

Sept. 7, 1942
Hotel Bolivar
Lima, Peru

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Almost as soon as I stepped out of the taxi at the Hotel Bolivar on the Plaza San Martín a week ago, it was apparent that the 1,600 mile hop from Santiago had brought me more than geographically closer to the United States. The United States and North Americans, as I have since discovered, are doing their bit to make Lima a boom town. It takes no trained eye to pick out North American men on Lima's streets, going their hurried way with a free, loose stride. North American conversations, wherever they may be held, are voiced in a volume that drowns out softer Castillian speech. The nationality of North Americans is proved twice over by characteristic gestures employed to implement speech. North Americans say "Good Morning" to people in elevators whom they have never seen before and whom they shall never see again. North Americans believe less in formalities than any people in the world. North Americans walk under broad-brimmed hats, hats which have more sombrero to them than any I have seen in South America. North Americans are fork-shifters and can be spotted in a minute in any restaurant. The truth is that North Americans, however much they try, never quite get away from being North Americans. They may change one mannerism or more and they may try their very best to conform to foreign customs, habits and mores, but their nationality broadcasts itself in a loud voice. The day after my arrival in Lima a young lady stopped me and asked if I knew where the postoffice was. She explained that she could not speak a word of Spanish and was wondering how she could find out where the postoffice was when she observed me, a North American. "How did you know I was from the States?" I inquired. "Oh, I could just tell," was her answer. And that's the way it is.

Most North Americans who are in Lima are here, it is said, because of one of the four priorities: Mining, official business, communications and transportation. Of the four mining is the most important, for United States war industries want every ounce of certain alloy metals that can be obtained and other basic minerals which cannot be mined in sufficient quantity in the United States. One geologist summed up the mining problem in this way: We thank our lucky stars that the Spaniards prospected most of South America three and almost four hundred years ago. Every day we learn geology from the Spaniards. It is amazing how they searched out and discovered the richest mineral deposits yet found in the Andes. It is not uncommon for geologists to come upon a rich, abandoned mine which the Spaniards discovered and exploited in the past. If they had just left us a map of their activities, it would make the job of the prospecting geologist infinitely easier. It is by no means an easy task to discover rare minerals in these "hills." Geologically the Andes are a big mess. It is not so easy to apply geologic theory to strata that is broken and twisted into a million faults. If we could just learn the theory, or the knack, which the Spaniards had we would do a much better job. In any event mining activity is expanding feverishly. More copper than ever is coming out of the large Cerro de Pasco mine and precious war minerals like Vanadium, Tungsten to harden steel, Molybdenum necessary in the manufacture of machine tools and Antimony the lead alloy are being obtained in increasing quantities. It is probably not the part of wisdom to comment about the other three priorities. Suffice it to say that they have many ramifications, especially the second classification with its members of military missions, its coordinating groups, good-willers, etcetera.

Lima, linked economically with the port of Callao, lies inland from the coast a score of kilometers. Lima is situated on the Rimac River in a valley of the coastal plains. Callao and Lima have a combined population of less than a half million, a relatively small percentage of Peru's 6,500,000 people. Lima is a well-laid-out city. Boulevards are wide, many and attractive. Lawns and flower gardens

beautify the residential sections of the city--quite in contrast to some South American cities, the homes of which are crowded together, wall to wall, and are built almost at the edge of the street. Lima also has, it must be said, its unlikely barrios. I have seen conventillos as poor and as unlivable as those of any city. The poor and beggars must be counted in the thousands. The wage scale of labor is unsocially low. Many heads of families earn less than ten U. S. dollars^{MONTHLY}. In a country where food is at a premium one wonders how people can exist on such small incomes. An office girl earns about 60 soles a month (\$5 in U. S. exchange.) A conscripted private in the army receives 3 soles a week, or a modest tip. Sanitary problems, especially during the summer months, must be formidable. One has to be on guard against dysentery. It is best to drink bottled water or some other substitute and to leave tempting fruits alone. Meat is a luxury in Peru. Already I have begun to miss thick Argentine beef cuts. Fish, however, is more plentiful with Corbina and Pejerrey the most served. Fishing is an important industry at the port of Callao. A common Peruvian fish dish is salted shark meat which is served to foreigners under the name of Bacalao. It is the part of expediency to tie a chain to one's valuables when traveling on busses, street cars or walking about the streets during rush hours. This lesson I learned in a practical way. The other day I was shoved and jolted about in a crowd. Before I knew that the signals had been called and I had been caught in a power play, a professional pickpocket was away and gone with a life-time fountain pen. The pick-pocket profession is an old and honored one in Lima. It seems to me that it would take more than scheming for some of the poor of this city to keep body and soul together.

It would seem that to understand Peru, even in these days, an elementary course in archeology and a knowledge and appreciation of the old Inca civilization must be essential. The two most-populated sections of Peru are the Departments of Cuzco and Puno, high in the mountains of southern Peru and near the ruins of the Inca kingdom. In these Departments, just two of twenty-four in the Republic, live 1,600,000 Peruvians, all of whom are descendants of the Inca people. Theirs is a remarkable story of survival and a clinging to an ancient way of life. How these people, in the ages past and today, were and are able to live off the produce of a few valleys in a desolate setting is an almost incredible achievement. Pizarro, the intrepid, would have nothing of life in the lofty city of Cuzco. Life there was too demanding for him. So he established Lima on the coastal plains. Peru has few large cities: Lima, Callao, Arequipa, Cuzco and Chiclayo. All others have populations of less than 30,000. Scarcely any of the smaller cities can be said to be modern. Geographically Peru is divided into three parts: The Coastal Plains, the Cordillera of the Andes, and the Montaña or tropical Amazon valley. The Coastal Plains comprises but little of the area of Peru, the Cordillera in some places advancing to the sea and allowing no room for the plains. The restricted area of the Coastal Plains can be realized by citing the fact that only a million acres of land along the entire length of the coast is cultivated. A million acres is nothing. On those precious acres an important part of Peru's agriculture is nurtured--almost all the rice, sugar cane, cotton, grapes, olives and fruits which the country produces. The Cordillera of the Andes, which also parallels the coast, accounts for almost a half of the total area of the country. Upon the plateaus and highlands and in the valleys live the Peruvian descendants of the Inca people. Water is stored by dams in the mountain valleys, crops are irrigated, land is terraced--all to the end that maize, wheat, barley, potatoes and other necessary foods may be produced. A livestock industry of sorts is maintained in the uplands. Rarefied air, lack of feed and fodder are too much of a handicap for cattle, of which there are few. However, sheep, ^{WHICH} ~~who~~ have adapted themselves to the comparatively barren mountain country, have learned to live and graze like llamas. It seems almost a miracle to one who has seen some of this area from the air that agriculture of any type can flourish there. Beyond the mountains lies the other half of the country. It is the Valley of the Amazon, a lush, tropical region. This, the Montaña region, is rich in natural resources but unexploited: A jungle, a country of fever, it awaits the coming of those who have the fortitude to exploit it. The Montaña is a relatively unpopulated region. Iquitos, the only important city of the region, is a port on the navigable Amazon with a population of only 15,000.

I have set down only a few random thoughts on the Peru which so many North Americans are beginning to discover. Not so long ago only a few foreigners were interested in this country, among them archeologists who are always discovering some old and remarkable civilization only to find out that the world, from one civilization to another, has changed but little. I am not unmindful of the historical and traditional importance of Peru in South America. It has had, and is continuing to have, cultural importance in Spanish-American countries. From the time of Pizarro to the coming of San Martín, Lima was the seat of government of the Vice-Reys of the Spanish monarchs. In Peru and Colombia the best Spanish of South America is spoken. During the past week I have had but a glimpse of Peru. I have only seen Lima and its vicinity, the port of Callao, some parts of the Valley of the Rimac. I had the opportunity to talk with students at the University of San Marcos. I hunted through bookstores, searching for volumes that might explain Peru. And, job of all jobs, I have gotten all my papers in order. So tomorrow it is north again. Tomorrow night a stopover at Cali, Colombia, is scheduled. The next day it is on to Balboa, the Canal Zone. Then, come a day when priorities permit, it will be on to Miami and the United States of North America.

Sincerely,

Francis Herron