

Further impressions of South America

*A continuation of one participant's impressions
from the TAPPI South America study tour*

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Night masked the landscape on our flight from Porto Alegre, Brazil, to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Buenos Aires itself was brightly lit, however, even though we arrived at approximately midnight. The activity and the neon signs reminded me of Times Square in New York City. People were everywhere, enjoying themselves even at this late hour. Our guide indicated that we should not drink the water in Buenos Aires, but we could use it to brush our teeth.

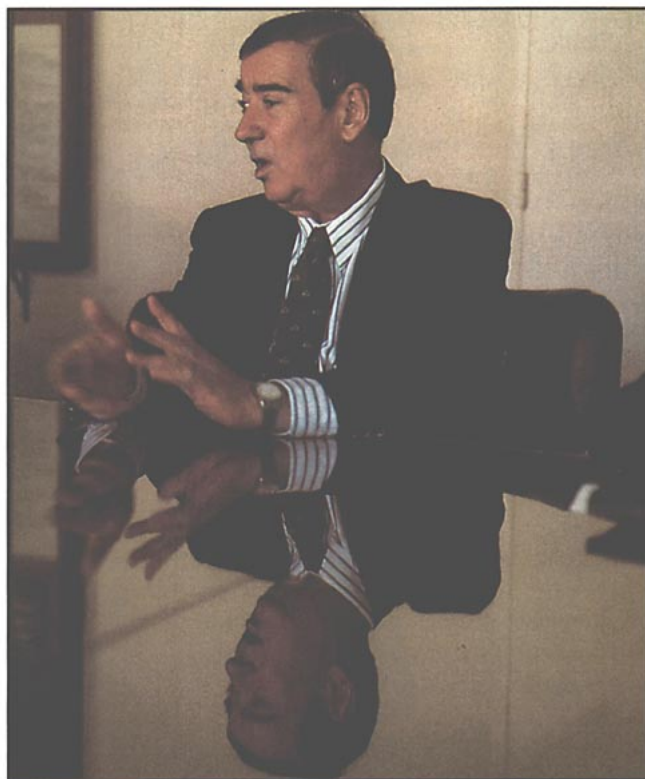
On Sunday, we had a leisurely morning followed by lunch in a typical Argentine steak house hosted by a new member to join our group: Fernando R. Bertolini, an Argentinean consultant. If real men eat meat in Brazil, then in Argentina they eat BEEF. The size of the steaks the waiter placed before us astounded us all. One taste convinced us why the Argentineans enjoy this dish so much.

In the afternoon we toured the city. All the residents seemed to be outside enjoying the sunny day; it was the first pleasant day after three days of rain. We followed the tour with dinner (more beef) at a restaurant that featured a tango show. Tango, with its exotic steps and hauntingly entrancing music, is still a trademark of Argentina.

Just as the Brazilians had adjusted to their economic plight, the Argentineans had a similar view toward their various military and elected governments. The average person in the street mentions this regime and that regime in the sense that certain things happened, but everyone lives their lives as best they can.

Argentine paper industry

On November 29 we met with members of the Asociación de Técnicos de la Industria Papelera y Celulosica Argentina (ATIPCA) at Centro de Investigacion de Celulosa y Papel (CICELPA). The facility is similar in concept to that of the Instituto de Pesquisas Tecnológicas (IPT) in Brazil. The ATCP representatives indicated that Brazil is steadily capturing all of their markets, but that Chile is investing money in the industry in Argentina. Overall the industry suffers from high labor, energy, and raw materials costs. Only wood has a low price, because it's in good supply. There has been no growth in the per capita paper consumption in Argentina in the last 20 to 25 years, according to ATCP.



Fernando Bertolini in meetings with ATIPCA

CICELPA has 15 people who work in the pulp and paper area. Their main activities are technical studies on pulping, bleaching, papermaking, and testing of raw materials. Government and industry provide the financial support to this institute. We saw some small pilot equipment during a tour of the facility for paper and pulp studies.

In the afternoon we flew to Santiago, Chile, and continued on to Concepción, Chile. Clouds obscured our view of the Andes. Around Santiago, however, there were numerous farms visible from the air. The general scenery reminded us of California. Flying to Concepción from Santiago was like flying from California to Oregon. Recalling some long-forgotten geography lessons, this should not have been surprising. We

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were essentially as far south of the equator as the California area is north of the equator.

In Chile I discovered the national drink—a pisco sour. Pisco is fermented from sweet grapes grown exclusively in a designated region of Chile. Now I did not care whether I could drink the water. I had an excellent substitute!

November 30 dawned as a cloudy day. Since this was a day of leisure, our group explored the city of Concepción individually on foot. I was able to experience the activities, smells, and colors of the local meat, vegetable, and flower markets; walk in a vast forest preserve; tour the local museums; and visit the shopping area before the rains descended later in the day.

Three Chilean mills

Rain greeted us again on December 1 as we packed ourselves into a van early in the morning for a few hours' drive to the Empresas CMPC mill in Laja at the junction of the Bio-Bio and Laja rivers. This mill provides other company divisions with about 315 tons/year of kraft pulp using *radiata* pine and eucalyptus. The latter has a growing rate of about 10 years in Chile compared with the 7-year cycle in Brazil.

From Laja we travelled to Nacimiento to tour the Forstal e Industrial Santa Fe S. A. mill which uses 100% eucalyptus. This mill claimed to be an environmental leader in Chile operating at close to U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and Scandinavian standards. The mill only started operation in 1991 and reached its planned capacity of 600 tons per day in less than one year. Today it runs at approximately 700 tons per day.

Our return drive from Nacimiento along the Bio-Bio River was shorter and more scenic, meaning we traveled rough, unpaved roads for a good portion of the way. The scenery, however, was indeed breathtaking.

Our final mill visit occurred on December 2. We drove south from Concepción, with a stop in Lota, a once-flourishing coal mining area. Here we detoured to visit the grounds of a former mansion. The trees, shrubs, and flowers were absolutely gorgeous. The profusion of colors was a fascinating blend of familiar plants and tropical specialties. Our destination was the Celulosa Arauco y Constitucion S. A. facility at Arauco. Arauco II is a pulp line completed in 1991 that uses *radiata* pine to make product for export to Europe and Asia. Production is over 300,000 tons per year. Although the fact that the line was



Bob Kinstrey examines CIELPA pilot machine.



The market at Concepción

not operational diminished somewhat the grandeur of the operation, it was obvious that here was another world-class operation in South America. Their control room was particularly impressive. It could compete favorably with the NASA control center.

Our last official duty was to meet with members of the Asociación Técnica de la Celulosa y el Papel de Chile (ATCP-Chile). This proved to be an excellent opportunity to get better acquainted with individuals we had met at the mills, to meet other mill representatives, and to discuss the state of the industry in Chile.

From Concepción we flew to Santiago for some leisure time before returning home. We enjoyed an informative city and



The old gardens at Lota



The study group and hosts at Arauco II



Wayne Gross and Dave Bentley relax at the end of the trip.

shopping tour as well as an all-day tour to the Pacific Ocean coastal cities of Valparaíso and Viña del Mar. There was much similarity to California and San Francisco in particular, including the painted-lady Victorian houses in one area. The area captured our fancy and inspired talk of return trips for vacationing and retirement.

After an overnight flight to Miami, I flew home and took a drink of water directly from the tap.

Final thoughts

The conclusion of a trip such as this TAPPI study tour to South America invariably poses some questions. For example, what

was the best part of the trip? For me the answer is easy—the wonderful people we were able to meet. Everyone made us feel very welcome, and our hosts at all the mills, institutes, and technical societies went out of their way to accommodate us and tend to all of our needs.

One might also ask what lesson can we learn from the trip? Our group seemed to agree that all the operations that we saw were excellent, first-class, highly technical, and state-of-the-art. They can compete with and indeed sometimes surpass facilities in other parts of the world. When these people speak, we should listen!

The pulp and paper industry faces strong environmental and economic pressures that will produce changes in the markets in the future. The people we visited are aware of these pressures. They

are working to meet the challenges they provide and develop the necessary technological improvements in all aspects of the industry, from growing seedlings to effluent control. South America as seen in the mills we visited is an important factor in the pulp and paper industry today. It will certainly continue its prominence in the future. **■**

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