

Date: August 20, 2003

Location: Santiago, Chile

Subject: Update #3: El Día Del Paro y otras noticias desde Chile

Dear Friends and Family,

As I write my third update from South America, I'm hoping that all is well back home wherever you may be. Hopefully, you weren't too adversely affected by the power failures late last week across the U.S. Northeast or whatever other chaotic-ness that's been occurring around the world lately!

It's already been over a month that I've been down here in South America and I already know that I'm going to wish I could stay longer when December comes by in a flash although I know I'm missing out on a lot as NSO (New Student Orientation) and all the activities of another academic year roll around.

I have another two hours until my next class (my first class today ended at 1PM and my second class starts at 6:30PM) so I'm taking this opportunity to prepare another update to entertain and keep my readers back home and elsewhere informed of my activities. =)  
(Thanks, btw, for writing back... you know who you are. =P)

Anyway, I was thinking that I'm going to run out of: 1) things to write about and 2) pictures to share at the rate that I'm going... but on second thought, I decided that there are still a lot of things I want to share that I'll save for later updates. =)



<left> So to begin with a random picture... can you please tell me what is wrong with this picture? =)

Look closely and maybe you'll see it... no?

If you remember from my first update, most places in this city, including bathrooms, are surprisingly clean... so what's wrong with this picture?

Yeah, that's right. There's no TP. Not even a TP dispenser. (TP is short for Toilet Paper for those who didn't know. =P)

So this isn't exactly a stall in a public bathroom (it's a stall at U. Chile) but I've noticed that it's pretty much the same everywhere you go! I guess I didn't really notice earlier because I never needed TP when I used the public facilities but I was unpleasantly surprised that day when I went in expecting to find TP... so I guess my question is this... do you suppose Chilean students carry a roll of TP in their backpacks when they go to school? Or maybe everyone carries it? Haha, I think I'll ask my conversation partner (who I'm going to meet for the first time in about 2 hours) about it. =)

<right> Now that that's out of the way, I don't think I've shared yet about the number of stray dogs that wander around all over Santiago. It's really astonishing the number of strays that are running around but more than that, the fact that they don't look malnourished and some of them actually look quite good and would appear to make awesome pets... Anyway, you've gotta be careful not to step on sleeping dogs all over the place or hit them as they run at your car when you're driving around.



Which reminds me... I miss my dog... I hope she's doing alright at home... =)

Anyway, I bet you're wondering what "Día del Paro" is doing in the subject title of my message instead of the usual "Greetings" or "Saludos" from Chile. (It's ok if you weren't, too. =P)



<above> Well, last Wednesday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003 was declared the Día del Paro here in Chile. It literally translates into "Day of the Stop."

If you were watching CNN on Wednesday or Thursday, you might've seen the media coverage as violence broke out (as expected) between protestors and the *Carabineros*.

It started pretty much as a peaceful protest where the protestors gathered at several key locations in Santiago and began marching escorted by hordes of *Carabineros*, who were there to try to maintain order. The Day of the Stop was basically a call for Chileans to stop what they normally do (i.e.: don't go to class, don't go to work, etc.) to protest economic and human rights issues in Chile. Anyway, as of 11AM when I left to go to

class, the crowd hadn't gotten out of control and the city was still functioning. Basically, we were informed that public transportation would probably be available in the morning but by afternoon/evening, it would be very difficult to get around, classes would be cancelled and it was recommended to stay home.

So we actually had class that morning (while many students who lived in farther areas couldn't get there because of the protests) and I tried to find a micro to take me home at around 1PM... after waiting for nearly half an hour waiting for a micro that never came, I figured I'd just take a micro downtown (because that was the way the buses were going) and I could find another micro or take the metro back home.

<right> So the micro was going along the main street and as we went by *La Moneda* (refer to Update 2 =P), I saw about a dozen *Carabineros* in



riot gear beating a protestor with their batons and saw protestors everywhere getting into skirmishes with the dozens (hundreds?) of *Carabineros* there. As soon as the bus passed the "war zone" I got off and started walking back towards where all the action was to take pictures and to see what else was going on.



<left> *Carabinero* Riot-vehicles: Front vehicle launches tear gas while vehicle in back operates two high-pressure water sprays.

<right> Protestors being hit by the high-pressure water sprays and running around causing all sorts of other damage to property. (Note railings and fence pieces blocking the street.)





<left> Bus stop with glass panels shattered and spectator (protestor?) hiding behind post from *Carabineros*. Graffiti proclaiming the Day of the Stop covering the walls and signs.

<below> Stray dog sitting in the middle of the square around which chaos is occurring.



Even though there were some violent hoodlums and such in the crowds, many of the protestors were students, professors, health workers, public workers and others who were protesting the economic problems of the nation as well as the unaddressed human rights issues of the disappearances during Pinochet's government dictatorship.

Dodging the water sprays and trying not to breathe in too much of the tear gas that was floating around the entire area made things a bit exciting and I think I was trembling as I was running around snapping pictures. But getting to talk to this one Chilean worker revealed to me a little bit of what was going on in the mind of the Chilean protestor.

Anyway, one of the main points they were protesting was the free trade agreement with the United States... there were signs protesting the Economic Dictatorship and I was told that with the free trade agreements and stuff, employers will pretty much have the ability to fire all their workers only to hire them back at half their wages... and given that the income per capita is already really low as it is in Chile... that's really not cool. My Economic and Social Politics class that I'm taking started talking about poverty and wealth discrepancies last week and it's interesting to see how different agencies and governments determine poverty levels and try to alleviate the pressures on society... Class meets again tomorrow so we'll see what comes up this time.

Other than the chaos that was the Day of the Stop, the past week was pretty packed with things to do, places to go, and people to see. =)

Last Friday was a holiday that nobody seems to know what for... but I ended up skiing in the Andes with a wild assortment of international students (Eleven of us to be exact). =) Other than the 3 other Americans I knew from Council, there were a couple of German, French, English and other American students we got to hang out with. It's rather interesting, I think, that I'm meeting so many international people while here in Chile!

But I've also been meeting Chileans! => As of this moment, I think I must've met at least a dozen Chileans from here and there! Come to think of it, it's interesting that my Chilean university friends are mostly from U. Chile and not from U. Catolica where I have more classes. And of course, can't forget my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ at my newly adopted home church. =>



<left> “Cristo Mi Pastor” – one of God’s many houses where I can go to fellowship with fellow believers and spend time with my God! It’s good to be a citizen of heaven! =>

I guess it’s like my trip to the U.S. Embassy... I didn’t really get a chance to take any other pictures while I was inside because I was joining the congregation in lifting “alabanzas” (look it up! =P) to our Creator. => It’s different praising in Spanish and even though there are some songs that are

translated from English, some of the completely new to me songs have been really blessing! Anyway, looking forward to this Friday to meet up with the other “Jovenes” and have some time of fellowship! =>

In addition to heading out of Santiago to hit up the slopes this past weekend, I also went out southeast of Santiago to go visit the “Cajon del Maipo” valley region and go horseback riding with another Council friend. A bunch of us were supposed to go but everyone else bailed... we had a paper due on Monday (which I proudly started, complete, and turned in... yes, on Monday. =P) and some people thought they’d work on it that weekend. =>

<right> From Santiago, for a fare of 700 pesos (roughly \$1), we boarded this micro (which is basically like a school bus inside) for the rough noisy 1.5 hour ride to San Jose del Maipo. That wasn’t so bad because there were seats available from the main bus terminal in Santiago... now... the journey back was something completely different. When we got on the bus, all the seats were taken and there were people standing in the aisles...



given that this bus also serves the local Cajon del Maipo region (which is basically one street that runs through the valley with houses, restaurants, and such on both sides), we were hoping that people would get off so that we wouldn’t have to stand for the 1.5 hour drive back... well, turns out we ended up standing half-way home until people got off and we found some seats... given that we’d been horse-back riding most of the day... standing for 45 minutes or so on that bouncy micro really did a number to my already sore legs. =P

Back to San Jose del Maipo though... we found the tourist office and found out that we had to go further south to find horses... so we hopped in a *Colectivo* (which is a cab that charges a flat rate and runs a fixed route picking up passengers as a bus would) and headed about 20 minutes further south to find some horses. =)

<right> We found some horses where we saw a sign that said, “CABALLOS AQUi”... Yep, a sign that literally said “Horses Here”.



It was a lot cheaper than I had been expecting because some others who had gone the weekend before had told me to expect to pay about 18,000 pesos... the guide (he wasn't really talkative so we decided he was just a guide, not a tour guide =P) let us know that it'd be 3,000 pesos per hour for a

3-hour trek up and down the hills.



<left> Here we are on our tired horses preparing to head back up and over the mountain to get back to the “Horses Here” sign. =)

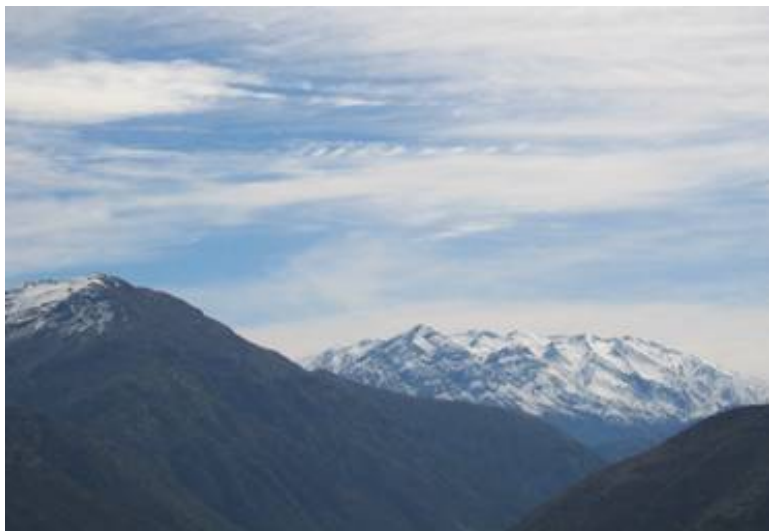
There were some awesome sights so I was snapping pictures left and right as we climbed up the

mountain on our horses. =)

<right> I'm currently using this picture as my desktop. =)

I still can't get over the fact that I'm here in the Andes!

Everyday I look up and see the Andes... It's really a breath-taking view and to top it off, the clouds were really cool looking that day, too! =P





<left> Some really cold, fresh, mountain spring water flowing from the Andes. =)

Learned an interesting fact in my Chilean Realities class about water and water pollution... all this fresh water comes flowing off the mountains... but once it hits Santiago city, it's completely nastified.

Apparently, all the sewage in Santiago flows straight into the River Mapoche... and the bacteria levels in the river will definitely kill you. Even though the water in the tap is supposedly safe to drink, you definitely do not want to even go near the river because well... you just don't. =)

To end an altogether long, boring update, I found some cool cars while we were in Cajon del Maipo. =)

<right> I found myself in a car wreck in San Jose del Maipo. =P



There was supposed to be a National Monument... but all we were able to find where the map indicated the monument

were the remains of a bunch of old wrecked cars. So I had to take a picture. =)



<left> And lastly, I think the *Carabineros* left their patrol cars parked this way just for me! =P I don't think they're as cool anymore because there were serious instances of human rights violations happening

left and right during the course of the Day of the Stop and so they were causing more ruckus for an already complex situation here in Chile...

Well, my first month here is over and I should be heading to sleep as I have a full day of classes in the morning.

Hope this wasn't too long and boring and that all is well back wherever you may be! =)

- Dan