

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

CRT - 6  
Puno

Puno  
Peru  
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New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The town of Puno, 12,648 feet above the sea, is located on the northwest shore of Lake Titicaca. Lima is 280 miles away, Cuzco 240, Arequipa 218 and La Paz 171. The Southern Railway links Puno with Cuzco and Arequipa, and, with the intervention of a steamer operated by the same railway, to La Paz. These same cities can be reached by land over roads which are sometimes no more than a succession of pot holes but which at their best offer a good hard washboard like surface and occasionally newly laid asphalt. Traveling by either method to reach Puno (as I have done) consumes a great deal of time, and, since the railbed is not much smoother than the average road, one's body is delivered at Puno in a somewhat battered and bruised condition. What is important here, however, is that the town is not just-down-the-road-apiece from any point of departure: to reach it demands over half a day's traveling time. Yet, as I discovered, the isolation which these comments suggest does not weigh heavily upon the town.

This last trip into Puno I came by train from Cuzco, a journey lightened by the music and antics of a group of army officers en route to examinations for promotion. Their good spirits, encouraged by some heavy morning drinking, lasted for about half the trip, after which many of these sturdy masters of bivouac and tactics retired into glum motion sickness.

Entering Puno at sunset - a spectacular affair in gold, salmon, blue, violet and purple reflected in the still waters of the marshes outside town - and being hustled from the station to the nearby hotel leaves a poor impression: a few adobe buildings along a few narrow streets. But in the morning when one goes up to the center of town he finds Puno clean and lively and almost too small to contain the numbers of people in the streets. There is a briskness in the air and in the movements of the pedestrians which is catching, and one hustles along in spite of the altitude.

Puno serves as Peru's port on Lake Titicaca, receiving and

sending goods to and from Bolivia, and as an entrepôt for the agricultural, pastoral and fishing products of the Altiplano populations. It is as well one of the centers of a flourishing smuggling trade, made easy by the difficulties of policing the lake and the many small communities and hamlets along its shore.

From the stories I heard, it seems that Puno was for some years a static depot and transit station for these various traffics, with a small permanent population. Then, at some time after the last world war, an impulse to growth appeared which puzzles the puneños as much as the outsider.

Indians and mestizos from the hinterland emigrated to settle in the town. Most of the indians took up trading (and perhaps became receivers of smuggled goods), buying and selling at the many fairs and markets held in the surrounding area. The mestizos sought after white collar positions such as shop clerk or teacher. Some of the younger men among the gente decente families decided that Puno was as good a place to practice law or medicine as Arequipa or Lima - the classic goals of these professions for puneños. Capital, which once found its outlet in any other part of Peru but Puno, also began to settle here, although in small (but encouraging) quantities.

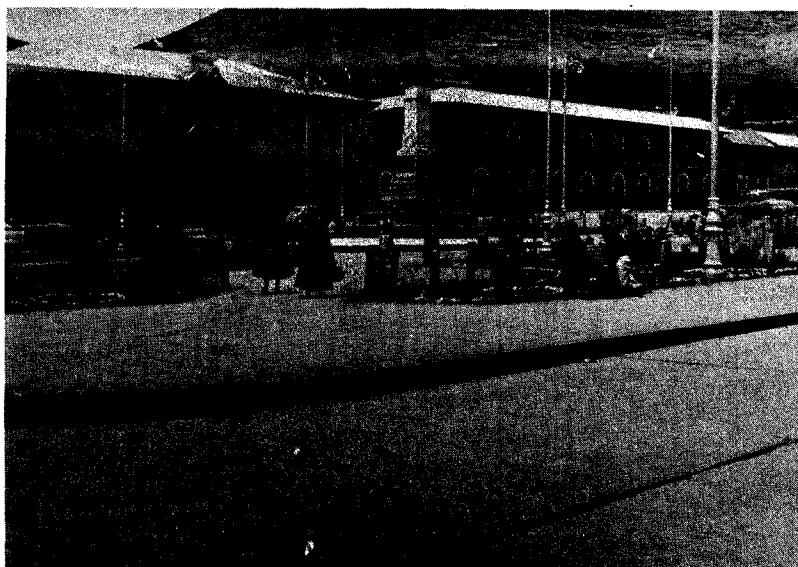
Along Calle Lima, the main shopping area outside the indian market near the railroad station, new shops opened up, many of them branches of parent stores located in Arequipa, Cuzco and Lima. The streets turned from dirt to cobbles and even pavement, and the municipality installed new generators for the electric system. A tourist hotel was erected by Peru's energetic Compañia Hotelera, and, as a kind of last touch, metal containers for papers and trash were placed in nearly every block in the central district with a painted injunction to the public to keep the town clean. The estimated population rose from fifteen to thirty-five thousand.

This was no revolution, however, for the life of Puno goes on much as it has for many years, although with a freshness in certain aspects of its behavior. The alteration spoken of represents the gradual accumulation of changes here and there in the commercial and social life of the town which occurred in a relatively short period of time, thereby seeming to form one process.

In Puno as it is today, the shopper can buy Del Monte peaches, Libby's fruit salad, Gillette razor blades, DuPont nylon stockings, Swiss watches, journals and magazines from the U.S., France and Germany, wines and liquors of every brand and assorted cameras and photo-



Two shots of the Plaza de Armas. Puno.



graphic equipment with films to match.

At nightfall, Calle Lima is illuminated with bright light from the street lamps and the open shops. Indians, mestizos and whites crowd its length from the Plaza de Armas to the Parque de Manuel Pino, some interested in buying, others just taking the air. Over the mingled sounds of the three languages - Spanish, Quechua and Aymara - music roars out of loudspeakers donated by the municipality.

Conversations are filled with references to reopening the University of Puno (founded at about the time of our civil war and closed shortly thereafter), and how best to lobby for the airport planned for the near future to service the Altiplano (for which Puno is in competition with Juliaca, 30 miles inland).

The varied strains in the political life of Puno seem to have been united into one theme: more local autonomy. This is now an old song for the conflict between the centralized authority of Lima and the desires of the provinces for self rule has long gone on.

Puno in the past has taken to any political party which was against Lima's control. It was, for example, a center of aprimo, the catchall program of Haya de la Torre's Alianza Popular Revolucionaria ("Popular Revolutionary American Alliance," APRA). Once seen that regional autonomy was not forthcoming under the APRA supported president, Bustamante (1945-48), the movement disappeared in Puno. Today a new vitality seems to have entered the old demand for a freer hand in the administration of its affairs without reference to a specific party or program.

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Two important entries in the catalogue of factors which have given a new tone to the life of Puno are the Servicio Cooperativo Peruano-Norteamericano de Educación ("Peruvian and North American Cooperative Educational Service," SECPANE) which opened an office here in 1946, and the Maryknoll missionary group which founded a parish here in 1948. The work of both these groups has had and promises to have wide reaching effects.

Before discussing their activities a brief comment on the Altiplano indian is necessary since it is with him that they are principally concerned. Both the Quechua and the Aymara live in the Department of Puno and differ from each other to some degree. The Quechua is more like his Cuzco counterpart (CRT - 5): conservative, less willing to crack the mold of his traditional way of life and often suspicious of and hostile to any efforts to help him. The

Aymara is more flexible and less given to an almost fanatical dependence upon an "indian" pattern of behavior. He is also proud and independent and sometimes inaccessible for these reasons.

The majority of the Altiplano indians are farmers and pastoralists although there are a number of communities living on the lake shore which draw their basic subsistence from fishing. The farmer deals with a soil which in itself is cooperative but must also reckon with the frosts and hail storms which scourge the Altiplano. Seed once sown has no assurance of arriving at a full harvest. His pasture land is limited, since the large wool haciendas account for most of it, and what is left is of necessity over grazed.

Among the Aymara, and to a lesser extent among the Quechua, agricultural activity has been supplemented by some form of work bringing in a cash income. Many indians migrate temporarily as far as northern Peru, and even go outside the country, seeking jobs such as wage worker on an hacienda or as a member of a gang building or repairing the road system. Often this migration, between planting and harvesting, will empty a community of all its male members.

Migration is not the only recourse: trade or the development of a home industry are also important. Both men and women trade in the many markets of the area, selling and buying smuggled as well as normal goods. The indian may also participate directly in the contrabanding of materials across the lake although this seems more confined to people from the fishing communities who have more reason to be out on the lake.

Home industries take many forms. Some communities take advantage of the fact that beef cattle are rarely raised on the haciendas, which prefer sheep, alpaca and llamas, and keep cattle under a forced feeding regime. The sale of such animals brings them a substantial profit, and provides, incidentally, much of the beef sold in the markets of Lima. In this enterprise, thin cattle are purchased and driven to the buyer's home. There he has in storage yachu, a plant growing abundantly in the lake, which he feeds to the cattle in small but regularly amounts. The beasts' hunger is never fully satisfied and at each feeding they eat every scrap of fodder and eat more per day than they would otherwise, so that they soon plump up and can be sold for a good price.

One community, Ccota, draws a large yearly income from its orchestras which are in great demand for fiestas. Not only does the band hired out receive money but it is also wine and dine and in general has a good time. In order to maintain this state of affairs,



Faculty of Núcleo.  
Ccota. (Sr. Paniagua  
with muffler.)

Schoolchildren.  
Ccota.



Ichu, a Rural section of Puno Parish.



Father Murphy of the Maryknolls, and his House at Ichu.

each year the young men who have reached twenty volunteer en masse for conscription into the army (whereas most indians will do almost anything to avoid conscription) with the rider that they be assigned to an army band and learn one or more instruments. In this way Ccota has kept its position of preëminence in the entertainment field.

With all this traveling, trading and other commercial activity some Puno indians are relatively sophisticated beings with a strong practical sense and knowledge of other cultures besides their own. As the object of educational and missionary work they are much different entities than the average isolated stay-at-home farmer of the southern sierra.

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SECPANE's Coordinator of Nuclear Rural Schools in the Puno area is Sr. Luis Alberto Paniagua, a short, soft spoken man full of intensity, energy and drive. Before coming here he taught in Lima and Cuzco but being a puneño by birth he jumped at the chance to return when his present post was offered to him. Passionately dedicated to the proposition that education is one of the keys to solving the "indian problem" of Peru, he is willing to work long hours for small pay in the execution of his duties. But he handles his work with good humor as well as dispatch as I saw while spending some time in his office.

Sr. Paniagua has found that the Puno indian is often eager for a school in his community, sometimes from purely commercial motives since the ability to speak, read and write Spanish can be of immense value in his business activity. Whatever the motive is, however, this receptivity provides the entry which the nuclear service needs. The Quechua has proven less responsive than the Aymara, and the service's representatives have been booted out of Quechua communities many times without having more than a few minutes to explain their purposes.

The costs of operating the nuclear service are high. The núcleo in Peru (as elsewhere in Latin America) is patterned after the Casa del Pueblo (House of the People) devised by the Mexican Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos, during the early twenties. This type of school is designed to serve the entire life of the rural community teaching not only reading, writing and mathematics but also music, painting, sports and theater and giving instruction in sanitation, domestic science and scientific agriculture. Expenditures, then, are much greater than in the ordinary Peruvian school which is responsible only for the four R's: reading, writing, arithmetic and religion.



One of the continuing problems of Sr. Paniagua's job is to dispense the funds at his disposal most effectively. Teachers must be paid and housed, school buildings erected, half ton and pickup trucks provided to link the scattered system of núcleos together, libraries, texts and technical aids bought and distributed. Sometimes the community contributes to these expenses but this help cannot always be relied upon.

Ordinarily compromises and substitutes can be found when funds are limited but in one area a shortage of money is critical: teachers' salaries. In order to attract the capable person without whom the program suffers a good wage should be offered. As it stands now this is not the case. Sr. Paniagua said: "If it weren't that many young people join the service for the sole reward of teaching and being of service I wouldn't have a staff."

His current faculty ranges widely in ability. In some cases he feels that a teacher has drifted into the profession because he lacks the education or talent which would fit him for a more lucrative and prestigious post. Such a person tends to move without purpose and his indifference to his students (adults as well as children) is repaid in kind. The good teacher, of which there are many in the service, is less concerned with himself and salary and manages to achieve results of a high order of excellence.

Sr. Paniagua defined the good teacher as someone who not only has the necessary training to teach the many things required but who is also blessed with a combination of imagination, sensitivity and understanding to gain the trust and cooperation of the rural people.

In its beginnings here, the nuclear service met with the resistance of many of the large landholders, and others supporting the status quo. They made loud outcries of "communists all" and insisted that the indian was better off left alone. Despite this, the program got underway and the first noises died down although the hostility has not.

To me the most important point about the rural school service administered by Sr. Paniagua is that in its concept of nuclear education it is a strong agency for social as well as material change among the indians. This concept has no more real bounds than the limits of the individual's and community's wants and needs. The teacher in the núcleo has to be ready to answer and to defend almost any question relating to human activity. For example, "Why do you

sleep on a bed and not the floor?" or, "You say people should wash, why?" or, "Why should we give up trial marriage?" These are simple questions but they lead into complex ones. We may take the rationale behind the teacher's answers for granted, and in so doing lose sight of the real impact of this kind of education upon the indian, if he comes to agree with our premises for behavior and alters his manner of living accordingly.

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Using similar methods but working toward a different goal are the Maryknoll fathers. Their purpose is to make the Catholic religion a living force among the people of the Department of Puno. They too have to aim at some alteration in the traditional life of the indian, both because many indian practices conflict with Catholic doctrine and because a concept of social service is part of their missionary training.

Heading up the Puno parish, which includes the town and a number of outlying indian communities, is a gifted individual, Father Daniel Maclellan. Tall, lanky, with a wise and gentle face, Father Daniel is not only versed in theology and practical religion but is also a licensed pilot, a carpenter, an electrician and an aficionado of the bull ring. He wastes no elegant phrases in describing the Maryknoll's activities and aims, and is often refreshingly colloquial in conversation.

Behind this unaffected air lies a sharp, analytical mind coupled with three operating premises: that religion is a vital need for every man, that every man deserves being helped and that behind the apparent cultural differences which are seen as a man passes from group to group there is a body of common human desires and motivations, which can be ministered to directly in spite of initial barriers of language and behavior.

There are now five Maryknoll parishes in the department, staffed by 17 men. Eventually they hope to establish parishes in all parts of Puno served by full complements of priests. Although their main concern is "to get these people to Heaven," they are prepared to parallel the work of the núcleo teachers in fields outside religion, such as buying an adobe brick making machine for their parishoners use or organizing basketball teams.

The long range plan of the Maryknolls is the establishment of a native clergy, trained and willing to work among the rural people. Once major parishes have been laid out, each will have a center house to which will come graduates of Peruvian seminaries. There a new man will have a chance to learn and observe the techniques



Farmer of Ichu.



Young Parishioner of  
Ichu.

used by the Maryknolls. He will then go as pastor to some rural parish, but every two weeks or so he will return to the center house to discuss his problems and to relax. Father Maclellan thinks that at the end of fifty years the Maryknolls will be able to withdraw from Puno with the assurance that their work will be left in capable native hands.

Father Maclellan has helped to organize a credit union in Puno parish, not alone to encourage his parishoners to save but to see if the presence of available capital couldn't engender ideas for programs which would benefit everyone concerned. The results have been encouraging. His cook came to him recently and asked if the union couldn't purchase a baking machine and set up a model bakery in Puno. "If we kept it clean and made nothing but the best breads, everyone would buy." The point Father Maclellan makes is that it must be the indian himself who thinks up the uses to which union funds can be put: as treasurer he just takes care of the money and leaves the rest to the members.

The Maryknolls have had a great success here. For a long time the practice of Catholicism among townspeople has been slack. Many puneños put this down to the effect of the usual Peruvian parish priest who may be slack in his devotions, given to wine, song and women (often leaving the community to support his children) and all in all not a very exemplary person. The Maryknolls have shown themselves to be human but disciplined, dead serious about religion but not fanatics, hard working and able. As one person said to me: "The Maryknoll is a religious man not a saint nor a sinner, and who can resist such a person?"

But it is the Maryknoll's active, energetic and successful work among the indians outside the town which comes in for the most praise. It has surprised many townspeople as well as the indians that the priests will go out and live in an indian community as a matter of course. The response which they receive is much like that given to the good teacher described by Sr. Paniagua: his aims are justified and his work effective.

These missionary activities, like those of the nuclear school service, add up to another strong agency for social change in the Department of Puno, and promise to have equally long term effects.

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The town and the Department of Puno, then, strike me as being in a process of change, although it is much too early to make predictions as to its results. There are, however, important lessons to be learned here applicable to other parts of Peru.

What is happening among the indian populations is especially intriguing. There are still villages in the Altiplano pursuing a life unaltered for centuries, and not particularly wanting this changed. But in others, changes are taking place and new premises for behavior being developed, along lines of an evolution not a revolution.

In talking with sierra people I have sometimes gotten the impression that they reject innovations not on the basis of strangeness but because the new thing is identified with white and mestizo culture, being condemned out of the fear and hatred the indian has for the two groups. It may be that the more conservative indian will have another opinion and accept many things previously unwanted if he sees men like himself adopting material items and social forms belonging to the non-indian world.

As to the town of Puno, the recent acceleration in its development may not be sustained. If Juliaca should get the airport, it may lose much of its present importance as a reception center for goods. On the other hand, a road to Moquegua, a port on the Pacific coast, is a definite project, and this will maintain Puno's position as a receiver and trans-shipper of goods along a route from Moquegua to Puno to Cuzco and to Lima beyond. At the moment it's a tossup but the puneños are optimistic.

Sincerely,

*Charles R. Temple*  
Charles R. Temple

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