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Lessons from Jamaica

LAMBROS COMITAS is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Associate Director of the Research Institute for the Study of Man. In addition to his teaching duties at Columbia, he serves as Executive Secretary of the Columbia-Cornell-Harvard-Illinois undergraduate program of supervised field work in Latin America. Dr. Comitas has specialized in the Caribbean for ten years and made numerous field trips to the area. His research interests include interethnic relations, social change, economic development, and education. In 1961 and 1962, Dr. Comitas did program consulting and field exploration for the Peace Corps in connection with a number of actual and potential programs in the Caribbean. He served as Director of the training program for Jamaica One at the Research Institute for the Study of Man, and Area Studies Coordinator for St. Lucia One at Iowa State University; and later he was able to visit both groups in the field. Professor Comitas' latest major publication is the forthcoming Caribeana 1900-1965, University of Washington Press, the first comprehensive bibliography of the West Indies.

While much has been written about the general accomplishments of the Peace Corps during its first four years, comparatively little of any analytic value has been presented about the various structural problems faced by working units overseas. In the formative stages of Peace Corps development, there were ample reasons for this imbalance. For one, with so little time in the field, there was insufficient information about routine operations. Second, the actual difficulties encountered overseas appeared to be of a considerably lower order of intensity than had been feared. Finally, prolonged public discussion of difficulties or failures at that time would have adversely affected the organization's image and diminished its chances for public acceptance and support.

These conditions, however, no longer hold. The Peace Corps, as government agency and national institution, is now firmly established; masses of data concerning overseas work situations are being
rapidly accumulated; and perhaps most importantly, fundamentally similar field problems occurring in different parts of the world are now being conceptually linked together. For these reasons, it is of positive value for the Peace Corps, at this point in its development, to expand and coordinate its facilities for the scientific analysis of operational problems. Accordingly, investigation by social scientists of apparently not-too-successful Peace Corps field units would, by comprehending the structural nature of problem situations continuously encountered, limit errors in planning and implementation before a group is sent overseas, thereby considerably increasing the Corps' potential impact in the field.

In this spirit, I shall discuss some of the difficulties and problems of Jamaica One, a group of Volunteers with which I was personally acquainted. As trainees, the members of this group completed what was probably one of the most comprehensive and highly rated training programs provided by the Peace Corps up to that time. And yet, during their first year as a working unit in Jamaica, they gained the widespread reputation of being one of the most troublesome contingents in the entire Peace Corps. Even The New York Times singled them out as an exception to the generally laudatory performance of the Peace Corps, in an editorial on the second anniversary of that organization:

The Peace Corps has not butted in where it wasn't wanted, nor has it wasted time or funds. It has had its problems—on the island of Jamaica, for example—but taken as a whole it has been a genuine success. It has done solid work—the sort of work that can be done by well-trained and enthusiastic teachers, nurse's aides, nutritionists, and sanitation experts—in forty-one different countries.¹

This general opinion of the Peace Corps in Jamaica was undoubtedly unfair, for although the difficulties that beset Jamaica One were real enough, they were not unique to that contingent. In part or in whole, similar structural problems have been faced by many other Peace Corps contingents as well, although generally with less public attention. It is this recurrence of structurally similar problems in different settings that makes an examination of the Jamaica case of general interest.

THE JAMAICAN BACKGROUND

In the spring of 1962, twenty-nine men and twelve women were put into training for Peace Corps service in Jamaica. The stated objectives of this unit were "to help the Government of Jamaica's
existing vocational and adult education program, and to assist in the island's Agriculture Development Program. . . ." To achieve these goals, Volunteers were to be provided as industrial arts instructors, vocational teachers with various skills, librarians, nurse-health educators, commercial practices instructors, agricultural teachers, rural cooperative assistants, basic science instructors, and audiovisual specialists.

The island to which this vocationally heterogeneous unit was assigned is one of the newest and smallest countries receiving Peace Corps assistance. Although it is the largest of the British West Indian islands, Jamaica is only 146 miles at its longest point and 51 miles at its widest, with the total land area measuring some 4,400 square miles. The island is ecologically diversified: out of a population over 1,600,000, about 25 per cent live in expanding urban areas such as Kingston; another 25 per cent dwell in the low-lying sugar belt parishes or depend economically on these areas; the remaining 50 per cent manage to eke out an existence in the mountainous expanses of the interior or in restricted pockets along the coastline. Full independence within the framework of the British Commonwealth of Nations was granted on August 6, 1962, several weeks after Jamaica One had arrived to take up its duties.

With its beautiful climate, tropical foliage, beaches, and towering mountain ranges, Jamaica has long been a tourist attraction. This natural beauty, however, tends to conceal from the casual eye many deep-rooted problems—problems often endemic to developing societies—such as high population density, a large percentage of unemployed or underemployed, and an illiteracy rate that poses a serious obstacle to economic and social development. Agriculture, the primary economic activity, has two incompletely integrated components: a well-developed plantation system geared to the production of sugarcane, and small-plot agriculture devoted to food crops for local consumption. Large-scale agricultural development is hindered by traditional practices of the small farmers, who, moreover, lack the capital and incentive necessary for modernization. A complex system of land tenure, including legal as well as extralegal forms, further complicates the implementation of agricultural development programs.

The gross domestic product has increased three and a half times during the last decade, resulting largely from the development of bauxite mining and a vigorous industrialization program. Yet a rapidly increasing population has prevented this growth from raising per capita income as much as might be hoped. Not only
this, but an estimated two thirds to four fifths of the population exist on a minimal subsistence level in rural areas or urban slums and are essentially excluded from, and unprepared for, participation in the nascent industrial life of the island. Emigration of Jamaicans to the United States in the past, and to the United Kingdom up to a year or two ago, has provided some temporary alleviation of the immediate problems of the island. But this outward flow has also had the debilitating effect of depleting Jamaica’s short supply of skilled and semiskilled workers.

Other factors that have tended to restrict rapid national advances and that affect the functioning of Volunteers on this island revolve around the nature of the Jamaican social system. Contemporary Jamaican society is a product of a long heritage of slavery, monocrop cultivation of sugar, and metropolitan exploitation. The present racial and ethnic composition reflects quite clearly the economic history of the island: almost 75 per cent of the population are classified as Negro, descendants of Africans brought to the Caribbean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to work on the sugar plantations; 15 per cent are a mixture of Negro and white; less than 1 per cent are white. The remainder includes small but economically significant clusters of Chinese, “East Indians” from the Indian subcontinent, Syrians, and a variety of mixtures. Present-day control of economic and social power, however, bears no relationship to the numerical strength of the various racial and ethnic elements. Whites rank highest on the socioeconomic scale, browns are intermediate but important in political matters, and the blacks, though in great majority, are a poor third.

Although many Jamaicans would disagree, racial origin and its most visible symbol, skin color, is a critical determinant of social and economic position. As put by the noted Jamaican social anthropologist, M. G. Smith, “... local ‘nationalism’ has developed a convenient mythology of ‘progress’ according to which race differences are held to be irrelevant in personal relations” (Smith 1961:249). In very general terms, this anthropologist’s conception of Jamaican society consists of three hierarchically arranged social sections, each of which correlates roughly with one of the three most significant racial groups. Each social section is characterized by a distinctive set of institutions so that there is considerable difference between the sections in modal forms of kinship, family, mating, magico-religious behavior, education, occupational patterns, and the like. The white section, for example, which ranks highest, carries to a considerable degree the culture of modern Western European
society and is composed of individuals born in Jamaica but often reared abroad from early childhood. The black, or most subordinate section, is characterized by a culture that includes many elements similar to those found during the period of Caribbean slavery and in West African societies. The brown intermediate section, a cultural and biological amalgam of the first two, practices a mixture of patterns that stem from both the white and black sections. The integration of these three social sections has been and still is weak. According to Smith's analysis, social cohesion is only maintained through controls that are derived partly from the economic system and partly from the fact that the ranking social sections possess an effective monopoly over such regulative institutions as the courts and the police.4

An observer of Jamaican life need not accept this theory as completely proved in order to appreciate many of its accuracies in description. For example, it is evident that interpersonal relations among members of different social strata are minimal and that the significant values held by each stratum may differ substantially from those held by the others. Under such conditions, what one group considers of value and of import may not necessarily have similar meaning for the others. In any case, there appears to be a general consensus among most social scientists who have studied Jamaican life that they are dealing with a rigidly stratified society characterized by substantial social and cultural differences between the principal social segments. Some of the difficulties inherent in this complex of value systems and social arrangements with regard to the implementation of action programs are readily obvious.

THE TRAINING OF JAMAICA ONE

During a two-month period from April through May 1962, training for Jamaica One was the responsibility of the Research Institute for the Study of Man (RISM), an anthropological foundation in New York City specializing in Caribbean affairs. With its strong area concentration, RISM was in a position to develop an over-all curriculum in which all the study units required by Peace Corps/Washington were specifically related to Jamaica and the West Indies. This meant that the entire program was given a strong area focus, so that technical refresher courses, American studies, world affairs, health training, and the like were taught, whenever possible, by specialized personnel with relevant field experience in Jamaica or in other parts of the British Caribbean.

The training institution enjoyed one unusual and valuable ad-
vantage: since it did not have commitments to a permanent faculty, it was free to pick and choose specific lecturers for specific purposes and to obtain the best available lecturer in each case. For example, over twenty area specialists—West Indian, American, and British—constituting a majority of the social scientists specializing in this part of the Caribbean, presented descriptions and analyses of the culture and society of the region and dealt as well with particular and idiosyncratic problems that some of the Volunteers would face. Agricultural economists from Jamaica taught the fundamentals of agriculture as they pertain specifically to Jamaica. Nurse-health education work in the West Indies was taught by the Principal Nursing Officer of Jamaica; health training for the entire group was given by a lecturer in Social and Preventive Medicine from the University of the West Indies. In every case, lecturers were informed of the material that had already been presented by other staff members. Quite frequently, several members of this temporary faculty would attend the classes given for the Volunteers, forming a kind of ad hoc panel discussion group. Outside of the classroom, ample opportunity was provided for frequent contact and communication with the West Indian community in New York.

There was no disagreement as to the merits of the training program. The Volunteers were enthusiastic. Almost a year later, one of them wrote from the field, “I feel that I knew almost as much about Jamaica when I left RISM as it is possible to teach a person in two months.” The core training staff was also satisfied. The diversity of technical skills required for Jamaica One meant the recruitment of trainees with wide disparities in schooling and orientation; nonetheless, the staff felt that the general program, and especially the coordinated area approach, tended to bridge these substantial differences in the academic backgrounds of their charges. Peace Corps/Washington gave repeated indication that it considered the program highly successful and suggested it as a model for training programs then being prepared by other institutions for other areas of the world.

Anxiety over Selection

Only two hints of possible future difficulty emerged during this two-month period. The first of these was extreme nervousness concerning final selection for the project, which became almost the psychological leitmotif of the trainees. Although selection anxiety seems to be usual for all Peace Corps groups, in this case it was abnormally high, induced and aggravated perhaps by the initial
handling of selection warnings by officials from the Peace Corps itself. The group's antipathy toward anyone from Peace Corps/Washington grew as the date for selection drew near. All Peace Corps officials were considered potential screeners who had influence in the selection process. These antipathetic leanings were further reinforced when delays in the civil service clearance procedures threatened to keep five Volunteers from departing with the group.

Anxiety over Field Leadership

The second hint of possible future difficulty concerned field leadership. There was open apprehensiveness among the trainees about the fact that no Country Representative had been selected to direct them in Jamaica. When at last an appointment was made in the final stages of the training program, this general apprehension turned to sharp criticism of the appointee's lack of previous experience in, or knowledge of, the area. Notwithstanding these concerns, the group departed for Jamaica with assurances of continuing support from the training staff, with friends already on the island, and, as far as can be judged, with an optimistic outlook on its coming tour of service.

EARLY PROBLEMS IN THE FIELD

Upon the Volunteers' arrival in Jamaica, a very rapid deterioration of their sanguine expectations was evident. During the group's first six months on the island, over half of the original work assignments were changed; the Country Representative was replaced; six PCVs of the thirty-eight finally selected were returned to the United States for a variety of reasons; and morale was extremely low. Critical attention was focused on the project by several vitriolic letters to various authorities from the Volunteers themselves, by a series of special investigators sent by Washington to stabilize the project, and by the ensuing publicity it had received in both the Jamaican and American press. From the perspective of the PCVs, who were obviously the persons most immediately concerned, the general situation was a by-product of two interlocked issues: problems revolving around the work situation and problems involving Peace Corps direction and administration.

Unfortunate Timing

Initial confusion surrounding work assignments resulted in part from unfortunate timing. The Volunteers arrived in Jamaica as the school year ended for the summer holiday. Consequently, some
fifteen of them destined for the public schools required temporary assignments for the first three months. These arrangements were far from satisfactory: a commercial course teacher became a secretary for a Jamaican educator; a number of PCVs were sent to government youth camps where they did a minimum of instruction and a maximum of manual labor; a few became part-time instructors in an in-service training course in the industrial arts, while others were assigned to the same course as students! Few, if any, thought they were doing the kind of work that a Volunteer should be doing.

Problems of Status and Structure

Volunteers who immediately assumed their permanent assignments also encountered difficulties. Job content and relevance was one issue. Peace Corps librarians assigned to one organization discovered that they were superfluous and, on their own, negotiated a transfer to a reference library that was in desperate need of professional assistance. Other Volunteers ran into structural conflicts with their local supervisors. One such example of status incompatibility led to the removal from Jamaica of two of the most capable and dedicated Volunteers in the unit. These two mildly described their overseas experience as follows:

We then began working as . . . Volunteers in the . . . system whose . . . processes we were assigned to bring up to date. Most unfortunately, the director of the system is a sort of madman who cannot bear to have persons with much . . . knowledge near. The result was that our actions were intentionally misinterpreted, and threats were made which were so drastic that we were literally forced out of the country. The Peace Corps was anxious to assign us elsewhere, but none of the current possibilities seemed to call for our qualifications, so we reluctantly gave up our status as Volunteers.

The reaction of the unit to the outcome of this incident was that Volunteers were being punished for doing their job well under trying circumstances, and that they were not being protected by the Peace Corps staff in Kingston or Washington.

On another and more general level, this incident involving Volunteers and their local counterparts or superiors is reminiscent of similar occurrences in other countries where differences in experience and training threaten already established status and prestige positions. Fortunately, few of these incidents have engendered the drastic solution of this Jamaica case. The important point here is that in order to systematically confront such situations,
the causes and solutions must first be sought in the nature of the local social system, rather than in assuming that there must be idiosyncratic psychological pressures at work.

**Logistical Frustrations**

One group of Volunteers was assigned to government youth camps in the mountainous interior, where they found themselves immediately harassed by logistical problems. Contrary to assurances received, neither their living quarters nor the special workshops in which they were to teach had been constructed by the time they arrived. Various Volunteers spent periods of from three to twelve months doing unskilled pick and shovel work, constructing school buildings. Only rudimentary hand tools were available to them for this purpose, and members of the Representative staff were often of little help in providing tools—even cheap ones that were relatively easily available. Even when they received the full cooperation of their Jamaican superiors, the teaching and work opportunities of these Volunteers were circumscribed. The nurses had few medical supplies and were underutilized; the commercial course teacher had no typewriters or other teaching aids; and the vocational teachers had no shops, no equipment, and in some cases, no students. During the first few months of residence, discontent and frustration grew and grew among most of these Volunteers. Soon some began making invidious comparisons between their mismanaged work situations, cramped physical and social setting, and bare subsistence fare—and that of their peers assigned to the Kingston area not far away, who might or might not be deriving satisfaction from their job assignments, but at least enjoyed comfortable apartments and the full amenities of city life. Such invidious comparisons could hardly be avoided in circumstances such as these, where the project is vocationally heterogeneous, and where the host country is very small so that news and gossip get around readily. The result was a growing alienation by the PCVs in the mountain area, both from the Peace Corps staff and from their fellow Volunteers. In retrospect, it seems clear that much of this problem of invidiousness and envy could have been avoided if Jamaica One and perhaps Two had been assigned only to upcountry stations, and then, perhaps, Jamaica Three exclusively to Kingston.

**Lack of Administrative Communication**

Job anxieties within the entire contingent continued, and dissatisfaction mounted. The tendency was for the Volunteers to
ascribe responsibility for all problems to the local Peace Corps administration, alleging that the Representatives spent too little time in the field with the Volunteers; that they knew little about the Volunteers' problems; that they were of little help in bureaucratic procedures; that they were ineffective in resolving work impasses and anomalies with the Jamaican governmental hierarchy; and that they created intragroup tensions by capitulating to the demands for equipment or requests for job transfer made by the more aggressive Volunteers. Disciplinary problems increased, and the whole effectiveness of the Peace Corps seemed threatened amid a series of petty squabbles. Even after personnel changes in the administration were made, the relationship between the PCVs and their leadership remained somewhat distant. One Volunteer described the gap separating the Volunteer and administrative subcultures as follows:

The Country Representatives have been so far removed from the Volunteers that there has been no common meeting ground. . . . They are so different that we seldom have common attitudes and breakdown of communication is fairly common.

ANALYSIS

Through systematic investigation, social science can be of fundamental value in the analysis of action programs operating in different sociocultural milieux. In the past, such scientific investigation has generally revealed that the operation of "problem" programs has been considerably affected by a number of complexly linked factors. Repeated findings of this order should serve as a constructive check on many non-social-scientists—especially those personally and emotionally involved—who tend to assess programs in black and white terms, often after identifying only partial causes or symptoms to explain involuted issues. Unfortunately, many laymen still attempt to analyze and to explain problems in purely vocational, or administrative, or psychological terms—to the almost complete neglect of social structure and cultural value systems. Three newspaper accounts of Jamaica One will illustrate such tendencies toward oversimplification.

In November 1962, The Jamaican Weekly Gleaner carried a story on a public lecture devoted to Jamaica's foreign affairs which was held at the local campus of the University of the West Indies. The article was captioned "Peace Corps Activities Here Called Fiasco."
The Chairman of the meeting, a Jamaican, made the following observations:

It is well known that the Peace Corps in Jamaica is a fiasco. But the U.S. Government is not all to blame for this. In this business of requesting and receiving technical aid it is very necessary that the country requesting aid should first of all find out where its need is greatest, and ask for assistance in filling those needs. And in this particular case of the Peace Corps, I think that the Jamaica Government is to blame for not having ascertained in the first instance, the fields in which it really needed the assistance of the Peace Corps.6

A month later, a two-column story appeared in The New York Times under the heading “Peace Corps Men in Jamaica Feel Their Skills Are Wasted.” It developed in some detail the point that Volunteers were “struggling with what many of them regard as a badly planned program,” that morale was generally low, and that “there is a prevalent feeling that they are being wasted in their assignments.”6 In this account Volunteers in the field ascribed responsibility for their troubles to the Peace Corps staff, especially to those departments responsible for overseas operations. This assumption is much more fully and graphically documented from Volunteers’ correspondence. One such letter states emphatically, “Peace Corps/Washington would seem to be one of the biggest reasons for low morale in this project.”

A third position emerges clearly in February 1963, in another story in The New York Times. This article was captioned “Snags in Jamaica Vex Peace Corps—Shriver and High Aides Will Review Project on Scene.” The Jamaica Project was conceded to be the “main headache” in the Latin American program, but Peace Corps officials have been unable to pin their Jamaican difficulties on any single problem, and they dispute the contention that the project was poorly planned. Many of the assignments didn’t work out, said a high Programming official. It’s hard to generalize on why. It could have been failure to adjust on the part of some Volunteers, failure to get along well with their Jamaican supervisors for others, lack of equipment, lack of strong leadership from the Peace Corps Representative, and a major error on our part was the failure to have an assistant for him.7

While eschewing any single cause, this particular analysis strongly suggests a psychological dimension. Its main point is that, with more flexible and resilient Volunteers and more dynamic leadership, essentially minor problems could have been transcended. This position, it would seem, implies failure in the selection and/or
training process and errors in the selection of field administrators, but no fault is found with the basic structure of the project.

Among the Volunteers, the tendency was to ascribe their difficulties to personality deficiencies in the field staff. In their opinion, such deficiencies clearly led to inadequate administrative back-stopping and faulty interpersonal relations. Here again psychological factors are offered as an explanation.

There is merit in this position as there is in each of the three newspaper stories, although none, by itself, accounts fully for the problems that dogged the Jamaica One operation. Factors involving the structure of the program and the social and cultural matrix in which the Peace Corps operated in Jamaica are, in my judgment, much more basic than are, for instance, the personality configurations of particular individuals.

Factors Affecting Intraorganizational Relations

The initial plan for Volunteer activity in Jamaica, the first series of administrative decisions implementing this plan, and the ensuing development of the Jamaican program, are all elements of great importance in identifying the causes of early trouble. Many of the problems and inadequacies of Jamaica One were inherent in the structure of the program well before a single Volunteer had set foot on the island. For example, long after the trainees had begun their training in New York, no Peace Corps Representative had been appointed for Jamaica. Whether or not this delay was unavoidable, it was certainly unfortunate. When a Representative was finally appointed, he turned out to be a person who, despite professional qualifications, was totally unfamiliar with the island. This lack of knowledge about Jamaica and the West Indies also characterized his immediate successors. As a consequence, these administrators knew much less about the sociocultural realities of Jamaica than did the Volunteers to whom they expected to give transcultural leadership and guidance. Little wonder, then, that the Volunteers whose subculture, as the editor has pointed out, places a high value on intimate knowledge of the host country, had difficulty in completely relating to the latecomers suddenly and tardily placed in charge of them. Furthermore, by the time of the first appointment, the Volunteers had already formed strong in-group links and loyalties. It would not have been easy for any outsider to gain their acceptance, but certainly it was doubly difficult for persons unfamiliar with Jamaica. Also, the simultaneous arrival in Jamaica of Representative and Volunteers allowed the Representative little
opportunity to familiarize himself either with the complexities of Jamaica or with the Volunteers before the very real problems began of settling down to work.

Additional difficulties grew out of the fact that the first Representatives were called upon to administer an intricate program for which they had no original programming responsibility. Not only did they lack detailed knowledge of the arrangements and understandings already made by Peace Corps/Washington and the Jamaican government, but they arrived on the island, each in turn, lacking any acquaintance or rapport with the Jamaican officials most closely involved.

In short, my belief is that faulty organizational arrangements, such as those outlined, strongly predisposed Jamaica One in the direction of trouble and that given the nature of the structural end-product, trouble would still have ensued even if both Representatives and Volunteers had been veritable paragons.

Superficial Cultural Similarity

None of the three newspaper stories considered cultural factors as a possible cause of difficulty; nor, to my knowledge, did any of the responsible officials involved with the program. Perhaps the reason for this neglect of cultural factors was that Jamaica bears a superficial cultural similarity to the United States, in somewhat the same fashion that Santon has already described for the Philippines (page 49). Jamaica is nearby, utilizes English and an English Creole, has a familiar political orientation and organization, and is well represented by its citizens on our shores. Geographical proximity and some surface similarities in language and dress, however, do not make Jamaica and the United States culturally homologous, as has already been explained at some length. Nevertheless, it is unfortunately true that such external appearances of sameness, if taken at face value, might well have operational consequences for Peace Corps programs. In most of Africa and Asia (except the Philippines) the stranger expects, and is psychologically prepared for, gross cultural differences in almost every aspect of life. In Jamaica and the British Caribbean, apparent similarities in specific behavior very often obscure from the stranger's view numerous basic differences in the reasons for, and implications of, such behavior. The dangers of misunderstanding in such a situation can very well be greater when the cultural cues are close but do not fit one's own. Yet, Peace Corps/Washington has often given the impression that the Jamaica situation should possess inherently
fewer difficulties than those of supposedly more exotic lands. Precisely because of this, additional pressure was placed on the Volunteers. While they were struggling to function effectively in a truly complex sociocultural system, outside observers considered them fortunate in being where they were and, not infrequently, ascribed their problems to personal shortcomings.

*Jamaica's Atypical Cultural Position*

In its operations, the Peace Corps usually seeks to make two contributions to the host country: one is technical, to help the people of the host country meet their needs for trained manpower; the other is ideological, to promote a better local understanding of the American people. There is little question of the need in Jamaica for the kind of technical services that the Peace Corps can provide. Pursuit of the ideological objective, however, runs into an almost unique situation in Jamaica, a small island with a population that includes many other North Americans, both permanent residents and transients. In addition, there are many native Jamaicans who are highly sophisticated about Americans and the United States. Together, these two facts can severely strain the original enthusiasm and motivation of a Volunteer, such as the one who wrote:

> If our purpose in Jamaica is to let Jamaica get to know Americans it is ridiculous. This is a big tourist area. Many Americans, Canadians and English live and work on the island, but more important, thousands of Jamaicans go to the United States to work and study. Many of them have seen more of the United States than some members of this project. What is our purpose in being here?

Other factors also render Jamaica somewhat atypical. Jamaicans, until recently colonial wards of Great Britain, have had considerable experience with innovative programs of various sorts. They possess a modern civil service of proved ability and critical acumen, at least at the higher levels. Through excellent communication media, they are keenly aware of conditions and events in the outside world.

Clearly, there was a need to take into account the above sociocultural characteristics of the host country if Jamaica One was to register immediate and important ideological gains. In order to be publicly successful, Jamaica One would need to produce an unusually visible and clearly demarcated output. This, however, did not happen. Instead, the program assigned Volunteers to a number
of different governmental and quasi-governmental units, a dispersal that was geographical as well as organizational. As a result, the total effort and accomplishment of the first contingent was never clearly identified as that of the Peace Corps. Structured as it was, even a trouble-free operation would not have guaranteed an early Peace Corps impact on Jamaican public opinion. It should be added, however, that the person-to-person impact on Jamaican opinion (as distinct from the on-the-job impact) was often valuable. The PCVs often effectively projected an image of a different kind of American on the minds of Jamaicans who had theretofore seen only American tourists.

Inadequate Planning of Job Goals and Assignments

Given the unusual position of Jamaica in terms of the Peace Corps’ ideological mission, it would seem all the more important, from the standpoint of Volunteer morale, that the technical mission in that country be clearly conceptualized and carefully planned and executed. The primary purpose for voluntary service in a place like Jamaica must be sought in the nature of, and satisfaction in, the work itself. Personal observation in Jamaica (and also in the British Caribbean island of St. Lucia) has convinced me that if a Volunteer were satisfied that he was contributing to the material development of his host country or territory, then other difficulties tended to take care of themselves. If, for example, the Jamaica One Volunteers stationed in the mountains had enjoyed reasonably high job satisfaction, they probably would not have felt any great envy of the PCVs stationed in Kingston.

In Jamaica, as we have seen, many work assignments proved ephemeral. Others were unclear as to their particular objectives. Without clear aims, there are few firm guidelines for the Volunteer. Is he there to promote change or simply to replace someone going on long leave? To what extent can he experiment or innovate while at his job? Are there any end-products expected as the result of his particular service? Where these finite work objectives are not or cannot be supplied, arbitrary action and communication breakdown between Volunteers and Peace Corps staff may very well occur. For example, in several cases of marked difference of opinion over work between a Volunteer and a host country supervisor, where the objectives of the job were not spelled out, it was almost impossible for the local Peace Corps administrators to judge systematically and objectively whether a Volunteer should be reprimanded, defended, exonerated, or privately praised. Without these
work goals, the principles for deciding each actual case may vary, resulting—among other things—in sentiments such as the following:

Peace Corps treatment of withdrawn Volunteers has contributed to a feeling of distrust of the intentions of Peace Corps/Washington as well as to the feeling that we have no support or protection from our organization. . . . On this same subject the very flexibility of some aspects of policy breeds a lack of security and a feeling of confusion.

In my opinion, the relative rigidity and compartmentalization of the program made for lowered technical efficiency and morale. The officials from Peace Corps/Washington's Division of Program Development and Operations (PDO) who made the original arrangements set up a design calling for very few specialists in each of a relatively large number of specialties. Such arrangements might have worked quite well in a larger, economically more diversified nation. But for Jamaica's less complex socioeconomic system, the design was incapable of absorbing unexpected exigencies. A highly skilled factory-trained machinist, for example, proved to be difficult to place satisfactorily when his original teaching assignment did not materialize; he ended up teaching English. The same held true for Volunteers in a number of other relatively specialized skills or trades.

SUBSEQUENT IMPROVEMENT

Keeping to the purpose of this chapter, I have presented the negative aspects of the field situation rather than the positive accomplishments of individual Volunteers and of the group. Most emphatically, however, there was a brighter side. As 1963 wore on, there was increasing evidence that the worst was over. Most Volunteers were working in situations in which they felt they were making positive contributions, and dissension and discontent were no longer the dominant themes. Even a note of optimism had returned to the public utterances of the group. In an editorial in their local Peace Corps newsletter, the editors had this to say:

Ironically, April Fool's Day [1963] represented our first anniversary in the Peace Corps. Except in the company of punsters, this is hardly relevant. There was nothing foolish in our joining, nor is there anything foolish in our situation. There is not one among us who is not accomplishing something worthwhile, and despite the loud noises which occasionally erupt on our little island, there is much of value in what we have done and we have all gained immensely by our personal experiences.

This must also have been the opinion of the Jamaican government,
for at about that time, additional Peace Corps Volunteers were requested, this time to play an integral part in a massive new program aimed at the development of local Jamaican communities. For their part, a high proportion of the Jamaica One Volunteers extended their service in Jamaica beyond the two-year tour in order to finish teaching the school year, or to complete a particular project. Perhaps it can be said with some comfort that all's well that ends well—provided only that we learn from mistakes and attempt to avoid their repetition.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter should serve to make clear that responsible Peace Corps authorities, before accepting the specifics of a particular program, should be knowledgeable about the country, its people and its needs, as informed as possible about the motivations of the host government in extending an invitation to the Peace Corps, and realistic about the abilities of the Volunteers available for service. To ensure maximum effectiveness, a program should fit, as closely as possible, the realities of the host country in relation to the services the Peace Corps can offer. In the hectic days of 1961, such exploratory care and effort were virtually impossible. At the present time, with the considerable experience gained and with additional personnel available, this initial effort should be axiomatic.

The Crucial Importance of PDO

It would be difficult, without careful field study, to go beyond this discussion and establish the exact priorities and relationships of the factors already considered. Given the present purpose, however, I do not think this necessary, for even at this level of discourse, the Jamaica case provides lessons to be learned and insights to be exploited by the Peace Corps. Among the most important of these, in my judgment, are the lessons that deal with organization: the Jamaican experience suggests quite conclusively the apportionment of responsibility that must be made by the various line divisions of the Peace Corps. It is clear that Recruitment, Selection, and Training, as indispensable as they are, depend upon the particular projects designed by Program Development and Operations. This latter division is responsible for the context, tone, and administration of every unit overseas. If it functions well—comprehending and adjusting for the sociocultural realities of each host country—then inadequacies in other divisions tend to be minimized and overcome. On the other hand, badly conceived or badly executed
projects may mean that even superlative efforts on the part of Selection or Training will be wasted. PDO is first among peers and should be instrumental in integrating and directing the professional efforts of all the other divisions.

The Need for Social Science and Area Competence

To carry out these responsibilities, PDO needs assistance. Officers of the division have many assignments: program exploration overseas, project administration from Washington, project implementation abroad, and middle-level policymaking. From the beginning, they have been overworked and overextended. Often, they are initially unfamiliar with the areas of the world in which they will do their work. Few of them, if any, are social scientists. From the point of view of minimizing field problems and providing expert knowledge on project development and direction, it is desirable that cultural anthropologists, comparative sociologists, and political scientists be more closely integrated with PDO. (Their efforts up to the present time have almost invariably been confined to the training programs.)

In this connection, I recommend the establishment of a small advisory committee to serve each of the four regional offices within PDO: Latin America, Africa, North Africa-Near East-South Asia, and the Far East. These small committees of three or more members would be selected on the basis of proved area competence and interest in the problems of change in underdeveloped territories. As returned Volunteers enter graduate school and finish their advanced degrees, the most competent should be integrated into these committees at the earliest moment.

In collaboration with PDO officials, these committees would advise on location, type, and size of projects within their respective regions. Having no administrative burden, each committee would serve as a board of objective advisors to the regional directors on cultural and structural problems. At relatively small cost and minimal organizational disruption, PDO could thus assure itself of a regular professional service which, until now, has only been approximated in the sporadic and rudimentary use of individual consultants.

NOTES

1 This is from an editorial entitled "Second Birthday" in the March 4, 1963 issue of The New York Times.
2 The original description and rationale for Jamaica One can be found in the Peace Corps Project Description, Form PC-104, Unclassified.
The gist of these introductory remarks on Jamaican conditions was presented by the author in an unsigned section of Syllabus for the Peace Corps Training Program for Jamaica, 1962, pp. 5-6. More detailed references on economic, occupational, and demographic issues in Jamaica can be found in Comitas 1964; Edwards 1961; Eisner 1961; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1952; Roberts 1956; Roberts and Mills 1958; Smith 1956.

M. G. Smith's most detailed statements to date on plural society theory in general, and on Jamaica, can be found in Smith 1960 and 1961.

This article is in the The Jamaican Weekly Gleaner, November 23, 1962, the overseas edition of a prominent West Indian newspaper, The Daily Gleaner, published in Kingston, Jamaica.


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