

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WEM - 6  
The Rains and  
No Carnavalón

Casilla 35  
Arequipa, Perú  
March 6, 1955

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

Dear Mr. Rogers:

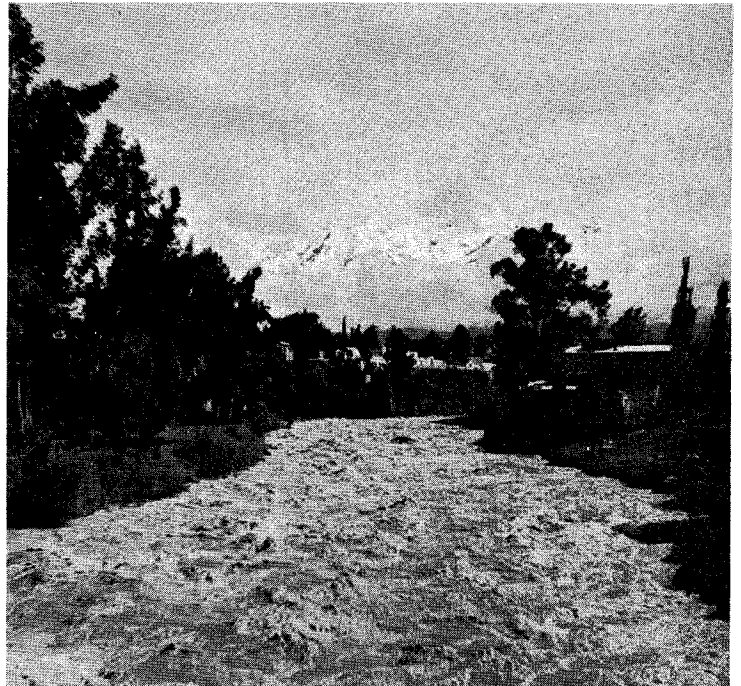
The arequipeños have a saying about their brand of weather during the summer months: "Enero poco, Febrero loco, y Marzo borracho". <sup>1.</sup> Although the dicho is humorous, there is nothing funny about this year's rainy season. 1955 has been one of the wettest years on record. The heavy rains have turned the coastal rivers into swollen torrents of mud and boulders. Travel in the sierra is almost impossible, for the rain has washed out the dirt roads and has loosened the bare soil of the mountain slopes to a dangerous extent. Huaycos or landslides are a constant danger to the traveller in the altitude.

A few weeks ago, over a hundred vehicles were held up for several days on the north bank of the Rio Sigwas while repairmen worked round the clock to repair the dangerously weakened bridge. Without food and water, the motorists were forced to pay ridiculously high prices to the local scalpers who came a-runnin' with baskets of fruit and jerry cans of water.

The Rio Chili has overflowed several chacras to the south of the city. When you consider the fact that farmland is worth up to 25,000 soles per hectarea (about US\$ 1,315), you can understand why the chacareros raise such a fuss about the construction of more dykes and levies.

This week the Chili flooded the southern approach to the Tiabaya bridge, thus blocking the main artery of travel between Arequipa and its ports of Mollendo and Matarani. Industries such as Leche Gloria (WEM-5) which depend upon transportation for the collection of their raw products are hardest hit by the floods and washouts. Several times during February, Leche Gloria trucks have been marooned in the back country for days at a stretch. The Arequipa market has been without oranges and fish for the past week due to the terrible conditions of the roads.

In Mollendo and Mejia, a small fishing and resort village south of Mollendo, the muddy waters of the Rio Tambo have pushed out to sea for several hundred yards, driving the fish into deeper water.



The Chili in flood stage

1. January - a little, February - crazy, March - drunken.

In a country which is used to wet weather, the present Arequipa rainy season would be shrugged off. After all, the mornings are usually clear, and the rains last only six hours or so. A full day of rain is a rarity, even in this near-record year. But the fact is that the city is not built to absorb constant wettings. Many of the houses and practically all of the hovels are built of unbaked adobe, a material which literally melts in a heavy downpour. The papers have been full of accounts of caved in walls and roofs. To date, no one has been caught under a falling block of 'dobe, but the chances are that sooner or later someone is going to get hurt. Rain water has seeped into the cellars of many houses and small stores in the lower section of town. A few days ago, water leaked into a leather store warehouse and ruined some 10,000 soles worth of hides.

The obvious problem during the rains is one of health. As I stated in WHM - 3, the majority of mistianos live in one room huts. Their children run barefoot in the streets dressed in thin and threadbare clothes. While the antiseptic mountain sun is shining, the mortality rate stays at an appalling but fairly constant level. The heavy rains, however, make it much more difficult to keep ahead of the omnipresent pneumonia and bronchitis.

The rains should end in the next three weeks, if they follow the normal pattern. The desert will lose its green stubble, and the rivers will drop back into their banks - and the trout will come out of hiding. The cillar of the churches will dry and whiten, and the Ciudad de las Lluvias will become the Ciudad Blanca again. But the memory of the 1955 rainy season and the damages it caused will be around for a long, long time to come.

.....

Inti-raymi is the Quechua name for the celebration of the summer solstice, one of the many sun-worshipping ceremonies observed by the Indians of ancient Perú. The rite was brought down from the sierra, by the fourth Inca, Maita Ccapac, who, according to the legend, settled the towns surrounding Arequipa in 1140 or thereabouts. The ceremony itself consisted of several days of drinking and dancing without stop.

The Spaniards who settled in the village of Arequipa shortly after its foundation (1540) brought with them the custom of celebrating the three days previous to the beginning of Lent in as boisterous a form as possible. Pitched battles were held in the streets, the men being mounted, the ammunition being cascarones (eggshells filled with colored water). Señoritas were sprinkled with expensive perfumes imported from Spain. Dancing and drinking was on a 'round the clock basis.

It is no wonder, then, that today's three days of Carnavales are a mixture of the two customs. The elaborate costumes, parties, and cascarones throwing of the Spaniards were



Corso de carros: a float entered by the district of Cerro Colorado or Red Hill



Huayno: fancy underpinnings.

united with the music, dancing, and paganism of the indio to form the modern Carnaval.

On Saturday, March 19, conjuntos (bands, same as comparsas) from the mountain towns of Ayaviri, Puno, Julaca, and Cuzco began their invasion of the Ciudad de las Lluvias. The rain blackened the chullos (stocking caps) of the men, the vivid shawls and dresses of the women. A few groups began to dance through the deserted street: the couples shuffling through the steps of the huayno. The musicians behind them tooted mournfully on their quenas (wooden six or seven-holed flutes) and samponas (antaras or pan pipes). Bottles of aguardiente were broken out to guard against sudden chills and/or thunderbolts, but even the effects of the straight grain alcohol could not combat the drizzle. The conjuntos retired to dryer and warmer surroundings, leaving a few dedraggled paper serpentinass (confetti) to mark their passage. It looked as though Carnaval would be a complete flop.

A miracle occurred the next morning. Momo, the god of Carnaval, must

Huayno: note the use of the handkerchief.

have intervened with the rain spirits, for the clouds had retreated to the flanks of the volcanoes. Mistianos looked on in wonder as the sun began to dry up the streets. Steam rose from the soaking cillar and adobe walls of the houses. The sound of the quena and sampona were heard in the land, and the Coca Cola<sup>truck</sup> toured the center of town blasting popular marineras and pampeñas (local dance music) through its loudspeakers. In the Selva Alegre (free translation: Happy Jungle) district, decorated trucks and cars jockeyed for the choice positions in the corso de carros. Each barrio (district), industry, and sporting club had chosen a queen, so that every vehicle was filled with some form of royalty or other.





Conjunto "Inti-raymi": all photos on this page illustrate phases of Cuzco dances. Embroidered pants and skirts are typical of Cuzco region. Note slings carried by men. Above: the guifala.

The comparsas led the throng up the hill to Selva Alegre - two lines of dancers and prancing devils followed by the quena players and the drummers. Policemen chased little boys who were running a little ahead of schedule in the matter of water throwing and ether spraying. Through the crowd the lines of dancers wound in the never-ending shuffle of the huayno. At intervals, Indian women dropped out of the dance to nurse a baby, adjust a petticoat, or take a good pull at the aguardiente bottle.

Peggy and I spent most of the morning taking pictures and recording the music of the best comparsas we could find. The huayno is an insistent musical form; the melody rarely exceeds seven notes and is repeated over and over again. Although an inversion or variation of the original melody is sometimes brought in, the overall effect of the repetition and the simple syncopation is hypnotic. After listening to the huaynitos for a couple of hours, one is liable to walk with a noticeable bouncing shuffle.

Once the floats and decorated cars had moved out of Selva Alegre in the direction of the Plaza de Armas, the real spirit of Carnival began to settle over the crowd. Although the town council had decreed that juego (play) would not start until the following day, the announcement had no effect whatsoever on the young and young-minded

disciples of Momo. Girls shrieked and men shouted as the chisquetes (flasks containing liquid under pressure) of ether and cheap (seven soles) perfume were put into action. The favorite method of employment seems to be that of creeping up behind the victim and squirting a jet at the nape of the neck. The effect is somewhat like that produced by dry ice, and cruel words are apt to be directed at the squirter, even though it is understood that it is all in fun. Vender's of plastic eye goggles were doing a landoffice business around the edges of the crowd. Peggy





had reason to regret not buying a pair; before we were able to work free of the mob, she was hit twice in the same eye by jets of ether. It is to her everlasting credit that she refrained from kicking her small assailants in the groin, for the pain although momentary is intense.

In the afternoon, the mistianos retired to house and hut to prepare for the real festival of Carnaval (Monday through Wednesday).<sup>\*</sup> I watched my landlord's 13 year old son, Kiko, take stock of his weapons - fifty-odd globos (small balloons filled with water), two large water pails, several pots of dye, a muñeco de anilina or old sock filled with a mixture of ink and shoe polish, and a bag of flour. "What's the flour for?" I asked.

"To put on the globos, Señor Beel. You can throw them better that way."

"And the dye? I thought colored water was prohibited this year."

"Well....."

"Is the ink in your muñeco permanent, Kiko?"

"Oh no! It lasts only four or five days. Look!". He rubbed some of the stuff on his arm, spit on it, and tried to scrape it off. The stain spread. Kiko looked immensely pleased.

Actually, Carnavales are the days of <sup>\*</sup>Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday; Saturday and Wednesday are tacked on for good measure by the arequipenos.



Above: a conjunto on the dirt track warming up before the competition. The harpa is a mestizo instrument.

Below left: a trio of tarkas, one of the many types of quenás. The tarka has seven holes, is much larger than the usual bamboo quenás. This class of instruments dates from pre-Incaic times.

Below right: a banda of quenás and tambores or drums.





Intermission and ice cream  
"¡O que rico!"

trying to out-dance and out-toot the others. The devil dancers pranced through the groups, whipping their comrades into more frenzied activity.

Winner of first prize in the comparsa competition was the "Conjunto Inti-raymi" from Ayaviri, a small town on the railway line between Juliaca and Cuzco. The group performed huaynos, guifalas (remarkably similar to the Virginia Reel) and individual dances from the Cuzco region. In many of the dance forms, the performers ended each figure of the dance with a short chant or song, the men imploring, the women accusing. The dancers carried slings in their hands, using them in much the same manner as the handkerchief of the huayno or marinera (see photo page 3).

In my opinion, the Quechua language is admirably suited for ballad singing. The gutturals and vowel combinations fit in perfectly with the simple construction of the serrano songs.

During one of the intermissions, a pretty Cuzco girl sang a number of canciones cuzceñas. She had a fine voice but seemed to be pushing it too far into the upper register. Alejandro Davila, an excellent guitarrista and folklorista, winced when he heard her reach into a falsetto. "This is a terrible thing," he said. These girls have heard about Yma Sumac <sup>2.</sup> and her four octave range. They think that in

2. Once the star of folk music here, Miss Sumac received a baddrubbing in the Peruvian press when she recently took out U.S. citizenship papers.

I took advantage of his good humor to borrow several balloons and to ask for free instruction in the "arming" of the globo, a feat requiring steady hands, iron nerves, and a suit of foul weather gear. The bathroom was several inches deep in water and shredded globos before I had conquered the art of arming.

Melgar Stadium, across the street from our apartment on Avenida Jorge Chavez, was the center of interest on Monday morning. The papers announced that there would be a competition between the comparsas, a greased pole contest, a free-for-all soccer game, and a parade of cabezudos (clowns wearing huge papier mache masks). During the early morning, the comparsas came tottering down Jorge Chavez - they had been dancing all night - and flopped on the ground outside the stadium to rest up for the big event. By nine o'clock, the sombra (shade) section of the stadium was filled with spectators. By ten, the dirt track circling the soccer field was lined with the different comparsas, each

Chullos, serpentinas, and sun glasses are the order of the day.



order to be good singers, they must copy her. The trouble is, most of them don't have the voices to do it. This is ruining good folk singing." As if to prove his point, the singer's voice faltered on an impossible note and broke into a hoarse wheeze. Dávila shook his head sadly.

The soccer game and greased pole contest were announced over the loudspeaker. A ball was thrown out from the crowd, and anyone who felt like it gave it a boot. Kids scampered over the bodies of sleeping dancers to join in the scramble. With all of our film and most of our recording tape expended, we pushed through the crowd toward the gate, dodging ether jets and serpentinás.

.....

The juego de Carnaval takes many forms. One may be hit in the face with a globo, a pailful of water, a handful of mud, flour, shoe polish, or ink. One may be attacked from balcony or street level. The only certain thing is that one is going to get almighty wet. In Yanahuara (across the Chili from Arequipa) juego takes the form of an aquacade. Teams of men and women line up on opposite sides of a large acequia (irrigation ditch) and take turns throwing each other into the water. This form of juego usually goes on for from 4 to 6 hours (one hour off for lunch). In Arequipa, though, it takes a bit longer to get thoroughly sopping.

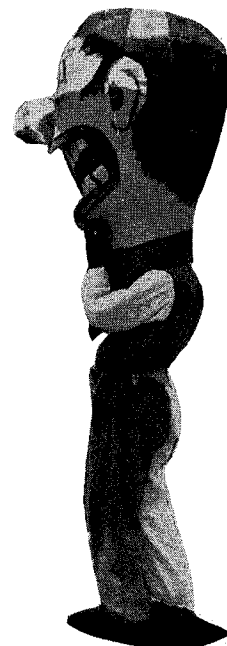
By two o'clock the streets were deserted. Blinds were drawn over the windows; heads peeped over balcony walls. It was time.

The first shot of the war was fired by a small boy. He appeared quite suddenly from around the corner and fired a globo through the open window of a passing gondola (bus). As he paused in his flight to observe the effects of his artistry, the tyke was inundated by a bucketful of slops thrown from the balcony above. His terrified shriek seemed to trigger off a score of individual battles up and down the street. Bands of men and boys stalked each other from house to house.

My landlord's door opened and Kiko emerged, his whole body trembling like a bird dog on the scent. Staggering under the load of a canasta of globos and a bucket of water, he crept down the stairs and into the street. His cohort and muñeco de analina carrier - our maid's four year old son Carlitos - brought up the rear. I went out on the balcony to watch their progress, and a globo splattered on the wall behind me. Without bothering to adjust my sights, I returned the fire. Luckily, the policeman on the corner was looking the other way when my missile hit him. Needless to say, I retired myself to inactive duty.

Meanwhile, Kiko and Co. had joined forces with the neighborhood gang. They were engaged in taking a house by frontal assault when the enemy armor appeared. A Ford camioneta (pickup truck) bearing two huge cans of water and a fighting crew of three swerved around the corner and attacked the boys. The infantry fought an inspired delaying action, but the shock action and superior fire power of the enemy were too much for them. Kiko squelched back to the house for more ammunition; Carlitos took a final swing at the camioneta with his muñeco and managed to wrap the thing around his neck.

A group of three masochistic señoritas toured the town in the back of a truck. By afternoon's end, they were sitting waist deep in water, still shrilling their battlecry of Socorro! Socorro! (Help! Help!)



Cabezudo

Devil Dancer



The juego continued all day Tuesday and Wednesday morning, even though the clouds closed in over the valley again and rain drenched anything that had been missed by the jugadores. Wednesday afternoon, then, was a perfect time to bury Ño Carnavalón.

A local historian told me that the Entierro de Ño Carnavalón was by tradition a putting away of the locura or madness of the people. Ño (a contraction of señor) Carnavalón, the king of the fiesta, the embodiment of the carnival spirit, was represented by a huge papier maché or rag doll. In the old days, the indios used to bear the "body" to a place above the city called Quinsa Mokko (three peaks) and bury it with full honors.

Despite the mestización of Carnival, this year's ceremony of the Entierro de Ño Carnavalón retained the spirit of a true burial. The "cemetery" was packed with people. The bright dresses and the skirts were gone; the crowd stood hunched against the drizzle. The mendigos (beggars) and the deformed moved through the crowd whining for their propinas or alms. The comparsas were forced into small pockets by the pressure of the mob and they staggered rather than danced. Ño Carnavalón and his locura were very dead, now, and the rain drove the crowd down the hill and back to the city.

.....

Most of Arequipa's society stay away from the city during Carnival. Many of them go to Mejía during the rainy season and they make it a point not to return to the city until after Carnavales. Their reasons for doing so include the bad weather, the horse play, and the presence of so many cholos and indios in the streets. Statistics agree with them in the matter of horseplay; some 3,500 people were hurt during the fiestas de Momo in Lima, while in Arequipa, the figure climbed to several hundred. Drunks were a common sight, and the police were kept hopping day and night. However, after spending some six months here, I believe that the antipathy of the well-bred arequipeño toward the indio has a great deal to do with the desire of the well-to-do to remain aloof from Carnival.

Both in music and in ceremony, Carnival is a good example of the mixing of the races in Perú. Stories of the good old days of aristocratic fêtes and balls notwithstanding, the present day fiesta illustrates the basic and continuing process of mestización in this half-costa, half-sierra city.

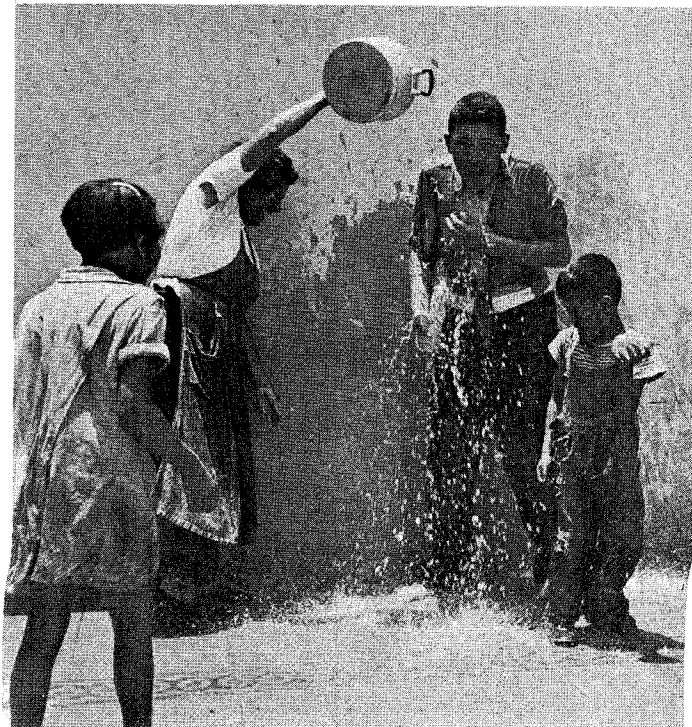
Sincerely,

*William H. MacLeish*  
William H. MacLeish

All pictures except those of the juego and the Rio Chili by Margaret Moll MacLeish.



EL JUEGO





Received New York 3/18/55.