

## NOT FOR PUBLICATION

The City Hotel  
Córdoba, Córdoba  
April 28, 1942

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Are the attitudes of Argentines, especially young Argentines, changing in the face of the evolution which is beginning to transform this country? And, if so, how fast is the change taking place? There is no doubt that forces are at work, tending to "modernize" the philosophy and living habits of the people. It is also equally true that the change is more marked in the port cities than in the colonial interior. On the surface the change is apparent. One can see it in the store windows and in the hats of the women. Buenos Aires and Rosario have many characteristics that are both continental and North American. Even the language in that part of the Argentine has different idioms. Buenos Aires is characterized by the word *Porteño*, which means that which is of the port. I am certain in my own mind that the *Porteño* thinks about many things much differently than the people of the interior, such as, for example, the people of Córdoba. Curious this difference. In Córdoba expressions of the Guani Indian tribe are still in use. The *Porteño* and *Rosarino* are beginning to absorb some of the restless, energetic qualities which stem from other nations, particularly our own. Provincial people talk about this "fast pace" which is not fast enough for some foreigners. I still remember how Jorge Helman, one of my Rosario friends, with eight minutes of grace raced me through the business section of Rosario so that I would not miss a train. Speed and dash like that would be impossible in Córdoba's narrow, old world streets. There is almost as much difference between Rosario and Córdoba as there is between Jorge Helman and one of my friends of the School of Economic Sciences.

This friend of whom I speak has a quick, lively mind. He is the best *cachadista* among the student group of which I am a part. That is to say that he can poke fun at any one of us without our knowing that he is doing it, although everyone else is aware of it. (The *cachada* is an Argentine form of humor which does not have, I am sure, a North American equivalent. It may take the form of exaggerated praise, when the opposite is meant. It must be so skillfully directed that the object of the jest really believes he is being complimented. In such a case no one gives the *cachadista* away by laughing out of turn or indicating the truth in any way. I have been so suspicious at times, however, that I have bluntly asked Argentine friends if they are handing me a *cachada*.) One might place this young man in a group of North American youths and he would seem to be one of the crowd. There would be one difference, a great difference in the way he and they think. It has taken me some time to discover that difference. One night we talked four hours, until 2 o'clock in the morning. I tried to discover his ambitions, what he was going to do to set the world on fire. It was a long time before he became frank. He had first to outline the immortal principles, trot out all the sacred ideals and stamp his approval on them. He had to admire the progressive nations and to pay special tribute to one great Democracy which will, as he assured me, save the world. And then he began to touch upon the most interesting subject of all, himself. First of all, I must have observed by now that he had "capacidad," more than most any other student. He said he had a ready intelligence. That of course was to be expected. He was a Latin. Most everyone knew that the Latins have more "capacidad" of mind than the people of northern Europe. He did not blush when he asserted he had more "capacidad" than most of the professors. He could out-think them, approach problems with more logic than they and come out on top in all class discussions even though the professors at times did not have the "capacidad" to realize it. Alas and alack! He confided to me that he does not have the "voluntad", the strong will, to realize his ambitions. It is a pity, he said in effect, that this is a country where "capacidad" is not recognized. If it were, he would have a great future. Men of position do not like to see "capacidad" in others. They will do nothing to promote it; they will do much to defeat it.

What is it you want to be? I persisted in asking him. He told me that he wished to be awarded a Cátedra in the University where he might benefit others with his knowledge and make 800 pesos a month. Besides he would then attain something which he greatly desired, tranquilidad. Here you are by your own admission, I stated, the makings of a great man. All you need is "voluntad." Why don't you pick up and go out in the world? He told me that Argentines like him admire the "voluntad" of other peoples, peoples who do not have "capacidad" but who, nevertheless, accomplish a great deal. He said that North Americans and some Europeans do not realize what sacrifices "voluntad" demands. If we should possess great purpose, we would lose our tranquilidad. That is something we cannot bear to lose. He told me that practically every young fellow he knows thinks just as he. Then, I questioned him, when you say that you are going to North America some day, you do not mean it? In fact, is it not true that you may never even go to Buenos Aires, or Mendoza or Iguazú Falls? Is it not true that you do not propose to do anything about the great political, spiritual and sundry ideals which you profess with such a grand manner and with such enthusiasm? He said that it was true that the doing was something else; but then <sup>one</sup> should understand, as I had not, that the doing was not implied. Indeed--and he insisted that I understand this important point--we do mean what we say when we say it. Then, I reasoned, your ambition is above all else to live tranquil, in peace, in the world of it might-be or it-might-have-been--according to the circumstances of the case. Yes, he said, I would sacrifice success if it meant that I should thereby lose tranquility. But do not forget, Che Pancho, he concluded, that I have great "capacidad."

The Institute of Statistics of the School of Economic Sciences of Córdoba University affords students the opportunity to make independent studies under its professors. Dr. Benjamin Cornejo, the director of the School, has suggested that I do some study under the supervision of this branch of the University in addition to assisting at a regular quota of classes. The special study which I have begun and which Dr. Yocca of the Institute has approved is based on a formidable list of questions which I have received from Prof. T. W. Schultz, head of the Department of Economics and Sociology of Iowa State College. The questions have five general divisions: First, the cost of living and social conditions obtaining among the working class of the pampas region. Second, the role of the land owner group. Third, the impact of war upon Argentina. Fourth, the social outlook of rural people. Fifth, trends in technology. Professors and students of the Institute are interested in Prof. Schultz's questions because they are so pertinent. Their general reaction to them is that they are questions which Argentines have often asked, but which they have never really tried to answer. There are no available statistics or basic books with made-to-order answers. Argentine economists and sociologists have treated the questions only in the most general terms and often from the standpoint of the particular group of society from which they have had their origin. Many general reference books have been written by people of the land-owning <sup>class</sup>. Almost every Argentine economic or social problem must reckon with the "land." In the rich Province of Buenos Aires there are landowners who have more than 200,000 acres of land, land as rich as that in the corn belt of the United States. In the territories of the nation there are holdings of more than a million acres of land. Almost everyone agrees, the estancieros included, that some day the great holdings of land must be divided, that the one-crop system of the chacareros must give way to mixed farming, that the great areas upon which livestock graze must become farm units. When and how will this be done? What program must the government effect to purchase the land? What will be the measure of justice which the landowners will merit? What sacrifices must they make in behalf of the ill-fed, ill-housed and, we might truthfully say, poverty-stricken chacareros, peones and farm workers? Is Argentina willing to sacrifice its magnificent cattle herds for a new kind of agriculture? Will Argentina continue to cling to the status quo as it has from the time of Rosas, the Great Restorer? Will a Homestead Act be passed--and enforced? There are many 'Homestead Acts' on the statute books, but none of them has ever been applied seriously. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the intent of almost every law has been to prevent the growth of latifundios and to encourage homesteading. To assure the operation of this principle, land was often given in enfiteusis, meaning that it

was leased for long periods by the government which retained the real ownership. It was Rosas who gave the land to its possessors, thus making the latifundio possible. Up through the years, the state ignored the basic laws and deeded millions of hectares away. Today Argentina finds its land problem linked closely with every economic problem. Because of the landed estates and the latifundio, a majority of Argentines live in the cities. Because of it the Argentine town is undeveloped, does not have the advantages which healthy communities should have. Because of it chacareros and peones cannot acquire the land which they need to develop rural society. Because of it education and social progress of all types is slowed up and hindered. Everyone who sees the Argentine knows the great potentials that exist and the imponderables which accompany them. Land is the greatest of the potentials and the latifundio system is the greatest of the imponderables.

By now I am a member of the student body in good standing, much at home in Córdoba. The University students call me Pancho or Panchito, though the diminutive is preferred by them. The nickname, or apodo, is very common. One student is called El Chacarero, because he comes from the campo. The students call one of the professors whose abilities they do not fancy El Vago, or the 'Vague' One. They are always dishing out cachadas to him. They say he is the best professor of all, "el mejor que hay." They have proclaimed me a criollo. I am sure it is not a cachada, for they invite me often to their pensiones to drink mate and to talk on little and big things. Are you a criollo? they ask me. I reply that I am not, but that I am trying hard to become one. Do you drink mate? they question. At every opportunity, I assure them. Do you like churrasco? they continue. Claro que sí, I affirm. Then you are a criollo, they say with decision. One class period the professor assigned me the task of explaining the New Deal. After I had finished a vigorous discussion on the supreme court resulted. The students couldn't understand how the NRA could be invalidated and the processing tax declared void. Surely, some contended, if that were true, Roosevelt did not really rule by edict!

Sincerely,

*Francis Herron*