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1956

Written for Politique Etrangere by Senator Mike Mansfield

At a little place called Chincha in Peru, farmers are spending their spare time with picks and shovels building an irrigation system designed by an American engineer under the Point Four program of technical assistance.

In the town of Governador Valadares in Brazil, mothers come on foot from miles around, carrying their sick babies, to have the children given a new and highly successful treatment developed by Point Four doctors for dysentery, the primary cause of infant mortality in the area.

In the countryside of Southeast Asia, farmers gather at demonstration ponds to marvel at the tilapia fish which can be raised in rice paddies and which, under Point Four sponsorship, is improving native diets throughout the area.

These are typical of many examples which could be cited of the specific accomplishments of the American Point Four program. The program takes its name from the last of four points which President Truman laid down as the basis for United States foreign policy in his inaugural address in January 1949. The first three of these points pledged "unfaltering support to the United Nations," continuation of programs for world economic recovery, and strengthening of "freedom-loving nations against the dangers of aggression." Fourth, said President Truman, "we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas."

Although this marked the beginning of a major, concerted effort by the United States to promote the development of underdeveloped countries, similar activities had been carried on in Latin America since the early days of United States participation in World War II. The primary interest then was to increase the production of strategic and critical materials. This meant that bad health conditions had to be cleaned up; that native workers had to be trained; and that research of various kinds had to be conducted.

Following President Truman's inaugural address of 1949, Congress in 1950 passed the Act for International Development which provided for implementing the President's Point Four on a worldwide basis. Appropriations for the first year were \$32 million. The program has since grown so that appropriations for the current year are \$152 million, and the cumulative total since passage of the Act for International Development is \$793 million. The figures include United States contributions to the United Nations Expanded Technical Assistance Program (currently about \$15 million a year) and to the technical assistance program of the Organization of American States (about \$1.5 million a year). American Point Four programs are in progress this year in 44 independent countries in Asia, the Near East, Africa, and Latin America, and in a number of dependent territories in those areas. More than 4,000 American technicians are working in the program.

Point Four should be sharply differentiated from the other components of the over-all American mutual security program. Point Four has nothing to do with military assistance. It has little to

do with economic assistance, such as Europe became familiar with during the Marshall Plan. Point Four is technical assistance—or, in its formal title, technical cooperation.

The word "cooperation" is worth stressing, because Point Four is a cooperative enterprise or it is nothing. It consists of helping people to help themselves, of showing people how to do things more easily or more cheaply, of advising them on how to take advantage of their resources and of how to overcome their problems. It is designing an irrigation system in Peru, not building one; it is working with Brazilian doctors to devise a new treatment for infant dysentery, not carrying out the treatment itself, it is showing Asian rice farmers the advantage of the tilapia fish, not supplying the fish itself beyond limited quantities for initial stocks.

The success of Point Four depends at least as much on the people who are being helped as on the people who are furnishing the help.

Although, as indicated, one can cite many specific accomplishments of Point Four, some of them quite dramatic, perhaps the most important and enduring accomplishments are the intangible ones which are not directly reflected in statistics of literacy, or crop production, or infant mortality rates. These intangible accomplishments are found in the changing attitudes of the underdeveloped peoples participating in technical cooperation.

"The ideas that have been planted here are changing the patterns of thought of this country," an official of the Health

Ministry of an important Middle Eastern country told one of the members of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

These changing patterns can be seen in many ways. Where once there was resignation, now there is hope. Where once poverty, illiteracy, and sickness were taken for granted, there is now a feeling that these conditions are not inevitable and a determination to do something about them. Most important of all, perhaps, there is a realization that a community's salvation lies within itself and that conditions really can be improved through the cooperative action of people working together. There has been a healthy change, also, in the attitudes of government officials to people and of people to government officials. Government tends to be less paternal; people tend to be less subservient. Relationships are more nearly on a plane of equality.

These changes are not by any means universal in the countries where Point Four has been at work. It has often been emphasized that Point Four is a long-term program, and in most countries it has not yet been in operation long enough for its full effects to be apparent. Indeed, there is some question as to whether all of the changes described above can properly be attributed to Point Four. Some of these new attitudes are characteristic of the revolution that is going on in the underdeveloped parts of the world.

This revolution is of enormous significance to the highly developed countries of Western Europe and North America. It was not inspired by the West, though it draws heavily on the ideas of both the French and the American Revolutions. Nor did the Communists

inspire it, though they are doing their best to take advantage of it.

Point Four provides an effective means for channeling the energies released by this revolution into peaceful, constructive activities and for promoting not simply economic development but a larger area of human freedom as well.

This is a task which is truly international, both in its responsibilities and in the sharing of the benefits which flow from it. As President Truman put it in his 1949 address:

"We invite other countries to pool their technological resources in this undertaking. Their contributions will be warmly welcomed. This should be a cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the United Nations and its specialized agencies wherever practicable."

The United Nations does, of course, carry on its own expanded technical assistance program, financed by voluntary contributions from some 70 nations, with the United States contributing approximately 50 percent of the total. In the Western Hemisphere, the Organization of American States carries on a similar, but smaller, program.

In some instances, economic benefits, in terms of expanded trade or opportunities for investment, can be traced directly to technical assistance. This is particularly true in Latin America, where the United States program has been underway the longest. In Peru, for example, demonstration technical assistance projects in the use of insecticides and fungicides increased demand so much that American

exports of these items to Peru more than quadrupled and in addition two American companies installed mixing plants in Peru. Nor are the benefits of increased trade resulting from economic development limited to the United States. The products of Western Europe are increasingly in evidence throughout South America.

When considered in its broadest sense, technical assistance is an extremely complex, difficult, and challenging task. But, as is usually the case in human affairs, the rewards are equal to the challenge. It is not enough, in a technical assistance program, simply to show people how to keep healthy, or how to grow more food, or how to teach others to read and write. If health is improved, some provision has to be made to utilize the increased human productivity thereby made available. If infant mortality is reduced, some provision has to be made to feed the increased population. If more food is grown, attention must be given to arrangements for storage and marketing—and to the effect upon world trade patterns. And if people learn to read, thought must be given to what is available for them to read and to the ideas which they acquire from it.

Most important of all, perhaps, it must be recognized that technological change is inevitably accompanied by cultural change; and the political consequences of cultural change are not always clear.

These collateral effects of technical assistance are to a large degree beyond the control of the nation which is furnishing the assistance. They go to the heart of the host country's sovereignty, and jealousy of sovereignty is a prime characteristic of underdeveloped

countries. The final result of technical assistance can only be determined by the people of the recipient country.

The six years of technical assistance through the United Nations and under the United States Act for International Development have been fruitful ones. Mistakes have been made, but much valuable experience has been gained and many problems which were not apparent in 1950 have been identified. A special United States Senate Subcommittee on Technical Assistance Programs, of which I have had the honor to be chairman, has concluded, after an intensive study, that:

"The concept of technical assistance is sound. Despite some waste, the investment which the United States has made in the program is also sound. The results to date justify further investment; indeed, the dividends from the investment already made will not be fully realized unless the program is continued."

So far as I, as one United States Senator, can judge, the future of technical assistance seems to be assured, in the sense that there will continue to be some sort of technical assistance program in which the United States participates. The record of Congressional support for technical assistance, as reflected in the figures of appropriations given above, is impressive. It is significant that this support has been forthcoming in Congresses controlled by both Democrats and Republicans. The same bipartisan support is evident in the White House where the program, initiated under Democratic President Truman, has been carried forward under Republican President Eisenhower.

So, it seems clear that the United States will continue to support technical assistance. What is not so clear is the precise

shape and size of the program in coming years.

The character of the program may undergo changes, the exact nature of which cannot now be plainly foreseen, as we become more expert at the task of extending technical assistance and as the underdeveloped countries themselves undergo the changes of growth.

The need for technical assistance is, of course, enormous; but the program is not to be measured simply by the need. The capacity of the highly developed countries is limited, not merely—or even mainly—by budgetary considerations but by the availability of expert personnel with the necessary skill and wisdom. Conversely, there are limits also on the capacities of underdeveloped countries to absorb technical assistance.

These limits have not always been recognized, either by the highly developed or the underdeveloped countries. As experience accumulates, however, the limits are coming to be more generally understood. So, too, are the benefits, both tangible and intangible, which flow from successful technical cooperation.

Many nations, besides the United States, are participating in technical assistance programs of various kinds. It is to be hoped that, as time goes on, that participation will increase, especially as concerns the nations of Western Europe.