



THE PERUVIAN JOURNAL

Even last August when we first arrived, people cautioned us about the months of June and July when the extreme cold sets in. We are witnesses now to that truth. In the early mornings we experience a bitter cold and we know that frost has fallen especially in the high lands around us. The day might be very sunny, but by mid-afternoon the winds blow across the valley again announcing the cold that sets in in the evenings.

Peru, like many of the countries in Latin America is beginning to feel the effects of the influenza. There have been more than 14 deaths and thousands of cases of the flu. (For a country our size, that is significant.) While news of the flu was hitting the newspapers in March and April, we felt pretty sheltered and protected, believing that the virus would not arrive at our doorstep. Wanting to believe that, we then did not prepare with the vaccines or other means of prevention that could have avoided the situation we are in now. *

And only just now after 20 deaths has the ministry of health reported that vaccines are available. Of course we know that they are still not available in the provinces and not in the health clinics, where the poor are treated.

The department of health and that of education partnered to take the emergency measure to close schools earlier than usual for mid year break. Believing that schools are where the disease is bred, the authorities took this measure as a means of halting the spread of the virus. They have asked people to avoid crowds and to be alert to some of the early signs of the virus.

Somewhat contradictory though, is the fact that the traditional military parade for the celebration of independence will still be held in Lima, and the crowd of thousands is still expected.

***The situation in Argentina is a lot worse with more than 100,000 cases of the flu and many more deaths.**

UNREST CONTINUES

It is typical that around Fiestas Patrias, July 28, our independence day, the cabinet members are changed. The recent unrest in the Amazon area resulted in several key persons being removed from office and new cabinet members installed.

While it is not easy to assess culpability in some of these matters, it is certainly true that simply removing some of the key players is not the solution. The country continues to be in turmoil as working conditions, trade agreements, and the on-going destruction of natural resources result in ominous abuse of human rights.

And while Alan Garcia, President of Peru, emphatically stated that Peru would not feel the effect of the economic crisis, the rise in unemployment, the increase in the cost of living, the inability of the worker to bargain for basic rights are definitely the trickle down effects of a broken economy.

In a recent presentation by a sociologist, Pilar Arroyo, we heard again the cry to address consumerism as a contemporary evil. The neo-liberal model that idealized and idolized "the market" has caused havoc in a global way, trickling down to all of the countries of Latin America. Peru is not an exception. The unrest, then, is a result of a long history of trying to maintain a system imported from the North and Europe that never had possibilities for our economies, (and in reality, brought financial disaster to the North and Europe as well).

FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

Many of you know that Maria Scharfenberger and her daughter, Fernanda, have been visiting this month. Life changes when a seven-year old enters your home. All of you would delight in seeing Kathy, Yuli, and Sue play "horsy," decorate Pooh's home and celebrate Winnie's second birthday.

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Their visit coincided with several of the strikes that happened across the country. Explaining to a seven year old about a strike, why we can't make the visit we had planned because there is no transportation, or why a government would take the lands of their people, presents a real challenge. But certainly trying to understand a reality of injustice through a child's eyes has been very insightful and at times profound. I recommend having a seven-year old in your home! Sure changes your perspective!

IN TOUCH

In spite of all the efforts to get Skype set up here, we are still without that possibility because of our internet connection. We will be thinking about all of you and praying with you during these days of retreat and community gatherings. And we will miss you lots!

Blessings and Peace!

Yuli, Kathy, Sue

