

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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ALEJANDRO FOGEL

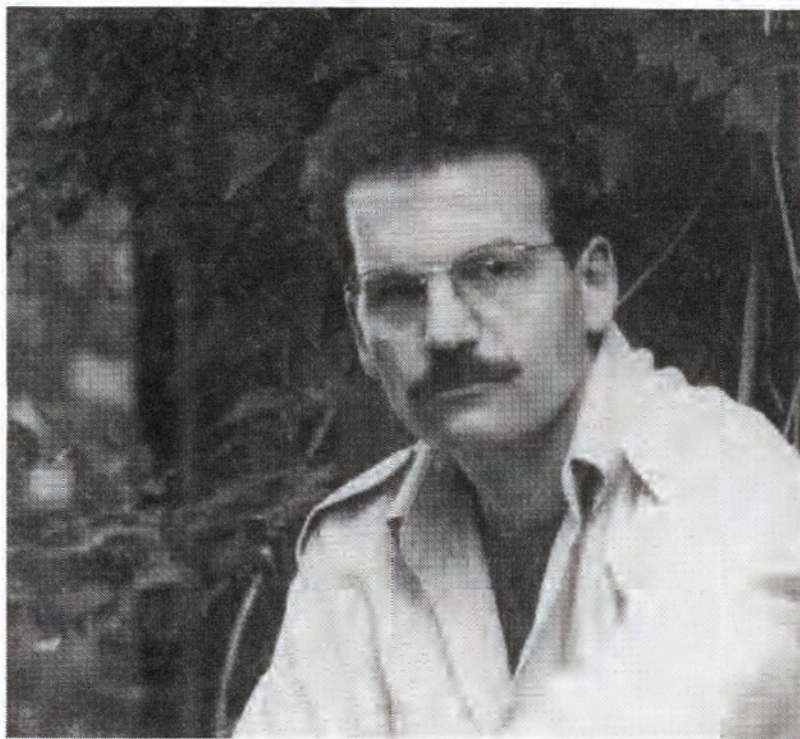
An Argentine-born visual artist, Alejandro Fogel is exploring the legacy and continuing influence of the Inca civilization on the culture, arts and societies of South America. Alejandro will be retracing the Incan road system that united large parts of South America prior to the European conquest. He will be doing paintings and photographs of the Incan ruins, as well as writing and conducting videotaped interviews with current inhabitants of these regions, recording their memories, histories, arts, folk songs and tales. His expectation is to produce a multimedia traveling exhibition.

Alejandro's paintings have been exhibited in galleries and museums in the United States, Argentina, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and West Germany. He was part of Argentina's first

public commission to create an archive of folk art. In addition, he set up a series of art workshops in Argentina for native populations in the Andes and Patagonia.

Alejandro was an artist in residence at the Rockefeller Foundation Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, in 1988,

was selected for a Rolex Enterprise Award in 1987, and has won many awards for painting, including the Arche Biennial Award (1986), First Prize from the National Endowment for the Arts of Argentina (1985) and the Richard Wagner International Association Award in Painting (1979).



ALEJANDRO FOGEL'S

THE INCAS ROAD

EL CAMINO DE LOS INCAS

AF-1

Not for publication without writer's consent

1 APRIL 1992

"LOVE" IN TIMES OF CHOLERA

I had a dream. It was a nightmare. I don't remember it. Something about food and militarists. I am in the province of Salta in the very north of Argentina. I'm the guy with that great romantic project about the Incas and their descendants and their lives today. I am the artist, the painter, writer, videomaker, photographer with all those dreams. I started already but let me tell you something before I really start: When you get close to people infected with cholera and you get to know why they have the illness, all those dreams become an illusion, some sort of another kind of dream.

It's very late at night. I am listening to the radio: "Two more cases". More statistics. I just took a shower. A long, great, warm shower. I brushed my teeth with mineral water. I have running water, unlike 50% of the population in Argentina. I am a lucky man in these times of cholera. "Water" has become a very hot word lately. Everybody talks about water. The water we don't



ICWA FELLOW ALEJANDRO FOGEL IS AN ARTIST EXPLORING THE INCAS ROAD

Since 1925 the Institute of Current World Affairs (the Crane-Rogers Foundation) has provided long-term fellowships to enable outstanding young adults to live outside the United States and write about international areas and issues. Endowed by the late Charles R. Crane, The Institute is also supported by contributions from like-minded individuals and foundations.

have, the water we lose per hour when we get cholera, the inhuman rise in the price of bottled water, two drops of bleach in one liter of water to disinfect the water, the *trucha* bleach (an Argentine slang word for 'phony') that's being sold that doesn't purify water , don't swim in the river, contaminated water, the water in the ice cubes served in the Aerolíneas Argentinas flight that sent cholera to the US.

One more toy for the president

Several towns are requesting extra money from the Federal Government to fight cholera, to build sewers and water potabilization plants. Menem's Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo, who had been president of the Central Bank during Argentina's last bloody dictatorship which was notorious for 'disappearing' more than 30,000 Argentinians, has an answer: No. "We can't spend more money over what we budgeted for this year". But what did he answer to Menem's request of a new 66 million-dollar presidential plane after he saw Mexico's President Salinas new Boeing 757? His answer was: Yes. "For the sake of public security"



President Menem visiting the cholera area and washing his hands

Cavallo declared. But even if the government decides to really help the people in the affected areas and invest in water plants it will be too late to help the economy, which is the government's main concern. The European Community has just decided not to buy Argentine fish. The Paraguayan government is not buying fruits or vegetables

from countries with cholera epidemics. The money already lost because of aborted business directly related to the epidemic is over one billion dollars.

"Love" in times of cholera

The Tobas and Mataco aboriginal peoples(I don't want to use the word Indians anymore. Do they live in Bombay?) are part of the 1.500.000 original inhabitants of Argentina. They live, along with several other native groups, in the infected areas. They used to fish in the Pilcomayo and Bermejo rivers until the outbreak of the epidemic. Since then they've been banned from fishing or drinking from the sources they've used for thousands of years. They were instructed to build latrines and dig holes where they used to defecate anywhere.

The government is doing a good job providing health care, food and help to those that contracted the illness and those at risk. But, what is this sudden "love" for the aborigines, always forgotten, always so far away...

What is Cholera?

Cholera is a severe infectious disease of the intestines which is extremely contagious. It starts with diarrhea and vomiting. Untreated, the infected person can lose up to six liters of body fluid per hour. Cholera can be transmitted through contaminated waters and through food that has been in contact with contaminated waters. Flies, cockroaches and humans may become carriers of the bacteria. To survive, the *vibrio cholerae* needs human sodium, while its mortal enemies are acid substances.

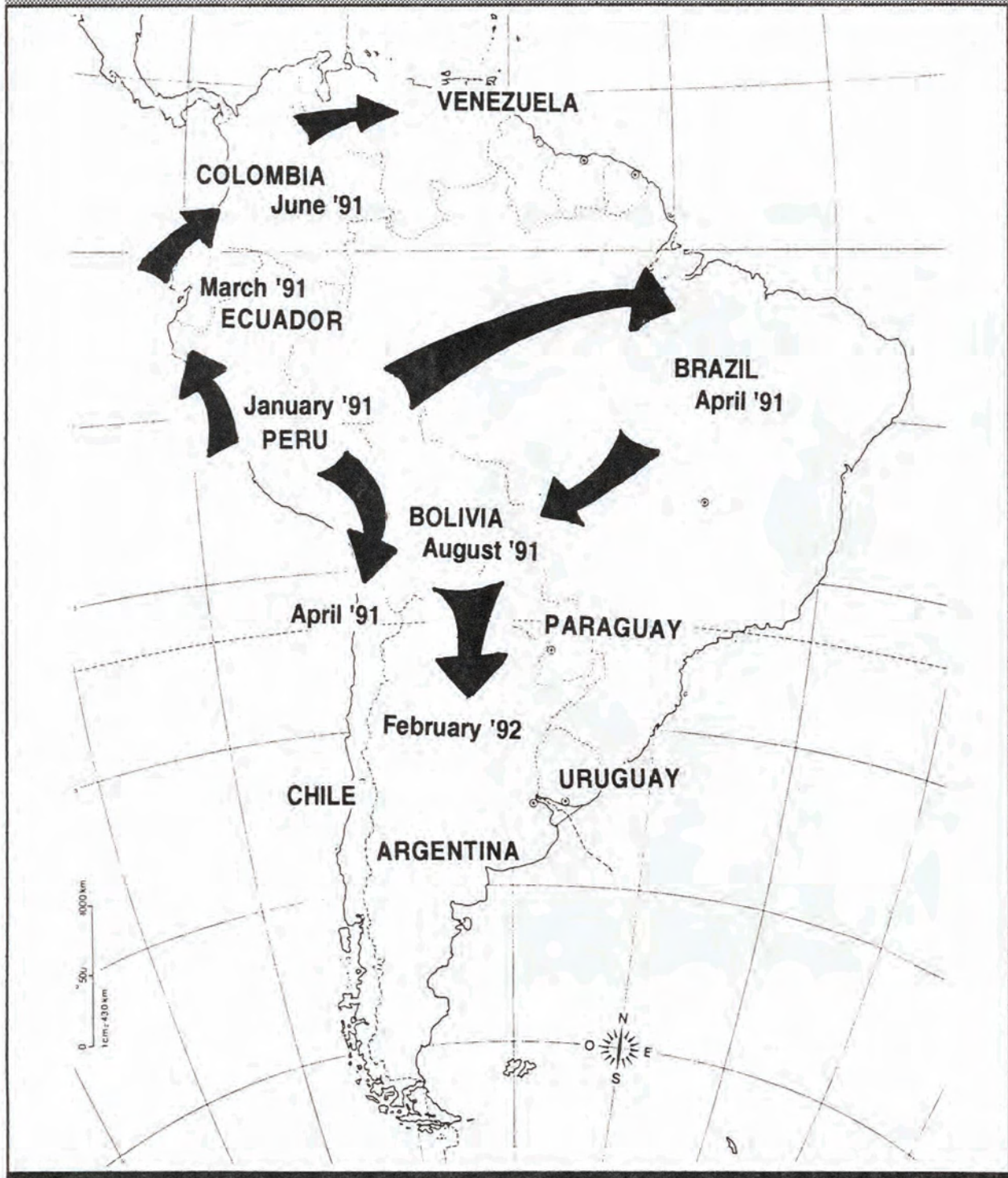
When a person suffers from malnutrition, his or her stomach does not produce acidic gastric juices, which creates ideal circumstances for the illness. The bacteria's access into the body is through the mouth and rapidly gets installed in the intestine or stomach, destroying the saline balance. Water stops being absorbed by the intestine and is expelled from the body. If the rehabilitation process does not begin within hours, the person gets dehydrated, the blood thickens and the heart stops working, causing death.

-The explanation is simple - says a physician at Salta's hospital- they don't want the disease to get to Buenos Aires where, like everywhere else in the country, sanitary food controls are nonexistent, creating the best conditions for a cholera epidemic. They don't care about anything else. Have you heard

what the Peronist representative Irma Roy said on the radio, yesterday? She said that "the Health minister can't make miracles. They are building toilets for them, they are teaching them where they should go to the bathroom and what is the cause of the disease. These people don't have culture or

any education. What can we expect from these Indian civilizations. They speak different languages and they even eat raw fish." Can you believe that she said that? She was talking about them like she would be talking about cows or horses. I was wondering if she thinks that the Japanese people are

ROUTE OF THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC



CHOLERA AREA IN ARGENTINA



Government aid planes landing in Santa Victoria

poor and warm weather provinces, who had to fight in the snow without shoes. But the *porteños* suddenly changed their minds about fighting to the bitter end when they heard a report about a British plan to bombard Buenos Aires as a last resort. We should stop this war—they cried— it's crazy to continue. Meanwhile, more than a thousand young men died.

Never in the news

The Tobas and Mataco peoples were never in the news until now that they are part of the international statistics of cholera. The fifty-seven Tobas who traveled crowded into a government garbage truck last year weren't in the news. They weren't in the news even when that truck crashed and six of them died and all of the others were severely wounded. Tobas don't count. They are theoretically Argentinians but nobody sees them as such. They don't speak the same language, they live very far away from Buenos Aires and, in fact, they were just discovered by the *porteños*. Before the cholera outbreak, the average middle class *porteño* would tell you: "there are no

uneducated because they eat raw fish, too? It's the same attitude the *porteños* (inhabitants of Buenos Aires: port people) had during the Falklands War. The war was so far away, so many

thousands of kilometers from Buenos Aires. We should keep fighting till the end, they said, when the war broke out. The "fighters" were mostly uneducated drafted soldiers from

Hundreds of Years of Solitude

Gabriel García Márquez, who won a Nobel prize in literature, wrote Love in Times of Cholera using "in times of cholera" to refer to something that happened a long time ago. Cholera was a good way to refer to the past through an old and extinct illness. For centuries cholera affected India, with huge epidemics in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In the nineteenth century, it took hundred of thousands of lives in Europe, China, the U.S. and Latin America including Argentina where the last cases were detected in 1895. A few years after García Márquez's novel was written, cholera is back and it may stay in South America for many years, perhaps well into the 21st century, representing a presence of misery and deplorable sanitary conditions that many of us believed was gone for good.

Indians in Argentina. All Argentinians speak Spanish. This is a great country: there is no racism here. We don't have blacks, we are all from European descent." When you ask them about his or her full time dark skinned maid who makes three hundred dollars a month, who does everything that needs to be done for their home: from the dishes to taking care of the children; who only gets off on Thursdays afternoons and Sundays and lives in a room the size of a closet, they will tell you: "Oh, yeah, she is from the provinces. She didn't have anything there. We took her to Buenos Aires and gave her a home." If you ask them if their domestic help is of European origin, too, they say: "Nooo! They are from 'here', they are *pardos* (browns), *cabezas negras* (dark little heads)". The average middle class *porteño* constantly mistakes

BURNED ALIVE

Santa Victoria Este is a very remote area of Salta province accessible only by four wheel drive vehicles or air. Several helicopters land. Military people, journalists, civilians get out.

Dozens of aborigines run away into the jungle.

What's happening? Why are you running? These are the people that are coming to help. The Minister of Health is here. He brought tons of food and medicine and mineral water. You don't have to fish in the Pilcomayo anymore. You don't have to drink its red water anymore. These men with cameras want to show the world the way you people live so you can get more help. The *Gendarmería Nacional* (National Guard) is bringing all the equipment and we are going to set up hospitals and clean places to eat.

Why are you running?

We spoke to one of the *caciques*, the tribal chiefs. He wanted help to rescue his brothers and sisters, all of them old people, who had run away into very dangerous areas of the jungle. "They have bad memories of the greens," he said. The "greens" are the Argentine National Guard.

Bad memories?

He looked at me. His eyes were red. This man hasn't had any sleep for days. The old people know, he said. In 1935, when the *viruela* (smallpox) epidemic came, thousands of our people were thrown into holes in the ground and burned alive to stop the disease from spreading. My people are afraid of the greens. They think they are going to do the same thing now.

I tell the worried man that The National Guard is not going to burn anybody alive these days. They are under the scrutiny of the democratically elected government of Carlos Menem, and are working and collaborating with him. The mission: to establish a sanitary barrier 2100 kilometers away from Buenos Aires, to keep cholera away from the capital city, away from recognized Argentina.

We collected some other stories about things that happened to the aborigin of Salta in 1992:

- "Greens" of the area put a group of Matacos in jail to force them to dig latrines.

- The Patrón Costas family, owner of the Tabacal Sugar Mill, didn't allow an aborigine woman affected with cholera to be accepted in the sugar mill's hospital.

- A shop owner in the city of Tartagal sprayed with insecticide a group of aborigines who approached his store, afraid of being contaminated.

- A group of local producers in Tartagal were complaining: "Because of five fucking Indians our harvest will be ruined", alluding to the fact that consumers will tend to buy products from other areas of the country.



Matacos
mother and
children
waiting at
the Santa
Victoria
hospital

You want them to fire me?

This is part of a telephone conversation I had with a painter, a member of the Peronist party, who is now in charge of street exhibitions for the city of Buenos Aires.

When did you get back to Argentina?

Just a few weeks ago. I can tell that you're very active...

Oh, yeah! We have many programs in the process of development. We have a small budget but we can do things.

What about something to help people in Buenos Aires understand the aborigines' problems. What about an exhibition with a different view than the conquistadores? I don't think we have anything to celebrate. 1992 is more like a year of mourning than celebration. What you think?

...You want them to fire me?

Fire you?

The City is behind a big fair, "Discover America". Big bucks. It's sponsored by several private companies. It looks like Aerolíneas Argentinas and Telefónica have leading roles in it.

(Note: Aerolíneas Argentinas (has the monopoly on domestic air traffic) and Telefónica (owns 50% of the telephone lines) were recently privatized and bought by two of Spain's state owned companies)

Buenos Aires for the whole of Argentina. There is a popular say: "Argentina ends at the General Paz Avenue". General Paz Avenue is the highway that surrounds the city of Buenos Aires.

Smuggling of slaves

Since the first cases of cholera in Argentina originated at the border with Bolivia and the first people affected there were the aborigines, Argentinians are blaming Bolivians and aborigines for the introduction and spread of the illness. The first Argentine reaction was: we must close the border with Bolivia. The "border" is a political fantasy created by the white men's ambitions. It doesn't have any connection with reality. The 500 kilometers of jungle between the two countries is crossed daily by thousands of natives peoples and the Pilcomayo river is the natural border between the two countries where Tobas, Matacos and Chiriguano live, sometimes on one side of the water, sometimes on the other, eliminating de facto any notion of country, border or political sovereignty.

The smuggling of Bolivian migrant workers into Argentina is a big problem. They are taken from Bolivia and illegally brought into Argentina to work in the harvest for almost no money, in subhuman conditions. At the same time many Bolivian workers are being expelled from province to province in Argentina and then back to Bolivia, "suspected" of carrying cholera simply because of their origin or skin color. The Argentine government is blaming Bolivia for hiding information about the advent of the cholera outbreak in the border towns, when the truth is that, when a year ago the epidemic started in Peru, everybody knew that sooner or later it would come to Argentina. The

The aborigines environment

While men and criollos go to high elevations in the Pilcomayo River, throw dynamite into it and then net huge amounts of fish to sell at market. This means that the aborigine, whose life depends on fishing and who traditionally fishes from the lower waters cannot catch any fish. The aborigines' environment is constantly being disrupted by 'progress'. The way he collects food, the only way he's known for thousand of years, no longer exists. When the aborigines are able to fish, they have to sell their product for extremely low prices, for their condition has fostered centuries of exploitation.

In terms of hunting, there is very little left for the aborigines by the time the white man and the criollo with their advanced weapons are finished. The grey wolf is practically extinct because of the increased value of its fur. The consequence of this is that since the grey wolf counterbalanced the puma population, the area is now infested with pumas which are killing off large amounts of animals, upsetting both the natural ecology of the region and making animal husbandry very difficult, too.

From time immemorial, the aborigine used honey to sweetened his food. Then the white man introduced goats letting them wander freely throughout the mountains. The goats caused plant and flower devastation that made the bees go away and left the aborigines without a major staple in their diet-honey. The white man introduced sugar at the beginning of the century beginning a barter trade exchanging fish and crafts for sugar and other kinds of non-native growing foods, creating in the aborigines, an extreme dependency on foreign markets.

There is severe deforestation created by the logging industry which is indiscriminately cutting down quebracho and carob trees. There is no reforestation campaign. Every year, the criollo, after the drought, and as a spiritual rite to increase next year's harvest, create huge fires. In August, they burn everything in the hope that next year the vegetation will grow stronger. Every year, these fires burn thousands and thousands of trees and destroy aboriginal territories.

The beautiful red lapacho that once grew everywhere in Salta, is on its way to extinction today and one of the main causes is that low income people went back to cooking with wood since gas is so expensive. Paradoxically in the north of the province, they expel natural gas into the air instead of pumping it through the pipes because the company produces such an excess.

Being a nomad the aborigine doesn't have a definite place to live but he has his territories. These territories are being sold by the state to agricultural businesses, pushing the aborigines off the land they've live on for thousands of years.

Argentine authorities are nervously blaming Peruvians, Bolivians, and "Indians" for a problem they are not prepared to face.

It started in Peru

The Argentine authorities knew a year ago, when the first cholera cases surprised the Peruvian population, killing several hundred people in two months, that there was a good



Government
food
supplies

Spain Celebrates

Spain celebrates the 500th anniversary of its invasion of the Americas, by expelling a Latin American every two hours from its soil. 1.518 Latin Americans were expelled in 1988, 1.780 in 1990, 3.831 last year and Spain is expecting to rid itself of a record number in 1992. The reasons: fear of cholera and illegal immigrants. The promise of "an ocean of love and friendship for our American brothers" in 1992, is sinking.

chance that the bacteria would cross its borders and spread throughout the continent because of the subhuman conditions in which a large percentage of the people live. What did they do then? Nothing. In August 1991 Dr. Julio Pietrafaccia, in charge of health in the area of Santa Victoria in Salta where the aboriginal population lives, sent a report to the authorities explaining when, why and where the cholera epidemic in Argentina would start, but he never got an answer. He was right. In February 1992 the aborigines' migrations between the borders created by the white man between Bolivia and Argentina, introduced cholera in Santa Victoria. "They only come here at elections time", he said, referring to the authorities exiting helicopters full of mineral water and food, delivered now on a daily basis in an attempt to

prevent the spread of the disease. "Bringing food and water only creates dependency and, when the press and the government get busy with something else, these people will be forgotten again and the three big problems will still be here to create an epidemic blow up. First, the aboriginal population is weak, at risk to contract any kind of illnesses. Second, the vibrio cholerae, the bacteria, is already here and third, the environment where they live has no potable water, very bad hygiene conditions and poor nutrition."

In Santa Victoria there is one hospital with two doctors for 4.000 aborigines and 1.000 *criollos*.

Cholera is good

"Cholera is good", rural school teacher Toranzo said to us. "Because of cholera they came to help us, otherwise we

The Coca Tradition

For hundreds of years in the Andean regions of South America, chewing coca leaves has been a common custom. In these areas, people chew coca because it allows them to ascend to high elevations without suffering the usual altitude sickness and it makes them feel less tired at these heights so they can work for longer periods of time. Chewing coca also takes away hunger.

In Salta, 30% of the people chew coca everyday. They are aborigines, businessmen, political representatives, workers. You can buy coca everywhere: supermarkets, kiosks, because it is not illegal. What is illegal is the smuggling or importing of coca leaves that may be turned into cocaine production. "Coca and Bica" signs are very common here. Bica is for bicarbonato (baking soda), the substance that is an important part of the chewing of coca. The user puts a handful of coca leaves and a little bit of baking soda in his or her mouth to create an effective chuno, or coca ball, which can then be chewed for hours. In times of cholera, this baking soda presents a terrible problem--

it kills the acid substance in people that naturally destroys the cholera bacteria, creating an enormous risk for the coca user. At the same time, the very way of coca harvesting constitutes an excellent way of transporting the illness. The leaves are piled up after the coca growers shake them down from the trees. During the harvest they live, eat and defecate on these leaf "mattresses" until they are picked up to be sold.



Women eating
government
provided
pasta

HOW MANY MINUTES IT TAKES IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES FOR A WORKER TO BE ABLE TO BUY A HAMBURGER

Amsterdam	31
Atenas	33
Bogotá	98
Bombay	131
Bruselas	31
Buenos Aires	105
Caracas	103
Copenhagen	39
Chicago	18
Düsseldorf	22
Estocolmo	61
Frankfurt	22
Ginebra	21
Helsinki	40
Hong Kong	24
Houston	27
Johannesburgo	35
Londres	36
Los Angeles	20
Luxemburgo	20
Madrid	54
Manila	165
México	235
Milán	33
Montreal	21
Nairobi	82
Nueva York	26
Panamá	66
París	39
Río de Janeiro	79
San Pablo	106
Seúl	30
Singapur	70
Sydney	18
Taipei	34
Tel Aviv	33
Tokio	21
Toronto	20
Viena	30
Zurich	20

GETTING
INTO THE
BRADY PLAN

COUP
ATTEMPT
LAST MONTH

ALREADY
IN THE
BRADY
PLAN

wants to fight against cholera and other diseases like yellow fever, TB and chagas (an illness spread by an insect that provokes heart disease). They requested help from the provincial and federal governments since the outbreak in Peru last year but the answer was always the same " smiles and nice words". The organizations in defense of the aboriginal peoples want to create bridges between the white man and their peoples. They want to be recognized as part of this country and stop being ignored by the national education authorities who barely include their cultures in Argentine school text books.

1 dollar = 1 peso

How did it happened? Does it mean the end of inflation?

Suddenly, after a severe hyperinflation process (200% a month), Argentina is "stable". A year ago Economy Minister Cavallo, Harvard graduate and (I can't stop repeating this every time I can) former President of the Central Bank during the bloodiest dictatorship in Argentine history, conceived the magic Convertibility Plan: The dollar stays the same, tied to the peso and the inflation will be similar to that in the developed world: 3 to 8 % a year. The first part of his plan worked. He kept the dollar low. But he couldn't control the inflation that, in a year, rose to 46%. You might say: Well, he did a good job. From thousands of thousands percent of inflation rate a year he took it down to a two digit number. The problem is that in those crazy times, the dollar went up at the same time as the local currency, raising thousands of thousands percent a year, sometimes more than the austral. Basically, what I am saying is that Argentina is again in the Guinness Records Book with one of the most incredible inflation rates in

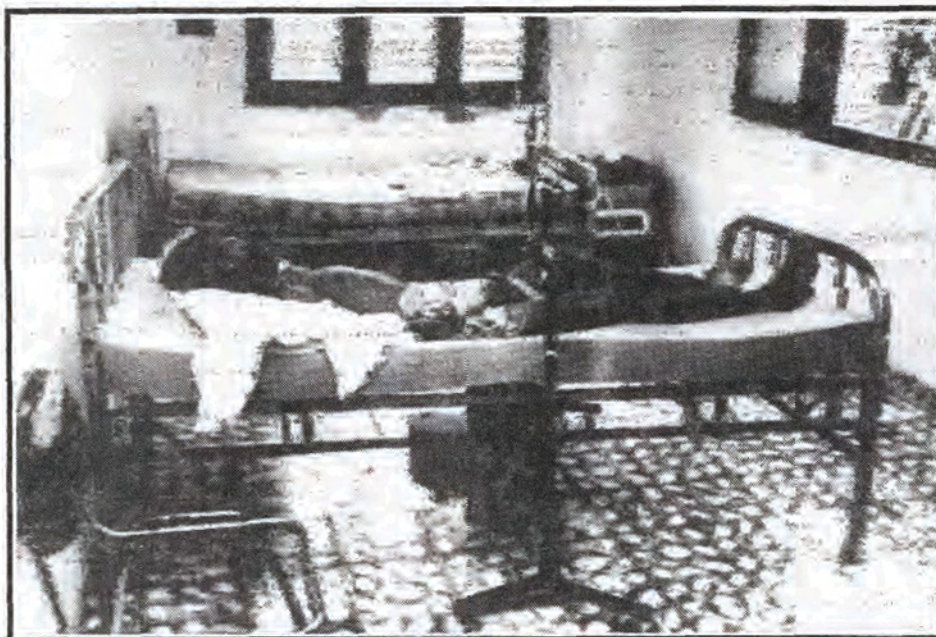
wouldn't get anything". He came to Salta 18 years ago to teach the aboriginal population writing and reading.

The Peronist representative for Salta designated to conduct the operations Rauch Col, said:

AF-1
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"Thank God the people of Salta

belong to the Third World. Cholera won't change me. I am going to keep eating fish and chewing coca leaves. Cholera can catch me any time it wants, I won't pay attention to it." But the AIRA (Indigenous Association of Argentina)



Cholera victim
at the
Santa Victoria
hospital

Is cholera on its way to the US through the Mexican border?

There were more than a dozen cholera cases in the city of Monterey, Mexico this year. This industrial town is just miles from to the US border. In several northern Mexican municipalities, the authorities are on alert because of the strong possibility of the illness spreading. Seventeen fish stores were closed and the population has been instructed to take severe hygiene measures. In less than a year thirty-five people died of cholera in Mexico and more than 3500 contracted the illness, mostly in the southern states.

Through an Aerolineas Argentinas flight

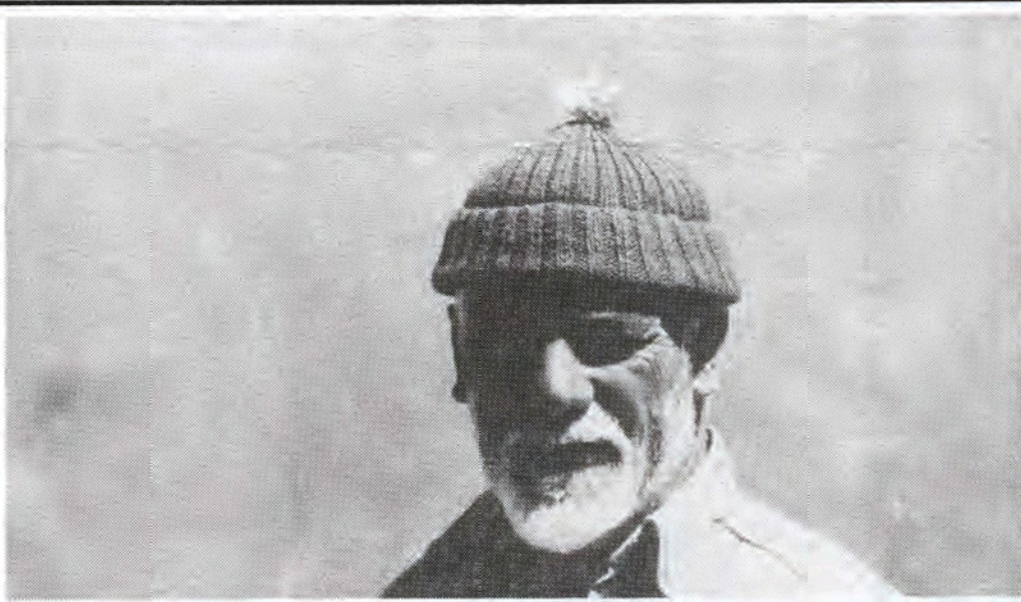
One person died and nearly seventy-five contracted cholera in a plane that went from Buenos Aires to Los Angeles. Possible reasons: contaminated ice cubes, a prawn salad served after a stop over in Peru, or a passenger or group of passengers carrying the bacteria onto the plane and infecting the rest through bathroom contact.

hard currency ever: 46%.
Who is paying for that?
70% of the fiscal income comes from the added value tax that everybody pays and only 30% from capital gains tax, exactly the opposite of the tax policies in the industrialized countries. The consumers tax rose to an incredible 18%, mostly affecting the lower classes. Food prices have tripled in hard currency creating a very difficult situa-

tion for those who live on a salary. A teacher makes \$200 a month and a bag of groceries costs \$40.

Mr. Cavallo and Mr. Menem are rushing to get into the Brady Plan to get a foreign debt reduction. But getting into the Brady Plan means starting to pay the interest and capital on the 60 billion dollar debt right away and religiously, something Argentina has not done in

the last ten years. That will mean more sacrifices from those who are most at risk for cholera, those who don't have sewage or potable water. "Love" in times of cholera has come to mean expanding the gap between rich and poor to a level this country has never before seen.



Baqueano
Hernán
Uriburu

The Importance of a *Baqueano*

Hernán Uriburu is a *baqueano*, a local expert or guide. His passion in life is showing the occasional visitor the wonders of his beloved province, Salta. He lives in the city of Salta with his wife Inés and their children. Several times a year, Mr. Uriburu organizes week long group treks and horse rides through the province. He avoids, in these excursions, contact with any semblance of modern civilization. He knows exactly where to take his travellers to 'get away' from the western technologized world. From the most incredible wildlife and natural landscapes to the astonishing legacy of the Inca and pre-Inca civilizations that are still intact: towns, fortresses, irrigation channels, petroglyphs....He guides people through the wonders of Salta.

Hernán Uriburu helped us a lot in our trip to the Salta province. To him and his family a very special : Thanks!

Thanks also to:

Mr. Jorge Padovan, Production Director of TV Channel 2, Salta

Mr. Fernandez Real, Editor in chief of the newspaper Eco del Norte, Salta.

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Rec'd. in Hanover, NH April 9, 1992