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## Raising the World's Standard of Living, by Robert T. Mack

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## BOOK REVIEW

RAISING THE WORLD'S STANDARD OF LIVING. By Robert T. Mack, Jr. New York: The Citadel Press, 1953. Pp. xvii, 285. \$4.00.

Whether due to sharpened sensitivity to suffering, to the exigencies of the cold war, to anticipation of potential economic gain, or to the demands of the underprivileged themselves, there is no doubt that efforts are now being made to lift the level of living in the world's blighted regions on a scale unprecedented in history. We are reminded of the pitiable plight of two-thirds of the people of the world, and we are told that, while insufferable conditions were formerly accepted with resignation by the submerged peoples, this is no longer true in the face of what has been described as a revolution of rising expectations. Modern means of transportation and communication, the spread of education, the multiplication of human contacts, and the revolutionary impact of communist ideology and of American industrialism have produced powerful ferments. On one hand is the determination to throw off colonial controls and to assert unequivocal national independence; this drive finds expression in nationalistic movements establishing or seeking to establish independent statehood for areas formerly under the domination of imperial powers in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Parallel with this political tide are the awareness of an appalling backwardness and a hope and determination to achieve a better life. These hopes and resolutions are confined to the articulate leaders in some cases while in others they have a mass basis. In any event, no profundity is required to see that, in the presence of heightened hopes, the persistence of misery makes for instability and breeds the resentments, discontents, pressure, and hostilities which jeopardize both peace and freedom throughout the world.

It should not occasion surprise that world-wide efforts to raise living standards have produced an extensive body of literature. While vast in quantity, much of it is hortatory and speculative. Mr. Robert Mack's *Raising the World's Standard of Living* is happily not of this character. In this dissertation he has chosen to concentrate on one aspect of the problem—that of technical assistance—and he has narrowed his investigation to the problem of coordination of national and international efforts attempting to aid in the socio-economic development of under-developed areas.

After explaining the range and limits of his investigation and the sources from which it is drawn, the author places the problem in its historical context, then analyzes the nature and problems of coordination in their universal, regional, and national aspects, and concludes with an evaluation which notes outstanding coordination problems and suggests remedial measures to make coordination effective.

The book recalls that efforts to raise living standards are not entirely new, however much Mr. Truman's fourth point served to dramatize, intensify, and organize energies in this direction. Even before World War I some public international unions and some of the activities of the major powers dealt with the problem of advancing living conditions. However, the benefits to the people of under-developed areas by the work of colonial powers were usually an incidental by-product of the endeavors of colonial powers to further their own interests; local benefits as primary ends really had their beginning in the inter-war period when the mandate system furthered the idea of metropolitan trusteeship rather than absolute proprietorship. Even so, activity was insufficient to justify serious consideration of the problem of coordination. During the inter-war period, the League of Nations and other bodies concentrated on handling emergencies and on the problem of reconstruction and development of already advanced countries. Very little was done to develop under-developed areas as such although a start was made—especially by the Permanent Mandates Commission and the International Health Organization of the League as well as by such private agencies as the Rockefeller Foundation, Near East Foundation, Phelps-Stokes Fund, Red Cross, and similar organizations.

It was not until the United Nations was established, however, that the world officially recognized the problem in its true dimensions and established institutions for dealing with it. The Dumbarton Oaks draft, though, drawn by powers which were thinking primarily of political security through maintenance of the victorious big power coalition, did not stress the socio-economic phase. At San Francisco, the pleas of small states, of the under-developed countries, and of the informed citizenry of the major powers themselves resulted in transforming what had appeared to be lip service to the cause of material amelioration into a major enterprise. The Economic and Social Council, designed to serve as chief coordinator of efforts in the economic and social field, was established as a principal United Nations organ, and much attention was given to the provision for Specialized Agencies working in this field. The inauguration of technical assistance on a concerted, planned, extensive scale dates, in effect, from Mr. Truman's plea for a

"bold new program." The latter, the author reminds us, was neither new nor bold in a sense; but it, along with the launching of the United Nations activities in this direction, did greatly stimulate the developmental movement.<sup>1</sup> For example, the Colombo Plan contemplates the expenditure of five billion dollars in a six year attempt to better living conditions for nearly six hundred million people in South-East Asia; the United States has appropriated over one hundred million dollars for the Point Four Program for the current year; the United Nations' budget for technical assistance is twenty-one million dollars. David Owen, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Technical Assistance Board, reported that the United Nations had employed over 1600 experts from 65 countries, served 97 countries and territories, and trained over 2100 people in 74 countries and territories.<sup>2</sup>

Almost half of the book is devoted to a thorough analysis of the organizational structure and coordinating machinery and procedures in the United Nations and Specialized Agencies, among regional bodies, and in national states, both aid-giving and aid-receiving. The industry and care with which the author has penetrated the complex web of confusing relationships are impressive, and the structural maze which is exposed has, in itself, lessons for the student of administration. While it is doubtless useful to have a clear exposition of the facts regarding technical assistance mechanisms on all levels, one could wish that this picture could have been somewhat shortened and simplified. Aside from having a compendium available on the administrative facet of technical assistance operations, the reviewer believes that the principal value of this part of the work lies not in the factual presentation itself, for it can soon become out-dated, but in the increased authority and respect which conclusions so thoroughly based will likely have.

For those who have thought of Point Four and United Nations activities as being the whole technical assistance picture, the multiplicity of regional efforts will come as a surprise. In addition to the regional agencies of the United Nations, there is quite an elaborate structure involved in the Association of American States; in addition, there is the Colombo Plan machinery, the South Pacific Commission, the Caribbean Commission, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (West Europe), and the Economic Council of Mutual Assistance (East Europe).

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1. P. 163.

2. Address before the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Feb. 19, 1954; also referred to in *Briefing on United Nations Affairs*, Oct. 8, 1953, p. 2.

Befitting to the study of a question so vast and subject to as many material and imponderable factors as is this one, the author is wisely cautious, outlining only tentative and broad conclusions. This was a prudent attitude, too, in view of the fact that the study terminated in June 1950. It would be interesting to know whether the author believes that, in 1954, the problems have grown or lessened, whether the lessons of early experience have been learned.

Pointing to what in 1950 he termed the "present pseudo-anarchial status," the author observes that informal methods of coordination have been more effective than formal ones, that the "staff spirit" in which personnel in one agency exchange views with their counterparts in others was developing and with good results.<sup>3</sup> He notes, too, that except for the accumulation of information interchange pyramiding up to the Technical Assistance Board, coordination dealing with specific matters and with field operation has been more successful than other types.<sup>4</sup>

Several serious problems loomed large as early as 1950. One difficulty arose out of the lack of adequately prepared, precisely formulated, and well balanced program requests from the countries seeking aid (and from reports which one hears, this appears to be still an obstacle). Associated with this problem, and contributing to it, is the lack of adequate coordinating machinery within the aid-receiving area. Given this situation, performance will be jeopardized, or external pressures for coordination will be necessitated.

An extremely serious problem, one which poses a threat to the effective continuance of the whole effort, and one which it is hoped that experience has lessened, is the tendency toward bureaucratic empire building and agency particularism. It is declared that agency mindedness has a tendency to blur the vision and to interfere with positive, cooperative action. Governments recognize the need for coordination in principle, but their representatives frequently will not or cannot reconcile practice with preachment. This has reached even the world's highest coordinating body, the Technical Assistance Board of the United Nations. In practice, at first, each participating agency representative was a kind of ambassador detailed to struggle for more money, more personnel, or more favorable consideration of the agency's ideas. During the early stages when there was an insufficiency of adequate plans and an excess of funds and experts, each agency tried to spend money as rapidly as it could in order to be in a better position to receive more funds and personnel in the future. It is said that this is no longer

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3. P. 219.

4. P. 215.

true. It is apparently a fact that project requests are now exceeding the available supply of funds and suitable personnel.

Whether the programs are unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral, another critical problem was the tendency for political-strategic considerations to interfere with, and to outweigh, socio-economic ones. "Here the problem of one-worldism versus two-worldism versus total world anarchy appears in its strongest disruptive role."<sup>5</sup> For example, the conflict between Israel and the Arab League necessitated the holding of two separate conferences, one in Egypt and the other in Turkey, dealing with the same subject matter, statistical information, and techniques. Again, when Poland requested aid to help it produce its own penicillin, the United States, while strongly supporting the humanitarian purpose involved in delivering penicillin itself, opposed communication of the manufacturing process, fearing that it could be used for purposes of bacteriological warfare. When the process, although not the product, was denied, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union withdrew from the World Health Organization.

In outlining remedial measures Mr. Mack asserts that all resources, public and private, should be utilized to promote rising standards of living—and at all levels, national, regional, and international. He emphasizes, too, the need for secretariat personnel of regional and international agencies to operate in fact as if they genuinely were members of an international civil service. Coordination procedures and techniques are at hand, but they must be applied by personnel not unduly influenced by political considerations. There must be a sincere effort to coordinate activities for the common good. While aiding governments should not work at cross purposes with one another, the underdeveloped areas themselves must also put their own houses in order, and centralization and decentralization must be combined to eliminate disruptive politics as much as possible. Repeatedly the point is made that political differences constitute the major road block to effective operation. Referring to the Economic and Social Council, we are told: "In the last analysis, of course, its success depends upon whether the political atmosphere is sufficiently clear to allow for co-operative and coordinated activities."<sup>6</sup> While the outlook is "something less than perfect," its creation is "a major step forward."

"Whither it is all tending," he concludes, "is a question which it is yet too early to answer with any definiteness."<sup>7</sup> Although starts have

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5. P. 219.

6. P. 39.

7. P. 222.

been made at effective coordination, there are grave doubts that truly large scale effective coordination can be attained as long as governments are dominated by political-strategic considerations.

Any comment on this study would be remiss if it did not express appreciation for the thoroughness with which Mr. Mack has investigated the tremendous literature in this field. It is a superbly documented work and contains an extremely useful bibliography of some nine hundred items. Books, pamphlets, and official documents at all levels were examined; and, in addition, interviews with staff and line officials were used to fill the interstices left by the published record.

The very nature of the problem of coordination necessarily involves primary attention to structural considerations, matters likely to be overlooked in concentrating on the more dramatic aspects. We are all conscious of the fact that noble purposes and worthy programs can be vitiated by faulty administration. At the same time, administration never operates in a vacuum, being conditioned always by dominant moods, pressures, and power relationships. While there is ample evidence that the author is aware of administrative physiology as well as anatomy, more attention to programs in operation would have added materially to the contribution of this study. It is probable that the terminal date of the research precluded such analysis. It is to be regretted, though, that more case studies, similar to the very excellent one on technical assistance to Iran,<sup>8</sup> were not made and presented. They would have heightened readability and, more importantly, clothed the bones of structure with the flesh and spirit of action situations. This is especially true since the point is underscored that the "political atmosphere" seriously limits genuine coordination.<sup>9</sup>

Coordination, moreover, involves substantive programs to be coordinated as well as coordinators. We need not only case studies of projects in operation, but detailed studies of the various kinds of assistance given, of the different kinds of cooperation extended by the areas receiving aid, and of the background, skills, and personality characteristics of the most successful technical assistance experts. Now, with more experience to draw upon than was available in 1950, we are beginning to get these, but many more are needed.

We have reached the point where the basic philosophy and operating methods of technical assistance should be carefully appraised. T.A. means different things to different areas and to different people in the same area. To some Americans it means "boondoggling" on a

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8. Pp. 177-222.

9. Pp. 39, 117.

global scale; to others it is a manifestation of humanitarianism and Christian stewardship; in a few cases, it may be conceived as a method of creating markets by increasing effective economic demand; to a large extent it is considered as a way of waging the cold war, of blunting the edge of Soviet propaganda, of supporting "friendly" governments, of securing allies, of checking drifts toward the communist orbit. To some it seems to waste our substance, to fritter away our energies, and to distract our attention from the one paramount consideration of national security. We are reminded not only that we may be creating economic competition against ourselves, as Secretary Humphreys has warned, but also that we may fatten underdeveloped areas for communist capture, after which their strengthened economies will be turned against us. These criticisms are answered by the assertion that America can never be secure in an insecure world, that technical assistance will largely remove the basic roots of insecurity and the lure of communism, and that national security itself will be endangered by excessive reliance on military power unaccompanied by viable economic and social conditions and a rejuvenated and favorable morale. Large sections of the world, inhabited by more than a billion people, are on the fence in the East-West struggle. They seek national independence and economic and social well-being; and if the Western world, and Americans particularly, are deaf to their pleas, they will be ripe for Communist picking; therefore, we will ignore them at our peril.

Space forbids extensive treatment of the issues raised here, but it can be remarked that it is not a question of *either* functional international cooperation *or* collective or regional arrangements for political security. Both are necessary, and both have risks. Functional international cooperation, including technical assistance, can, if properly articulated, do much to remove the seeds of war in the long run; but the salutary effects of such activities will not be realized if the run is not long. Meanwhile, peace must be kept in the shorter run; if it is not, the best laid plans will founder. Increased incomes, lower death rates, and higher literacy will stand forfeit to a war into which these areas are pulled; and a balanced diet will not in itself repulse a determined military thrust. Every year that peace is kept should increase the chance for the seeds of technical assistance to yield fruit and to contribute to peace—although this may not necessarily be true. Likewise, to the extent that technical assistance furthers stability and relaxation of tension, to that extent it facilitates the short run job of peace keeping. Here we are confronted with a dilemma. In the present world

both military power and economic and technical assistance appear necessary; nevertheless, the effort to pursue both policies simultaneously runs the risk of doing things in each field which interfere with attainment of objectives in the other.

Risks, though, are unavoidable. To say that there are risks is not to say that they should not be assumed. It is to say that they should be squarely confronted and that measures should be taken to minimize them. As Americans, we are primarily interested in American security. This, it seems to me, requires power sufficient to deter or check hostile power. This means military power, but it does not mean mere military power. Guns delivered to the Vietnamese, for example, will be useless, and might even be dangerous, if the Vietnamese lack the will to use them against the Viet-Minh forces. In other words, while technical assistance cannot guarantee allies, and while there is no absolute assurance that the aided people will not turn to the communists in spite of our efforts, failure to extend technical assistance will almost certainly result in their loss to the free world by default.

Risks there are, and they must be run, but they should be calculated. Without presumptuously venturing easy solutions, perhaps a few of the more obvious risks can be described. One of them is the risk of tying technical assistance too closely to the military arm or conditioning its grants upon abandonment of neutralism for an unreserved western orientation. This is likely to be resented, as it was in Indonesia and would be in India; and, in any event, it would not likely achieve dependable results even if aid were accepted under such conditions. In this connection it is feared that a step in the wrong direction has been taken by the submergence of the Technical Cooperation Administration of our own Point Four Program in the Foreign Operations Administration whose major purpose is military security and whose dominant personnel, now that dismissals of experienced key technical assistance chiefs have been made, are military and business men. The spirit in which aid is given is as important as the aid itself, and the uncommitted are unlikely to be won over by help which they view as bait by which they are to be hooked.

Whether we wish it or not, we are in the midst of a cold war. Resources, therefore, have to be allocated because we cannot do all that we would like to do. Here lies the risk of an imbalanced program. The delicate decision is one of degree or balance. Are we spending too little or too much time and energy on technical assistance? If we spend too little on technical assistance and place excessive reliance upon military power and alliances, it will be on the assumption that it is

as a military threat that Soviet power is most dangerous to us. This view risks the loss to the free world of these areas through economic demoralization, political instability and confusion, and communist subversion. On the other hand, too much technical assistance would be at the expense of other more necessary items and might result in such waste as to cause a revulsion against the whole idea by the taxpayers of aid-extending countries. It could also be extended at a pace beyond the capacity of the culture to absorb. However, the present American budget does not disclose an over-emphasis on technical assistance.

Early in this review reference was made to the revolution of rising expectations. Have these expectations risen too high? Will there be impatience for quick results? Has the program been over-sold? Experience has shown, I believe, that the forces of discontent and protests have a way of coming from the better educated and more favored—from an elite. We may, therefore, be creating the very conditions out of which protest springs. We must, I believe, run this risk; but, conscious of it, we should try to devise social and political policies to minimize it. The desirability of showing some progress fairly quickly should influence the kind of projects undertaken. Gigantic hydro-electric installations may be necessary, but they require considerable capital investment, and they may be at the expense of other projects whose benefits are more immediately evident. Preoccupation with grandiose schemes should not be the enemy of more modest projects. This will require good research and planning both by the aid-giving and aid-receiving area. Realistic planning will start with the area as it is and build cumulatively from an assortment of small accomplishments. If some benefits are really tangible and fairly quickly manifested, it is hoped that, even though dreams have not been completely fulfilled, people will recognize that first steps are being taken. We must, however, heed the warning of Secretary-General Hammar-skjold that the gaps between the living standards of the most and least advanced countries are widening, and, while taking measure to raise standards in the depressed areas, we must be careful to avoid giving the impression of promising Utopia.

We should candidly admit, too, that aid extended to some governments controlled by a privileged few ruling in a feudalistic environment may serve to bolster regimes which, in themselves, are prime causes of the very conditions which aid is intended to remedy. But we face a dilemma in such situations. If we openly intervene, we shall be accused of imperialistic domineering; but if we do not, corrup-

tion and favoritism are likely not only to dissipate funds but also to perpetuate the very ferments and discontent we seek to eliminate. Since we shall probably be accused of colonialism by the communists anyway, insistence upon reasonable safeguards to assure that benefits will reach those for whom they are intended does not seem imprudent. While we should not seek to remake societies in our image, it is doubtful if we should spend resources in areas whose regimes refuse permission to the erection of reasonable safeguards.

Moreover, we run the risk of assuming that better economic conditions automatically produce solutions; yet it has not been proven that people will necessarily desire freedom if they are better off economically. If so, why should we not grant gigantic sums to the Soviet Union? Technical assistance which emphasizes economic improvement may influence behavior, but it does not necessarily produce democracy or friendship. Over-emphasis on material change reflects the degree to which economic determinism has captured its presumed critics and threatens to imperil the larger goals. Unless there is an avoidance of the patronizing attitude, of attitudes of racial, cultural, or national superiority—unless, in a word, the essential worth of human beings is sincerely recognized—the result may be better wheat, fewer pests, and less soil erosion, but it may also be increased resentment and even hostility. Gordon Clapp has reminded us that *technical* assistance—the physical aspect of the problem—is comparatively easily solved.<sup>10</sup> Solutions should not be imposed—certainly not by outsiders. The key to this question probably is the top sergeant of technical assistance—the technician or expert. If he is merely an expert, without qualities of adaptability, without appreciation of other cultures, without insight into the mysteries of complex human relationships, without patience to teach and to wait, he may do irreparable harm. The very pride of the expert in efficiency and workmanship, when not mellowed by tact, sympathy, and devotion, is calculated to produce as many problems as it solves. Something of the missionary spirit is an indispensable commodity if the expert and, with him, the technical assistance program are to reach their goals. Material things are important, but so are attitudes, and we risk complete failure if we forget this.

Just as change in the natural world may upset the whole balance of nature, so technological change, however slight, may result in cultural disruption. This is not to argue for a hands-off, let-well-enough-alone policy, but it is to suggest that ancient cultures resting upon beliefs, practices, and institutions hallowed by time, are not changed

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10. Address before the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Feb. 20, 1954.

lightly, and when they are, the consequences challenge prediction. This simple truth underscores the wisdom of extending technical assistance only upon the invitation from the needy area, of training residents of the area to train others and to take over administration of the program as soon as possible. Cultural rigidity will put some limits, too, on the nature and desirable rate of change. Frequently, those who would benefit most from new methods resist them most vigorously, and progressive practices may have undesirable consequences in different cultures. Such was the case in Africa when veterinary service increased the number of cattle but, instead of increasing the food supply, actually contributed to erosion. Since cattle were killed only on ceremonial occasions, their increase merely resulted in over-grazing of the land.

We must be mindful, too, of real demographic risks. Stated simply, we can say that the population will increase faster as living conditions improve. In view of the tremendous pressure of population on food supply in many of the under-developed areas, this is a major problem. While experience indicates that a slowing down and leveling off of population increase sets in after a certain level of well-being has been achieved, it emphasizes the very real risks attendant upon excess population in relation to resources in the interim, and it accentuates the necessity of taking educational and other measures to control population increase during the transitional period.

For the most part, technical assistance has been governmentally inspired and administered; and governmental programs, especially unilateral ones, are inclined to be regarded with some distrust. While not inevitably so, they also run the risk of losing vitality through bureaucratic routine and delay. Even official international programs are not entirely immune to these risks. Every opportunity, therefore, should be given to use nongovernmental energies for this work when they are available on terms acceptable to the area aided. Admittedly, the job is too big to rely completely on private business, religious organizations, philanthropic foundations, and educational institutions, but indication that the Foreign Operations Administration intends to "farm out" more projects to private organizations under contract appears to be a salutary move if it does not mean abdication of governmental concern and support.

Technical assistance and human betterment if initiated and not carried through may whet desires without satisfying them. It may be a greater risk to extend aid in fits and starts than not to extend it at all. In terms of making an appreciable difference in living standards for many people in many areas, the problem is a long term one, and it should not be characterized by spasmodic efforts. With mounting

armament expenditures, and with tax and debt burdens already high, we should not be surprised if economic reversal and increased unemployment, particularly in the United States, were to produce demands for retrenchment or even abandonment of assistance of this sort. This, again, is a risk that must be squarely faced. It need not be ruinous if the retrenchment is not complete and for long, if private resources are still available, and if a good start has been made to help the area help itself. Much good can be done with comparatively small expenditures, and the spirit of hope can be preserved, but the effort should be sustained if at all possible.

Technical assistance is one of the most constructive ideas evolved in a destructive age, but its aims and methods must be soberly evaluated if its potentialities are to be realized. Mr. Mack's dispassionate and objective study, though limited in scope, has contributed to this evaluation in a significant way.

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