

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

The Bolivar Hotel
Lima, Peru
August 31, 1942

Dear Mr. Rogers:

It is surprising how simple and relatively unexciting it seems to fly. Saturday, August 22, I climbed aboard a seven-ton, two-motored Panagra plane and took off for the first time in my life on the first lap of a 6,000 mile air journey--Buenos Aires to Miami. We were off and away without a bump. In a few minutes we were roaring high above the pampa. There is no reason to get poetic about a bird's eye view of the Argentine plains. For two and a half hours, at seven thousand feet, we moved over the flat grain belt. I amused myself by looking at the edge of the wing and watching one field after another come into view. That way one got the feeling of motion. Many of the fields, I knew, were as large as five hundred or a thousand acres. One could count the chacras below. Every primitive corn bin or two meant a chacra. One could look right down upon the yellow maize in the trojes, uncovered and unprotected from the elements. Estancias were unmistakable too, for stately groves of trees numbered them. Trees stood out best of all. In two hours flying time the green of the green fields became lighter, more delicate, and I knew that Córdoba could not be very far away. Surely enough, Córdoba came into view, resting in a natural depression at the foot of the sierras and at the edge of the pampa.

The trip to Mendoza was over the Córdoba sierras and the bad lands of San Luis. The going was rough, and I remembered that one cheerful friend had suggested that air-sickness was worse than sea-sickness. I was not prepared for Mendoza in the winter time. I expected Mendoza would be an oasis in the desert. It was nothing of the sort. It was a bleak sight. There was no green upon the earth. Lined fields indicated vineyards. Adobe houses, the color of earth, showed in somber relief. Nevertheless I was glad to return for a short visit to this western Argentine province, for it was there that I made my first Argentine friends. There is no place in the Argentine that I like better. I spent three busy days in Mendoza. The Metrauxs again offered me their unexampled hospitality. I saw again the young professors of the University of Cuyo whose liberal ideas on education are neither understood nor quite accepted by all of Mendoza. The University of Cuyo is one of those promising things that one sees in the Argentine. Many co-eds are enrolled at the University, probably relatively more than in any other Argentine university--and this in spite of the fact that there is much traditionalism to be found in Mendoza, particularly in political and upper-class circles. I talked with Dr. Edmundo Correas, the rector of the University, who made a trip early this year to the United States and who visited some of the important educational institutions of the east. He was impressed and pleased by what he saw. He wants to return. So influenced has he been by United States educational institutions that he is effecting a survey of most of the leading universities of North America. Dr. Correas is going to publish the data which he collects. One of the young professors is proposing to start a course in practical sociology at the University next year. His proposal is more revolutionary than it sounds, for "scientific" sociology is understood and appreciated by few Argentines. North Americans who think in practical and scientific terms can scarcely understand the obstacles which must be overcome if practice is ever substituted for theory. Insofar as I know, this will be the first course in practical sociology to be offered by any Argentine university.

Tuesday afternoon in an hour and five minutes the Panagra plane made the hop over the Andes, across the San Martín pass which I know so well. A few minutes out of Mendoza we had climbed to 11,000 feet and were crossing the primer plano which, it being winter, is snow-covered. As we crossed the beautiful valley of Uspallata the plane climbed to 16,000 feet. We followed the valley of the Río Mendoza--or one of its tributaries-- to the continental divide. It took less than twenty minutes to pass the

most impressive peaks of the Andes. "Aconcagua a la vista," one of the passengers called out. There it was to the right of us, snow covered on its slopes, solid-appearing where massive formations thrust up. It looked down upon us from 23,080 feet. That day the wind was not blowing a blizzard on its summit. In the still, clear, rarified air it seemed that one might reach out and touch Aconcagua and many another peak. North Americans think in big terms. It may be interesting for them to know that fifty mountain peaks of 20,000 feet or more could be seen from the windows of that cabin. As yet all the peaks have not been named. It seemed no time at all until the plane dipped into the Valley of Santiago. The valley was green, in contrast to the arid desert lands on the Mendoza side. The valley hardly appeared large enough, or fertile enough, to sustain a city of a million people. A half mist hung over Santiago. We came down quickly and the atmosphere hung heavy about our heads. We were in Santiago.

Benjamin Subercaseaux, the Chilean writer in his book called "Chile," states that there are very few foreigners who understand Santiago, the capital city--and certainly none of the travelers who stop off for a few days at the Hotel Crillon. Subercaseaux knows his Santiago well and, I suspect, every nook of this mountainous, narrow and extended country. It is hard to define exactly what kind of writer, or thinker, Subercaseaux is. He seems to be a mixture of a psychologist, a mystic and a costumbrista writer, though there are elements of sociology, geography and economics to be found in his writings. Coincidentally, Subercaseaux took the plane from Buenos Aires as far as Córdoba with me and from Mendoza to Santiago. He is expert at portraying the "spiritual" ambiente of Chile. Here, once more, I have found that a great gap between Anglo-Saxon and Latin civilization is the world which separates the spiritual from the practical. To appreciate both and to harmonize them is one of the difficult tasks, I should imagine, of Pan-Americanism. Let me illustrate how hard it is to be practical. While in Santiago I tried to take a hurry-up course on things in Chile which most interested me. Perhaps I was unlucky, or did not know the right places to hunt, but I could not find a first class, elementary book on the economics, sociology or agriculture of Chile in the bookstores which I visited. Subercaseaux's works come closer than any I saw. The time I spent talking with Subercaseaux was all too short, but I have a standing invitation to see him should I ever return to Santiago.

I am not so foolish as to believe that I "discovered" Santiago on my short visit there, for one who sees the city at once realizes the difficulties a foreigner must face to know it and to know its people. Subercaseaux himself says that there are five Santiagos to know: The one which the tourist sees; the Santiago of the people of Santiago; the Santiago of those who live in the nearby country and on the slopes of the mountains; the Santiago of the Chileans who have come from the far provinces; and, lastly, the Santiago of the neighborhoods, or barrios. It is, indeed, a city placed in a beautiful setting and made up of a thousand contrasts. One can look down any of the wider streets, in any direction, and see mountains. Santiago rests in an amphitheatre of mountains. In the east is the Great Snowy Barrier, as the Andes are called--even more impressive than they are from the Mendoza side. To the west is the Cordillera of the Coast. At the north is the Chacabuco Range and at the south is the lower Paine Range. Fashionable, cosmopolitan Santiago gravitates around the first-class hotels, public buildings, banking institutions of a comparatively restricted area called The Center. This is the Santiago de lujo, the Santiago of the tourist, the un-typical Santiago. Cruise passengers must be amused by the age-old street cars, yellow and dilapidated appearing, which are on Santiago's streets. Often they go two together, one coupled to another. The first car is enclosed and the second is open to the elements, much like those which are to be seen in Rio de Janeiro. At noon and in the evening, there is a rushing of humanity and a scramble to find standing room on the street cars or to edge into a space on the Santiago busses which are called Micros. Many downtown workers go home to lunch at noon because, although Santiago is a teeming city, people still prefer the domestic habits of village life.

I visited several barrios. Some of them are not too pleasant to see. One section near the Río Mapocho, even if it is after a fashion a Bohemian district, is too sordid to have an appeal. It was there oddly enough that I saw bands of gypsies for the first time since I arrived in South America. Many barrios are poor, for the wealthy class lives quite apart from ordinary people. One could get out at the end of an omnibus line and find himself in a neighborhood of dirt streets and make-shift dwellings. There always seemed to be numberless dogs within sight, some of them husky and none-too-friendly-seeming brutes. Many people of the neighborhoods wore provincial garb. Life went on leisurely. Children played; men stood in idle groups; women were at their gossip. One could easily believe Subercaseaux's explanation that many people hardly ever leave their own neighborhood and that workers who go to other parts of the city to perform daily tasks are quite disinterested in the central part of the city or any other section other than their own barrio. Like an ordinary tourist, I took the funicular up the steep sides of the Cerro of San Cristobal, that 1,800 foot mountain which stands in the middle of Santiago. Unfortunately, Santiago could be seen only indistinctly from that height because of the mist-like clouds which hover over the city. Latinized to a degree and accustomed to the leisurely paseo diversion, I took evening strolls along the Avenida O'Higgins, pausing occasionally to read the inscriptions on monuments dedicated to those who symbolize Chilean history. I had planned to spend a day or two at the port of Valparaiso (before the building of the Panama Canal the most important port in South America) but a succession of events calling for more and more travel preparations (most of them new and war-induced regulations imposed by countries through which I must pass) prevented me. All sorts of guarantees are needed and much red tape must be cut as one goes from country to country. I see more and more complications ahead of me. I can now appreciate the difficulties which Tom Blakemore encountered when he was arranging to leave Japan a year ago. Problems which I must solve are not serious nor formidable like those which Blakemore had, but they are irritating and time-consuming.

Yesterday I was in the air ten hours, making a 1,600 mile jump from Santiago to Lima. There were three stops--Antofogasta, Arica and Arequipa. We climbed into the Santiago mist at daybreak, leveling out above the clouds. In the early morning all that could be seen were the tall peaks of the Andes to our left and cloud banks which had rolled in from the ocean, up the valleys and against the wall of the Cordillera. As the morning lengthened, the land scheme changed until the clouds no longer rolled inland, but rather were halted by mountains which rose up high and steep from the sea. From then on until we reached Lima we passed over hundreds and hundreds of miles of bad lands, of mountains devoid of vegetation, of uplands and plateaus as dry and bleak as any desert--it was a moving panorama of sterile majesty. Twice we passed near nitrate plants. Along this coast line, I was told, there are areas where rain has not fallen for forty years. Minerally, there is great wealth for the exploitation in these mountains. Clearly, it seems, before parts of Chile and Peru can be developed, their economies must in some way be complemented by that of rich agricultural countries. Antofogasta, 700 miles north of Santiago, is a natural harbor. It would make a formidable air base, there being thousands of acres of level land around the circular harbor. Arica, too, is a good harbor, but it does not have all the excellent qualities of Antofogasta. However, there is some fresh water that makes its way down from the mountains of the Bolivian plateau and makes the plains about Arica green. Arica is the free port of the Bolivians. It must seem a kind of paradise to the Bolivians who leave their high plateau and visit the valley for the first time. Panagra planes follow a course inland from Arica to the mountain city of Arequipa, which lies in one of the few cultivated valleys of southern Peru. We hit the altitude on this trip. On reaching Arequipa, it was necessary to come down sharply. Our eardrums got a test, the most rigorous one of the trip. It seemed incredible after coming down so far and so fast that we were still 8,400 feet above sea level.

Shadows were lengthening in the mountains as we reached the edge of the mountain barrier and came within view of the Pacific. Clouds did not hide it from view.

It was not so desolate from Arequipa north. Now and then valleys were green, though they could not be compared with the Valley of Arequipa. The green of the valleys was insignificant and was certainly less than a thousandth part of the mountain terrain over which we passed. I was thinking that the mountains would never end and that Lima must lie in a region of deserts and bleak uplands when we came upon the coastal plains. There was green, more green than I had seen since the flight over the pampa. In a few minutes we sighted the port of Callao at our right, Lima at the left and then we were landing. For the next week I shall be in Lima, south of the equator 12 degrees, in the capital of the Peru which Pizarro conquered, in the City of the Kings.

Sincerely,

Francis Herron