NOT FOR PUBLICATION

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

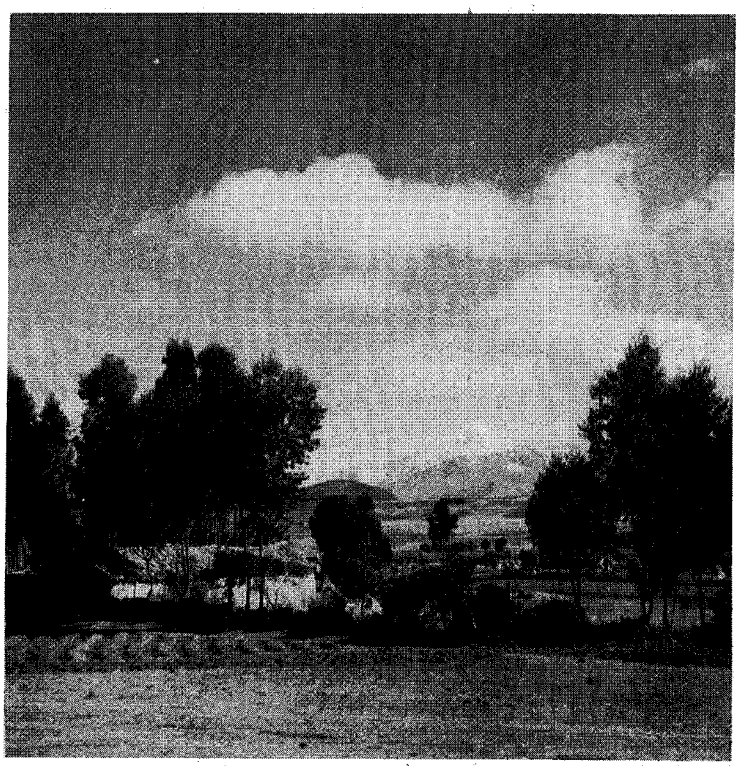
WHM - 23
CREAS: I

Casilla 208
Arequipa, Perú
November 11, 1955

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The district of Chinchero lies between 11,300 and 12,000 feet above sea level in the shadow of the great peaks of Pitusiray and Chicon. During clear days the land is subject to the intense rays of the tropic sun, but during the nights and periods of bad weather, the biting cold of the altitude sweeps over the treeless plain. As is true of so much of the altiplano and puna, drainage is poor, and 6.4% of the land is covered with swamps and ponds. Of these, Lake Piuray, 2.5 kilometers long by 2 kilometers wide, is the largest. The soil itself is thin and heavy; erosion is common on the slopes, and heavy rains are apt to flood the flat lands.



Chinchero and Chicon: trees are eucalyptus

The agricultural practices of Chinchero's more than 7,000 inhabitants are more primitive than those employed by the Incas, at least as far as soil conservation is concerned. Until the arrival of CREAS there was no attempt to prevent erosion and flooding or improve the quality of the soil by the extensive use of fertilizer. Wooden ploughs and iron-tipped digging sticks were about the only agricultural tools in existence. Of the area's 45,000 acres, only

18,120 were open to agriculture. In Alejandro Quesada's opinion, that figure could be boosted by some 9,600 acres by the introduction of a few modern methods of farming.

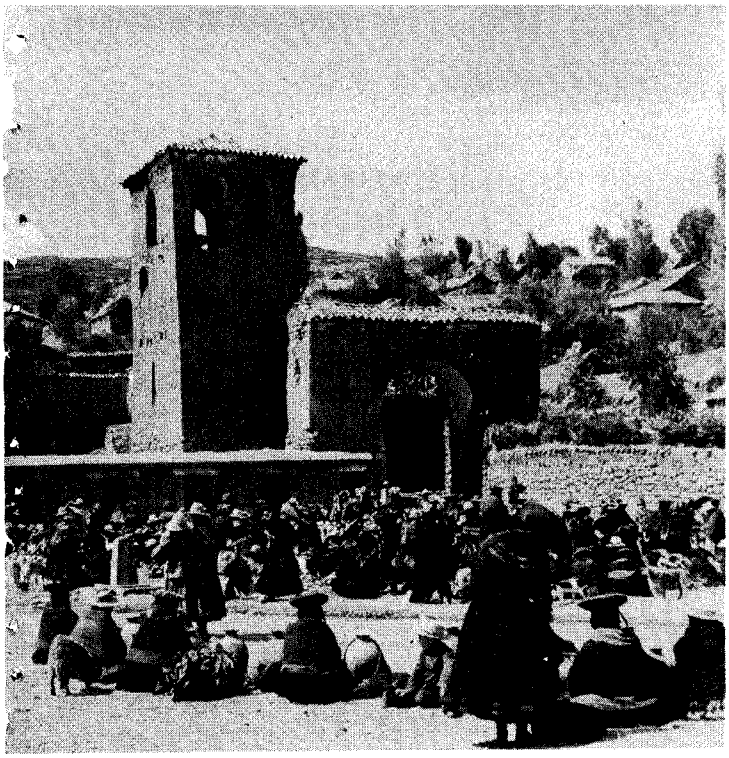
The climate of Chinchero is not one which is conducive to the production of abundant crops. From December through March, heavy rains and hail storms flood the ground and do great damage to grains and tubers. The dense fogs which occur from January through May favor the growth of harmful plant fungi. The wind storms of August and September often beat the grain crops to the ground, and the snow falls (which occur in two out of every five winters), hail storms and frosts of June, July and August can freeze the all-important potato in the ground. Quesada estimated an annual precipitation of 50.7 inches and temperatures ranging from 72° F. to 11° F. (average temperature: 57° F.). Under the above conditions, it is easy to see why vegetation native to the district is limited to brushwood, ichu grass, swamp reeds and herbs. The only imported tree which has survived is the eucalyptus, although CREAS is now experimenting with other species.

Animal life is as scarce as vegetation on this bare plateau. There are a few deer, wild guinea pig, weasel and puma (a relative of our western mountain lion). The only animal that seems to enjoy life in Chinchero, however, is the fox; there are several species of zorro in the region. The bigger foxes kill lambs, chickens and domesticated guinea pigs, at times invading the ayllus in search of prey. Pumas are rarely seen nowadays, but there are rumors to the fact that occasionally one of the big cats enters a village and dines on a sheep, dog or pig.

The numerous swamps of the region are filled with water fowl - ducks and mudhens. Song birds live in the sparse brush, and the hawks and vultures soar in the upper air. The Indians of Chinchero kill a few duck and deer and catch some of the local fish each year, scarcely enough to improve their meager diets. Their main concern with wild life is to keep the predatory foxes away from the livestock.

The total value of domesticated animals in Chinchero in 1953 was about US$ 19,000.00. Almost half the animals were cattle. The rest, in descending order of economic importance, were horses and burros, sheep, llamas, hogs, poultry and guinea pigs. The animals were in terrible condition, deprived as they were of decent feed, clean water and good care. Parasites, mange, running sores and the like took a severe annual toll of Chinchero livestock. About 10% of the cattle and sheep died each dry season from the lack of food and water and from the effect of the intense cold on their weakened systems. Due to a harmful lack of equilibrium between agriculture and stock raising, the half-starved animals could produce only a fraction of the normal amount of meat, wool, eggs and milk. Cattle gave one-sixth the normal supply of milk and weighed only one-third as much as they should. Sheep weighed one-half the normal weight, gave a quarter of the normal wool supply. Horses' weight was cut in half, and chickens laid one-seventh the normal amount of eggs.

Animal husbandry was on a level with the agricultural practices. Animals were often severely injured by primitive brands placed on necks, shoulders or hams. Herded by inexperienced women and children, cattle were forced to walk long distances to water. Slaughtering



Sunday market

was done when the animal had long since passed its prime. Cattle were killed at ten years instead of two; pigs and lambs at three to four years instead of an economical one. The result, of course, was that the annual profits produced by stock raising were only a fraction of the possible amount.

Land in Chinchero has a social as well as economic value. In 1953, three-fourths of the total area of the district belonged to Indian communities, and an additional one-fifteenth of the area was the property of some 600 small landowners who were members of the community from which they acquired the land. About 360 acres were rented from the nearby hacienda of Huaypo; rental was in the form of work - 144 days given to the hacienda for each 4 hectares (9.6 acres) rented. In terms of livestock, the Indians owned over 80% of all cattle, horses, sheep and poultry in the area. Pasture land rented from the haciendas near Chinchero was paid for with 10% of the animals which had grazed on the rented land each year. About 4,900 people (70% of the population) formed the Chinchero labor force; of these, 60% were men, 30% women and 10% children. Fundamental agricultural tasks were performed by communal labor, with the families of each ayllu working together. An estimated 220 days each year were spent working on community lands. Incomes were bolstered by working on nearby roads (2.5 U.S. cents a day) or on haciendas (maximum wage: 15 cents for a six-hour work day).

The principal crops in the district are potatoes and other tubers, broadbeans, barley, wheat, quinua, cabbage and onions. Quesada estimated that 10% of the total annual harvest was lost due to rain and hail, weeds and disease, and the negligence of the farmers. In general, planting occurs from August through December and harvesting from April to August. Almost all the food produced in Chinchero prior to 1954 was consumed in the district, the exceptions being small percentages of the barley, broadbean and tuber crops. The use of bad seed, the density of planting, the lack of fertilizer and contour ploughing, and the total disregard for conservation measures had so exhausted the soil that annual production was barely enough to satisfy the minimum demands of the communities. Under these terms, export of foodstuffs from Chinchero was a rare event.

Living conditions in the district are typical of Indian communities in this Department. Families live in small, one-room adobe huts with earth floors and thatched roofs. Many of the dwellings are windowless, although others belonging to the more modern-minded inhabitants

have one or two small perforations in the walls. Cooking is done over stone or adobe ovens fired with bosta (dried dung). Firewood is a rare luxury. There are no sanitary facilities save in those houses which have been equipped with a privy by CREAS. Rooms are lighted by candles or, occasionally, a kerosene lantern. Sleeping quarters usually consist of a raised platform covered with dirty sheepskins - a bed for an average of six people as well as the family collection of chickens, dogs and guinea pigs.

The family diet consists mainly of potatoes and other tubers, barley, maize and wheat. The food is washed down with chicha. Milk, eggs and meat are rare items on the menu. Clothing is made from llama and sheep wool, and each suit of clothes lasts about two years. Rubber sandals made from automobile tires are worn by the men, and the large majority of the women and children go barefoot.

Sickness is a common event in Chinchero, despite the effort of the local Nuclear School and CREAS nurse to curb it. Progress has been made, but tuberculosis, typhoid, small pox, grippe and intestinal parasites still attack a large portion of the population.

Educational activity has been on the upswing for the last several years, thanks chiefly to the efforts of SECPANE (a Point Four American-Peruvian program for the development of rural education). But, as of 1953, four-fifths of the population were illiterate, and only 20% could speak Spanish. Quechua continues to be the language of Chinchero. The western custom of organized sports brought in by the schools has struck a deaf ear as far as the older inhabitants are concerned. Diversion to them means a fiesta with plenty of coca and cane alcohol.

From what has been said before, it should be obvious that Chinchero has an almost closed economy. With few exceptions, what is produced in the district is consumed in the district. Annual earnings are used to buy fundamental household articles, and there is little enough left over to purchase seed and equipment for the fields. Extra savings are quickly spent for legal transactions, church fiestas, coca and alcohol. There is no money in Chinchero to buy consumer goods. As far as the richer regions of Perú are concerned, Chinchero and its thousands of counterparts throughout the sierra are dead weights on the economy of the country as a whole. They neither import nor export; they simply exist, much to the consternation of the editorial writers and politicians of Lima. It is one of CREAS' main jobs to break the leaden ring of the village's economy by assisting the Indian to raise his standard of living and, at the same time, his income to the point where he will be able to join the ranks of the national producers and consumers.

The local government in Chinchero is typical of small villages throughout the region. Among themselves, the Indians are honest, good-humored folk. Their ayllus are run in a democratic if primitive fashion. Distinguished elders or personeros in each community act as advisers for groups of men gathered to discuss some subject pertinent to communal labor or other activities. The women seem to exert a great influence on their husbands. CREAS discovered that if a woman wasn't convinced that agricultural credit was a good idea for her man, she refused to allow him to sign up for a loan.

It is in the relationship between classes that lying, cheating and general dishonesty come into play. An Indian will leave his door unlocked in the ayllu, knowing that all his belongings are safe. But that same Indian will try to rob a mestizo blind under the correct assumption that he who moves first in the game of deception will usually emerge with some of his skin intact. With his own people, Juan Quispe loves to laugh and play practical jokes. But in the presence of the mestizos, whom he hates, and the whites, whom he distrusts as agents of the State, Juan is a sullen, suspicious individual. He is aware that the mestizos can usually read and write, that they always win the battles involving legal transactions because they can talk Spanish and influence the lawyers (Juan has a special hatred of lawyers). But above all, he is aware that for centuries the mestizos have cheated and stolen land and material goods from his people. Therefore, Juan adopts the mestizo methods of lying and cheating in the hopes of preventing the same thing from happening to him.

The village officials are more often than not chosen from the ranks of the local mestizos. Sometimes an educated Indian is appointed to a minor post. It has been found that the man who climbs above the level of the ayllu and the wooden plough by means of his education is apt to cut all strings which formally bound him to his people and, in fact, turn on them and abuse them as though he were a mestizo in good standing. The mestizos and educated Indians, then, run the district as though it were a feudal domain. In Chinchero, one mestizo alcalde (mayor) kept himself in office for a long period by chicanery and bribes. His name is famous in the Cuzco area. To keep in his good graces, the ayllu Indians gave him presents of food and livestock. The poorer animals he sold in the market and the best stock he gave to high officials in the Prefect's office in Cuzco. By means of trickily worded legal documents, he took over Indian land. His word was absolute law in Chinchero, and his tenure of office was guaranteed by the bribes accepted by the Cuzco officials.

Under such conditions, it was only natural that CREAS should find itself opposed by two important groups in Chinchero: the mestizos, who feared that an enlightened group of Indians would mean an end of their feudal reign; and the Indians themselves, who thought CREAS had come in as an agent of the government to take away their land. How and to what extent the agricultural credit organization managed to gain the confidence of the people of Chinchero will be the subject of my next letter.

Sincerely,

William H. MacLeish

William H. MacLeish

Received New York 11/25/55.