennonite colonies, on 4 October 1961. On 10 September 1964 the section to the settlement of General Eugenio A. Garay, which lies 5 km from the Bolivian border, was inaugurated. The total distance from Asunción to the latter settlement is 776 km. Asphalting began in the 1970s and was completed as far as Filadelfia in the mid-1980s. In 1978 the Puente Remanso Castillo provided a road bridge linking the Trans Chaco Road to Eastern Paraguay.10

---

10 Nickson (1993: 223, 590-591); Ratzlaff (1999: 184), Unruh (1973: 106). For more details about the history and importance of the *Ruta Trans Chaco* see the publications of Ratzlaff.
Table 6: Gross income from the various products sold by the three Mennonite colonies in 1956, in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Menno</th>
<th>Fernheim</th>
<th>Neuland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton seed oil</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnuts</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnut oil</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palo santo extract</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With the opening of the Transchaco road the opportunities for marketing poultry and poultry products materialised and, since then, production of poultry has increased tremendously. This, in turn, required the production of more grain to feed the poultry, thus acreage in sorghum increased. Since the opening of the road, the Mennonite colonies have also supplied the growing market of Asunción with an increasing quantity of milk and dairy products which, before the opening, could only be sent by plane in small quantities to the capital. The marketing of all kinds of other products, such as cotton, the colonies’ main commercial crop, also became much cheaper.

The arrival of the Mennonites did not cause conflicts with the Indians. In the 1920s and 1930s land in the Central Chaco was abundant, as there were only a few hundred Indians in the colonisation area. Moreover, the Mennonites started to reclaim the land gradually and facilitated the further utilisation of the land reserves for hunting, gathering etc. Although the land had been legally bought, the Mennonites also paid a (symbolic) price to the Indians, in order to convince them that the white colonists had really become the owners. Another important reason why problems did not arise was that the Indians became better off, since they found work in the newly established colonies. Finally, it should be mentioned that the Indians of the area lived communally, while the Mennonites were pacifists by conviction.

From the arrival of the Mennonites a growing number of Indians migrated to the central Chaco in order to find work and to receive various kinds of support in the Mennonite colonies which, because of better communications and considerable foreign aid, saw remarkable progress, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. When the Mennonites started to settle, there were only a few hundred Indians in their colonisation area and these did not cause tensions. However, as the number of Indians grew, by migration and natural growth, it became increasingly urgent to do something in order to avoid future problems. This was all the more necessary as the area of uncultivated land decreased and it proved to be impossible for the Mennonites to provide sufficient seasonal and full-time jobs in the farming sector, because mechanisation considerably reduced the demand for seasonal labour. The Indians – on the contrary – expected that the Mennonites would provide work. Missionary activities, including education and health care, had already started in 1935, but land for the first Indian village was not bought until 1950. In 1955, a programme of systematic settlement was started, which was intensified in the 1960s, when social unrest threatened to increase. The purpose of the programme was to gradually settle some of the Indians and give them the same livelihood as the Mennonites. Four indigenous colonies were organized during the period 1955-1963: Yalve Sanga I (1955), Yalve Sanga II (1961), La Esperanza (1962) and Campo Largo (1963). In the mid-1960s, the Mennonites planned to found more colonies.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\) In later years, the ASCIM (Asociación de Servicios de Cooperación Indígena-Mennonita), which was established in 1976 to assist the social and economic development of the Chaco Indians, took charge of the settlement programme. This organisation succeeded in obtaining large foreign funds for the purchase of land (Nickson 1993: 42). For more information about the relations between Mennonites and Indians and the “Indian development policy” of the former see Hack (1976; 1976-1980 and 1983).
The Indians settled in the colonies formed part of the working population of the Mennonite area. Apart from land, they received farm equipment and food during the initial phase and educational and health facilities were also provided. The land was the property of the Mennonite organisation, but was to be ceded to the Indians as soon as an appropriate and officially acceptable model of organisation had been developed.\(^\text{12}\)

In trying to evaluate the Mennonite colonisation experiment in the Chaco, it must be noted that although geographical and economic conditions of the Chaco were adverse in the extreme, the sum total of other factors was strong enough to offset these negative factors and assure successful agriculture and cattle raising, practised on small and medium-sized farms under semiarid conditions and without the help of irrigation. The unifying role of blood relationship, origin and religion, in particular, was very important. Large numbers of Mennonite colonists came from the same country and region. Furthermore, they often grew up in the same community, belonged to the same church, and were often close blood relatives to many of their colony neighbours. Another favourable factor was that the Mennonites received considerable external support from Canada, the United States Agency for International Development and the Comité Central Mennonita, based in Akron, Pennsylvania. External help included a loan from the USA and Canada of 76,000 US$ in 1953 for further industrial development in Fernheim Colony (more specifically local cotton processing), a loan of 1 million US$ from the US Agency for International Development in 1957, and financial support from Germany and the Netherlands to develop social services.\(^\text{13}\) Other important factors included exemptions from State taxes; the availability of cheap Lengua and Nivaklélé labour for farm and all kinds of other operations; efficiently organised purchasing and selling through a cooperative system, and the opening up of the area with the construction of the Trans-Chaco route.

### Table 7: Data showing the development of the three Mennonite colonies (1956)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Menno</th>
<th>Fernheim</th>
<th>Neuland</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villages founded until 1956</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>4,065</td>
<td>2,395</td>
<td>1,979</td>
<td>8,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>1,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total area (ha), of which:</td>
<td>331,875</td>
<td>249,375</td>
<td>226,000</td>
<td>807,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenced arable land</td>
<td>6,571</td>
<td>3,383</td>
<td>4,576</td>
<td>14,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area under crops</td>
<td>4,474</td>
<td>3,043</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>10,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastures</td>
<td>132,000</td>
<td>82,000</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>258,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining (Forest) area</td>
<td>193,304</td>
<td>163,992</td>
<td>177,424</td>
<td>534,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Farm Size (ha)</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions to local export value from:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arable farming (%)</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock production (%)</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry (%)</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Despite the success of the Mennonites, their example was not followed by other groups. Up to the present, the Mennonites are still the only people to have founded successful permanent large-scale agricultural communities in the Chaco. On the one hand, this is surprising, since success of a certain group nearly always challenges other groups to follow their example, but on the other hand, it is also quite understandable, since the factors listed above which were responsible for the success are to a large degree specific to the Mennonites. Consequently, the Paraguayan Chaco has remained a thinly populated area. The major reasons why further agricultural colonisation failed to take place are rather obvious: living conditions in the Chaco are far from ideal, Paraguay’s population was rather small,

\(^{13}\) Nathan (1970: 32); Pidoux de Drachenberg (1975: 44); Quiring (1954: 304).
opportunities for expanding the agricultural frontier were much better in Eastern Paraguay, and the government lacked capital and manpower to organise large scale programmes of agricultural colonisation under marginal conditions.

2.2 The Mennonite colonies in eastern Paraguay

Eastern Paraguay offered several advantages compared to the Chaco. In the Eastern Region rainfall is higher, the heat is less, there are no sandstorms in wintertime, and the soils are generally better. In other words, conditions for growing crops, vegetables and fruit trees, and for livestock production are more favourable. There is also much more high quality forest, and communications in general are better. For these and other reasons some Mennonites preferred to settle in the Eastern Region, directly or after having tried to build up an existence in the Chaco. Nevertheless, the Mennonite colonies founded in Eastern Paraguay were, generally speaking, less successful than the Chaco settlements in the early 1960s. One important reason was the lack of good and continuous leadership, while another was the difficulty of finding an attractive cash crop, since conditions for cotton growing were not invariably good. Altogether, four colonies were founded in Eastern Paraguay up to the 1950s: Friesland, Vollen-dam, Berghthal and Sommerfeld. They will be dealt with in the following sections.

2.2.1 Friesland

Soon after the foundation of Fernheim, small numbers of Mennonites left the Chaco to settle in Eastern Paraguay. They were sceptical about the possibilities of successful colonisation in the Chaco and felt unhappy with the rigidly organised Gemeinschaftswesen. They settled near Concepción and the port of Rosario, while others bought some land in the colony of General Aquino (also named Chamorra) and tried to make a living among other German-speaking colonists and Paraguayans. Some Mennonites preferred to move to Asunción. When cotton production in the Chaco increased considerably in 1933 and cotton harvests were good in 1934 emigration decreased and some Mennonites even returned to the Chaco. In 1936, however, locusts and droughts were responsible for bad harvests, including that of cotton, and in nearly all villages there was a shortage of grazing land. As a result, emigration to Eastern Paraguay started again. Meanwhile, the Mennonite group which had settled down near Concepción had become so numerous that it became possible to establish a closed colony – Neuhoffnung – on state land at kilometre post 37 of the railway from Concepción to Horqueta in 1936. Meanwhile, the Mennonites in Fernheim had become increasingly aware of the fact that, for the further development of their colony, more land would be necessary. The number of farms in the various villages had to be reduced to about the half in order to make more farm and grazing land available to the remaining holdings. When it was decided in 1937 to carry out the inevitable Dorfauflockerung, a large group of Mennonites did not wait for resettlement elsewhere in the Chaco, but preferred to move to Eastern Paraguay. Their decision was made in the face of direct discouragement from the Mennonite Central Committee in North America, which refused to give any financial help to any settlers leaving the Chaco. After several investigatory expeditions the group found a property of 6,913 ha of land (including forests and camps) about 65 km east of Rosario, which was bought in June 1937 from the owners, Wilhelm and Arthur Strauch, who lived in Montevideo. In August 1937, 135 families, with 754 persons, left the Chaco, dissatisfied with the prospects of success there after seven years of bitter struggle. Two boats brought them from Puerto Casado to the port of Rosario, from where they travelled overland to the newly acquired land to found the colony of Friesland in September 1937. The exodus was lead by Johann Funk and Isaak Federau. The group founded 9 villages with 146 farms: Corniesheim, Grossweide, Zentral, Grünfeld, Rückenau, Landskrone, Waldheim, Rosenberg and Blumenau. They also immediately built various principal roads of 12-16 m in width and secondary roads to give access to the land. The farm houses were situated on the roads, along which many orange trees were planted. The colonists also built two schools, one in Grossweide and one in Zentral, which were inaugurated in July 1938. A secondary school was opened in 1942. Some farmers were opposed to compulsory membership in the colony cooperative in Fernheim, but later discovered that a cooperative was essential and they formed one in 1941 after having tried vainly for a number of years to buy and sell on an individual basis. Some German families who lived scattered in the area of Rosario, decided to join the settlers in Friesland.

14 Friesland is the Dutch province where Menno Simons lived and preached and, as such, the cradle of the Mennonites.
Table 8: Data showing the development of the Mennonite colony of Friesland during the period 1938-1958

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>1,072</td>
<td>955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Crops planted (ha)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaffir</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>116.6</td>
<td>174.0</td>
<td>122.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>161.2</td>
<td>194.3</td>
<td>313.6</td>
<td>479.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trees (number)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>2,551</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>3,179</td>
<td>2,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapevines</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Domestic Animals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>1,629</td>
<td>3,257</td>
<td>3,871</td>
<td>4,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>2,227</td>
<td>5,227</td>
<td>5,308</td>
<td>10,080</td>
<td>5,863</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Farm implements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1938</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm wagons</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buggies</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plows</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeders</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrows</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trucks and Jeeps</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source.** Fretz (1962: 59-61).

By 1938, about 1,400 ha had already been cleared and brought under cultivation, and all the *lotes* had been fenced. In 1946 an additional area of 753 ha was bought and in 1952 133 ha were acquired, as a result of which the original area of 6,913 ha had increased to 7,799 ha in the latter year. It included 3,010 ha of forest. By about 1954 the colony numbered 1,046 persons (203 families) and 195 farms.

Conditions for cotton growing were less favourable than had been hoped for, but many other products, like maize, manioc, kaffir, sugar cane, sweet potatoes, fruits and vegetables did well. In 1952 the colony had 566 horses, 3,600 head of cattle and 478 pigs. Grazing land was limited and more of it was needed, but all the land surrounding the colony was already privately owned and not for sale. One of the main economic problems at that time was that an attractive cash crop had not been found. In other words, the deep conviction of the Fernheimers who moved to Friesland that their greater proximity to Asuncion as a market for their products would give them a considerable advantage over their former isolated location in the Chaco had not been realised. Since it was impossible to live from the sale of

---

15 A detail worth noting is that nearly all the colonists in the Alto Paraguay area had clung to the primitive burning of the forest and the use of hoe and planting stick. The Mennonite colonists who had come from the Chaco, however, used to remove the tree trunks and to use ploughs – the completion of clearing with fire. When they came to Eastern Paraguay they avoided clearing high forest lands, if possible, and preferred to buy land already partially cleared from Paraguayan colonists; they removed the remaining obstacles, levelled and started to plough it (Wilhelmy 1949b: 54).
sawn timber, livestock, eggs and butter, about 100 of the 203 families tried to obtain an additional income from carrying out transports between places like Friesland, General Aquino, Itacurubi, Primavera and the port of Rosario. About one third of these families were full-time on the move. Paraguayan ox-cart drivers competed with them, which made clear that transport work was not a real solution. Because of this less favourable situation, 24 persons had returned to Fernheim, 39 to Canada, 66 to Brazil and 24 to Argentina up to 1954.

There was no reason for pessimism, however. Blöcker noted that the colony was doing well and Fretz noted that, after a first fifteen years of difficult struggle, the colony was fortunate to secure an outstandingly capable administrator and, at the same time, substantial loans with which to launch significant economic programmes. In the early 1960s, there was a general optimism among colony leaders and members. There was evidence of numerical and economic growth and some evidence that suggested a promising future.\(^{16}\)

### 2.2.2 Volendam

One of the more recent and the largest immigrant groups ever to settle in the Alto Paraguay region is the colony of Volendam. About 1,800 refugee immigrants arrived in Paraguay in 1947 and 1948 to make up this colony. They came from the same place as the settlers of Neuland, endured the same experience in concentration and refugee camps, and even more came over on the same ships. The name Volendam (a fishing town in the Netherlands) was taken from the name of one of the ships which brought many of the settlers across the Atlantic.

The Mennonite Central Committee provided a great deal of help to the settlers at Volendam. From the time of the arrival of the refugees from Russia in West Germany in 1943, the Committee began to work with the prospective colonists. The Volendam people preferred to go to Canada, where many of their relatives had previously gone, but the doors of Canada and United States were closed. The Volendam colonists came to Paraguay because it offered a way of escape from their plight as temporary refugees in Germany. Many of them had been quartered in Berlin, where they were in constant danger of being seized by the Russians and forcibly returned to Russia. The Paraguayan Government continued to guarantee the same privileges to the 1947 and 1948 immigrants as it had to the first Mennonites who had come in 1926 and 1930.

The Mennonite Central Committee had purchased 9,353 ha of land 13 km north of Rosario.\(^ {17}\) The land extended from the river in an eastward direction, thus affording the colony its own river port, a small boat stop known as Mbopicuá. The land was surveyed and laid out in 12 villages. Tiefenbrunn was the administrative centre of the colony and became the site of schools, the hospital, some workshops etc. The villages consisted of farms of 40, 30 and 15 ha.

The first Volendammers (295 families with 1,135 persons) arrived on March 2, 1947 and moved onto the land on 9 July. The Volendam colony was officially established on July 1, 1947 and, after the arrival of other groups, numbered 1,825 German Mennonites. In 1952 the colony comprised 15 villages with 425 families and 1,767 persons.

Because of its favourable location on the river and its proximity to Asunción, the Volendam colony seemed to have the greatest promise of success, yet the fact is that it had the most disappointing record of all seven Mennonite colonies. One of the serious handicaps has been its lack of strong and continuous leadership by capable men; again and again, its more able leaders migrated to Canada, as did also many of its stronger families. Between 1947 and 1958, 223 families consisting of 1,281 persons left Volendam, so that by January 1, 1961 the colony’s population was down to 800. Some villages were entirely abandoned. Approximately 750 of the exits were to Canada, some moved to Brazil and a few to Argentina, some returned to Germany and others settled in other Mennonite colonies in Paraguay or moved to Asunción. Invitations from relatives in Canada, glowing accounts of the situation in that country and extreme hardships in Paraguay made it difficult for those remaining to settle down to the serious business of developing permanent homes, clearing lands etc. Quiring adds that it was also difficult to find an attractive cash crop. The colony land, however, comprised much forest land and additional income was therefore made from timber cutting and timber transport, the selling of firewood,

---


17 This area is mentioned by Fretz but, according to Quiring (1954: 302), about 17,000 ha were bought and, somewhat later, another 13,000 ha.
most of which was shipped by boat to Asunción, and the selling of fence poles, which were exported to Uruguay.

From 1960, the colony was receiving outside assistance of major significance. An organisation of North American Mennonite businessmen known as MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) had interested itself in providing administrative advice, financial support, and expert personnel in an effort to reorganise the colony and stabilise it economically.18

Table 9: Data showing the development of the colony of Volendam (1948-1958)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td>1,683</td>
<td>1,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crops planted (ha)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>187.8</td>
<td>282.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaffir</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>271.6</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>6,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade trees</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>1,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic animals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>2,779</td>
<td>6,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>1,697</td>
<td>8,538</td>
<td>7,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm implements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm wagons</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buggies</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plows</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrows</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fretz (1962: 64, 65).

2.2.3 Bergthal and Sommerfeld

Although Bergthal and Sommerfeld were separate colonies, the members making up the two groups came to Paraguay on the same ship and planned their immigration and colonisation ventures cooperatively. Bergthal and Sommerfeld were the most recent of the seven Mennonite colonies established in Paraguay up to 1960s. According to Fretz, they constituted the most socially and religiously conservative element of the seven Mennonite colonies.

In contrast to the colonies Fernheim, Neuland, Friesland and Volendam, the Bergthal and Sommerfeld colonists did not come to Paraguay as penniless refugees. Like the migrants who came 20 years earlier, they deliberately chose to come to Paraguay. When the Mennonite colonists left Canada in 1926 to settle in Paraguay, where they felt their religious freedom would be unmolested, some of their co-religionists decided to remain in Canada. By 1948, however, they also had come to the conclusion that their way of life was being threatened by encroaching secularism and so decided to migrate. Rather than settling in the Chaco, they decided to locate in Eastern Paraguay, where natural conditions looked more favourable.

The Bergthaler and Sommerfelder, like the Menno colonists, were among the prosperous Canadian prairie farmers. They had sold their farms at peak post-war prices and therefore had substantial sums in the bank. They were also acquainted with mechanised farming and aspects of scientific agriculture. Thirteen tractors and a large bulldozer were among the first pieces of equipment brought along on the initial migratory trip. The social solidarity of the groups was reflected in a fund that was raised to assist the poorer members.

In 1946 delegates from Canada purchased a tract of land of 108,640 acres (43,967 ha). In 1948, 1,644 Mennonites sailed to Paraguay; 140 came from the province of Saskatchewan and the remaining 1504 from South Manitoba. Approximately 500 of those making the trip decided to return to Canada, before they had become established. Those who decided to stay settled in two colonies: Sommerfeld and Bergthal.

**Table 10: Bergthal and Sommerfeld demographic data (1950-1958)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bergthal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farms</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sommerfeld</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Sommerfeld** is located approximately 290 km directly east of Asunción, in the Department of Caaguazú, near the newly built Highway 1 stretching from Asunción east to Puerto Stroessner (now Ciudad del Este) on the Paraná River. **Bergthal** lies some 16 km farther north. The Sommerfeld colony comprised 9 villages, with 626 inhabitants in 1950, and 34,000 ha of land. The Bergthal colony was founded on about 11,000 ha of land and numbered 7 villages with 574 inhabitants in 1950. The first colonists arrived on 14 January 1949. The administrative centre of the colony is Chortitz.

Because most of the land acquired consisted of forest, the colonists had to clear the land first. The colonists started to grow the traditional Paraguayan crops and planted quite a lot of fruit trees. In 1954 about 300 ha had been cleared in each of the two colonies. Economically, the colonies were dependent for cash on the sale of wood, some vegetables, dairy, poultry and pork products. In the early 1960s, of the seven colonies, these two were the only ones as yet with a good farm-to-market road. The farms were initially quite small, but were rapidly being enlarged to make way for a greater degree of mechanised farming. In 1958 Bergthal had 5 trucks and 12 tractors while Sommerfeld claimed to have 47 tractors, a bulldozer, 13 trucks, and a jeep. On the whole, the colonists seemed content. Up to 1954 about 162 persons had left the Bergthal colony and returned to Canada; about 441 persons had left Sommerfeld. There had been practically no additions to either colony from outside. But because birth rates were impressively high and the death rate low, the colonies rapidly increased in population (see Table 10).

### 3. Bibliography of Mennonite colonies in Paraguay

#### 3.1 About this bibliography

The following Bibliography provides an overview of the publications dealing with the Mennonites’ colonisation activities, with the social and economic development of their colonies after these had been established and with the missionary activities of the Mennonites among the Indian population of the Central Chaco. Publications of a biographical nature and those dealing with the religious ideas of the Mennonites have not been included in this Bibliography.

---

19 Nickson reports that, in November 1989, a long-standing dispute with the Mybá-Guarani, whose ancestral lands had been appropriated by the colony, was settled in favour of the Indians when the government decreed the expropriation of 1,456 hectares of land belonging to the Sommerfeld Komitee (Nickson 1993: 545).

The Bibliography has been divided into several sections, each dealing with specific aspects of the Mennonite colonies. Within each section, publications have been listed in alphabetical and chronological order. Anonymous publications have been included, using the first word of the title.

Besides numerous books, the Bibliography also includes a large number of articles published in journals and yearbooks. The most important serials with their full titles and their local of publication are listed below. For practical reasons only the main titles of these journals have been mentioned in the Bibliography:

- *Der Bote*, Ein mennonitisches Familienblatt. Rostern, Saskatchewan.
- *Mennoblatt*, Zeitschrift für Gemeinde und Kolonie. Filadelfia (SBB 4° Co4710; IAI 4° Par ua 1 und Z/229).
- *The Mennonite*, Newton, Kansas.

Earlier already several other bibliographies on the Mennonites in Latin America have been composed. These are listed below. Although this Bibliography includes much of the information to be found in the earlier bibliographies, researchers are recommended to consult these publications as well, particularly those of Smith and Minnich *et al.*, which contain useful annotations.


Most bibliographic description has the information at the end where you may find the book or the article. Four German libraries where checked for their holdings.

IAI Ibero-American Institute Berlin (http://www.iaiacat.de/)

SBB State Library Berlin (http://stabikat.de/)

DNB German National Library Frankfurt/Main and Leipzig (https://portal.d-nb.de/)

SUB State and University Library Göttingen (http://opac.sub.uni-goettingen.de/)

In the other cases please consult their KVK (http://www.ubka.uni-karlsruhe.de/kvk.html) or the WorldCat (http://www.worldcat.org/).

3.2 General Works


---

21 For this serial see Rahn, Peter: “The Cradle of the Mennoblatt”. *Christian Living, A Magazine for Home and Community*, 6, 1959, July, p. 34.


MINISTERIO de Economia: *Las Colonias Menonitas en el Chaco Paraguayo*. Asunción: Imprenta Nacional. 1934. 64 pp. (Text also in German) (IAI Par gn 22, ...).


PLETT WELK, Rudolf: “Breve reseña de una visita a las colonias Mennonitas en el Chaco Paraguayo” (“Brief summary of a visit to the Mennonite colonies in the Paraguayan Chaco”). *Vida Económica*, Asunción, 1956, 12, April (IAI).

POSTMA, Johann S.: “Paraguay aus der Holzschuhperspektive”. *Bibel und Pfleg*, 1, 1954, 2, 15 February, pp. 3-4; 9, 1 June, pp. 3-5; 14, 16 August, pp. 5-6.


Siemens, Nikolai: “Mennonitische Streusiedlungen im Chaco”. Mennonblatt, 12, 1941, 3/4. March-April, p. 7; 5, May, p. 3; 6, June, p. 4 (IAI 4°Par ua 1).


WHITE, John W.: “La gran inmigración de los Mennonitas al Paraguay”. Boletín de la Unión Panamericana, 61, 1927, 6, pp. 559-569 (IAI 8° III bi 15).


WILLIAMS, Howard: Let my People go: A peace play in three acts, using three episodes based upon historical incidents in the history of the oldest group of people to object to war for religious reasons, the people called Mennonites. North Newton, Kan.: Bethel College. 1936. 49 pp.


YODER, Sanford Calvin: “To and Fro in South America”. Christian Monitor, April 1941 to May 1942 (Weekly, 15 entries).


YODER, Sanford Calvin: “Mennonites in Latin America”. The Mennonite 59, 1944, 1, January, pp. 5-6.

3.3 Migration to and from Canada; Canadian Mennonites

AUSWANDERUNG: “Neue Auswanderung aus Manitoba nach Paraguay”. Der Mennonit, 1, 1948, 1/2, January/February, p. 7 (DNB DZb 4433).


3.4 Migrations from Russia; Russian Mennonites

AUFSCHWUNG: “Aufschwung der russlanddeutschen Mennoniten in Paraguay”. Deutsche Post aus dem Osten, Berlin, 4, 1929, 9, pp. 196-198. (SBB 4° Ue 525; N.F.)


Kolonie”.


REIMER, Jacob B.: “Menno Colony in Paraguay. From Canada to the Chaco”. Mennonite Life, 29, 1974, 3, September, pp. 54-56 (http://www.bethelsks.edu/mennonitelife/).


RAHN, Peter: “75 Jahre Kolonie Fernheim. 1. Ankunft bei Trebol. 2. Das Koloniezentrum 3. Aus der Zeit des Chacokrieges 4. Abwanderung nach Ostparaguay”. *Mennonblatt*, 76, 2005, 5, 1 March, p. 3; 6, 16 March, p. 3; 7, 1 April, pp. 3-4; 8, 16 April, pp. 3-4 (IAI Z/229).

REGIER, Hans Theodor: *Siemens, Jakob W.: “Weitere Siedlungsmöglichkeiten in Fernheim im Chaco”*. *Deutsche Post aus dem Osten*, 4, 16 April, pp. 3-4 (IAI Z/229).

REGIER, Hans Theodor: *Siemens, Jakob W.: “Weitere Siedlungsmöglichkeiten in Fernheim im Chaco”*. *Deutsche Post aus dem Osten*, 4, 16 April, pp. 3-4 (IAI Z/229).


WIENS, Peter: “50 Jahre Kolonie Fernheim, 1930-1980”. *Mennonblatt*, 51, 1980, 2, 15 January, pp. 1-2; 3, 1 February, pp. 1-3; 4, 16 February, pp. 1-2; 5, 1 March, pp. 2-3; 6, 16 March, pp. 1-2; 7, 1 April, pp. 1-2; 8, 16 April, pp. 1-3; 9, 1 May, pp. 1-3; 10, 16 May, pp. 1-3 (IAI Z/229).


### 3.7 Neuland


3.8 Two urban centers: Filadelfia, Loma Plata

KLASSEN, Peter P.: “Die Entwicklung der Stadt Filadelfia”. Mennoblett, 69, 1998, 5, 1 March, pp. 3-5; 6, 16 March, pp. 5-6; 7, 1 April, pp. 3-4 (IAI Z/229).


3.9 Colonies in Eastern Paraguay


RATZLAFF, Gerhard: “Die mennonitischen Siedlungen in Ostparaguay”. Mennoblett, 48, 1977, 3, 1 February, pp. 2-4; 4, 16 February, pp. 2-4; 5, 1 March, pp. 2-4; 6, 16 March, pp. 3-4; 7, 1 April, pp. 2-3; 8, 16 April, pp. 2-3; 9, 1 May, pp. 3-4; 10, 16 May, pp. 2-3; 11, 1 June, pp. 2-3; 12, 16 June, pp. 3-4; 13, 1 July, pp. 5-6 (IAI Z/229).


3.10 Friesland


3.11 Volendam


REDEKOPP, Jakob: “Zehn Jahre Volendam”. Bibel und Pflug, 4, 1957, 15, 1 August, pp. 5-6; 16, 16 August, pp. 5-6; 17, 1 September, p. 4.


3.12 Sommerfeld and Bergthal

FRIESEN, Martin W.: “Bergthal, eine Siedlung im Urwald bei Caaguazú”. Mennoblat, 28, 1957, 3, 1 February, pp. 2-3; 4, 15 February, p. 3 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


3.13 Mennonites in Asunción


BOSCHMANN, David: “Die Mennoniten in Asunción”. Mennoblat, 34, 1963, 2 (16 January), through 10 (16 May). 1 or 2 pp. in each number (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


22 MEDA (= Mennonite Economic Development Associates): A North America based association of Mennonite colonists established to raise the standard of the colonies in Paraguay in cooperation with some Mennonites of the latter country.
3.14 Economy; Cooperatives

ANFANG: “Der Anfang einer kleinen Industrie im Chaco, Paraguay”. Mennonitische Auslese, 1, 1951, 1, p. 36.


FADLALA, Emilio: “Las colonias mennonitas en el desarrollo regional”. Vida Económica, Asunción, 2, 1956, April, pp. 60-64 (IAI).


FRIESEN, Martin W.: “Entwicklung des Genossenschaftswesens in der Kolonie Menno”. Mennonblatt, 45, 1974, 3, 1 February, pp. 7-8; 4, 16 February, pp. 5-6 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


WIRTSCHAFTSLEBEN: “Aus dem Wirtschaftsleben/Unser Wirtschaftsleben”. Mennobblatt, Zeitschrift für Gemeinde und Kolonie, 27, February 1956, through 40, 1969 (less regularly in the latter year). From 1 December 1969 for some time continued under the title: “Der landwirtschaftliche Berater” (short articles dealing with a wide range of subjects, written by different authors) (IAI 4° Par ua 1).

3.15 Arable farming, livestock production and forestry; ecology


CAMPAL, E. F.: “Some Aspects of Agricultural Activity of the Mennonite Colonies in the Chaco (Algunos aspectos de la actividad agropecuaria de las colonias mennonitas del Chaco)”. Vida Económica, Asunción, 2, 1956, April, pp. 54-60 (IAI).


ECKERT, Jakob: “Vor 25 Jahren. Die ersten Pferde für die Kolonie”. Mennoblatt, 28, 1957, 12, 15 June, p. 6 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


GREILING, Frank: “Auswirkungen und Konsequenzen aus der Dürrekatastrophe für die Viehwirtschaft im Gebiet der Chakokolonien”. Mennoblatt, 41, 1970, 24, 16 December, pp. 7-9 (4° Par ua 1).


LÖWEN, Peter: “Vor 25 Jahren. Maultiere statt Ochsen”. Mennoblatt, 28, 1957, 16, 15 August, p. 6 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


3.16 Transport; the Trans Chaco Road


NEUFELD, K. K.: “Wir und der Transchacoweg”. Mennoblatt, 32, 1961, 8, 16 April, pp. 5-7 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


3.17 Education


HILDEBRANDT, K.: “Unsere Schulen in Friesland”. Mennoblatt, 29, 1958, 18, 16 September, pp. 3-4 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


23 See also the Bibliography in Warkentin (1998) (this section).
3.18 Health and health care


DOLLINGER, Gerhard: “Die mennonitischen Krankenanstalten im Gran Chaco”. Der Mennonit, 9, 1956, 8, August, pp. 124-125 (DNB DZb 4433).


EPP, Hans: “Medizinische Betreuung der Indianer im Chaco”. Mennonblatt, 42, 1971, 6, 16 March, pp. 3-4; 8, 16 April, p. 3; 9, 1 May, pp. 2-3; 10, 16 May, pp. 2-3 (IAI 4° 1 i 695).


3.19 Mennonites and the Chaco War


3.20 Indians and Mennonites


EPP, Hans: “Medizinische Betreuung der Indianer im Chaco”. Mennonblatt, 42, 1971, 6, 16 March, pp. 3-4; 8, 16 April, p. 3; 9, 1 May, pp. 2-3; 10, 16 May, pp. 2-3 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


ISAAK, Kornelius: “Werdegang der Chulupimission”. *Mennonblatt*, 28, 1957, 6, 15 March, pp. 1-2; 7, 1 April, pp. 1-2; 8, 15 April, p. 2; 9, 1 May, p. 2 (IAI 4° Par ua 1).


KLASSEN, Tinchen: “Ach, diese Indianer!”. *Der Bote*, 1960, 12 and 19 April, 10 and 17 May.


REIMER, Jacob B.: “Mennoniten und Indianer im zentralen Chaco”. Mennoblatt, 51, 1980, 19, 1 October, pp. 4-6 (IAI Z/229).

REIMERT, Walter: “Die Ansiedlung der Indianer im Chaco”. Mennoblatt, 38, 1967, 9, 1 May, pp. 2-3 (IAI 4º Par ua 1).

REIST, Ilse: “Indianersiedlung im Chaco. Das MCC unterstützt diese Arbeit”. Mennoblatt, 33, 1962, 7, 1 April, pp. 2-4 (IAI 4º Par ua 1).


SAWATZKY, Martin H.: “Die wirtschaftliche Lage der Lengua im Chaco”. Mennoblatt, 33, 1962, 1, 1 January, p. 2 (IAI 4º Par ua 1).


SIEMENS, Nikolai: “Im Indianerland”. Mennoblatt, 23, 1952, 8, August, pp. 2-3; 9/10, September-October, pp. 2-3; 12, December, p. 3 (IAI 4º Par ua 1).


STAHL, Wilmar: “Cinco establecimientos agrícolas indígenas en el Chaco Central; un estudio de cambio social guiado”. Suplemento Antropológico, Asunción, IX, 1974, 1-2, pp. 111-152 (IAI 8º Par ge 64).


WIENS, Peter: “Indianersiedlungen im Chaco”. Mennoblatt, 38, 1967, 20, 16 October, pp. 5-6 (IAI 4º Par ua 1).

UNRUH, Murtle: “Indianersiedlungen im Chaco. Wo sind wir in Wirklichkeit?”. Mennoblatt, 40, 1969, 21, 1 November, pp. 2-3; 22, 16 November, p. 3; 23, 1 December, pp. 3-4; 41, 1970, 1, 1 January, pp. 4-5; 4, 16 February, p. 3 (IAI 4º Par ua 1).