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Connecting Realities: Peace Corps Volunteers in South America and the Global War on Poverty during the 1960s

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Conectando realidades: los voluntarios del Cuerpo de Paz en Suramérica y la Guerra Global contra la pobreza en la década de 1960

Resumen:

Este artículo aborda el trabajo de los voluntarios del Cuerpo de Paz de Estados Unidos en Sudamérica durante la década de 1960. El argumento que se trata en esta investigación es que a través de su entrenamiento en comunidades pobres de Estados Unidos y su intervención en contextos similares sudamericanos, se transformaron en conectores de distintas visiones de acción comunitaria. Esto permite insertar al Cuerpo de Paz dentro del escenario de lo que fue una verdadera guerra global contra la pobreza. Este argumento se sustenta en cartas y testimonios así como en prensa y documentación oficial rescatada de archivos y bibliotecas de Estados Unidos y Sudamérica.

Palabras clave: *Sudamérica, Cuerpos de Paz, Guerra Fría, Estados Unidos, desarrollo comunitario, pobreza.*

Connecting Realities: Peace Corps Volunteers in South America and the Global War on Poverty during the 1960s

Abstract:

This article examines the work of Peace Corps volunteers in South America during the 1960s. It argues that through their training in impoverished communities in the United States and their intervention in similar contexts in South America, these volunteers connected diverse visions of community action aimed at eradicating poverty. This allows an inclusion of a historical comprehension of the Peace Corps within the scenario of a Global War on Poverty. The argument derives from the analysis of letters and testimonies, press items, and official documents found in archives and libraries both in the United States and South America.

Keywords: *South America, Peace Corps, Cold War, United States, community development, poverty.*

Conectando realidades: os voluntários do Corpo de Paz na América do Sul e a Guerra Global contra a pobreza na década de 1960

Resumo:

Este artigo aborda o trabalho dos voluntários do Corpo de Paz dos Estados Unidos na América do Sul durante a década de 1960. Argumenta-se que, por meio de seu treinamento em comunidades pobres dos Estados Unidos e sua intervenção em contextos similares sul-americanos, transformaram-se em conectores de diferentes visões de ação comunitária. Isso permite inserir o Corpo de Paz no cenário do que foi uma verdadeira guerra global contra a pobreza. Esse argumento se sustenta em cartas e testemunhos, bem como em imprensa e documentação oficial resgatada de arquivos e bibliotecas dos Estados Unidos e da América do Sul.

Palavras-chave: *América do Sul, Corpos de Paz, Guerra Fria, Estados Unidos, desenvolvimento comunitário, pobreza.*

Connecting Realities: Peace Corps Volunteers in South America and the Global War on Poverty during the 1960s

Introduction

The Peace Corps is a volunteer project established in 1961 by John F. Kennedy that has sent young Americans abroad for two-year stints to collaborate in community development in urban and rural areas in the Third World. Some twenty thousand volunteers arrived in South America in the 1960s, one of the regions of the world that received the largest number of volunteers during that decade. This happened within the framework of U.S. interventions in Latin America after the Cuban Revolution, which had different expressions such as the Alliance for Progress, military interventions, cultural projects and diplomatic efforts, among other things.¹ Their presence in remote areas was part of what Alan McPherson has described as a process of increasing North-South intimacies,² which grew in size during the Cold War, a conflict in which not just violence, but the logic of modernization through social and economic development was also crucial in Latin America. Indeed, the challenge of development provided a key battlefield in which the United States and the Soviet Union both strove to impose their respective visions of how to modernize the world. Demonstrating the efficacy of their contending ideologies became a matter of crucial importance.³

From the U.S. perspective, the Truman Doctrine, formulated in 1947 by President Harry Truman, had launched a new era in the comprehension and handling of world affairs, especially regarding the countries of the Third World. U.S. support in areas of technology, industry, agriculture, education, nutrition, birth control and agricultural management were

1 Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 187.

2 Alan McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles. The United States and Latin America Since 1945* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), 2.

3 David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

decisive aspects of U.S. foreign policy.⁴ The Peace Corps was one of the tools the United States drew on to achieve its modernizing objective, and in Latin America it was conceived as a local complement of the structural changes promoted through the Alliance for Progress. Since Peace Corps actions had direct impact on small communities, the study of the program offers a window through which to examine local manifestations of the Cold War.⁵ Nevertheless, the historical relevance of the Peace Corps goes beyond its connections to U.S. foreign policy. Its work was also linked to local institutions, both public and private, in host countries. Through community development projects, volunteers contributed to a process in which distinct and often contending visions of Cold War efforts were embedded in a truly global war on poverty.⁶

Much has been written about the presence of the Peace Corps in the world. Kennedy's initiative has captivated historians who emphasize the fascinating experiences of volunteers in their host societies, their motivations, and a wide range of details related to how the organization functioned institutionally.⁷ Nonetheless, little has been written about the Peace Corps in Latin America and still less about the volunteers' training in the United States, which included community work in areas of extreme poverty.⁸ Nor has sufficient attention been paid to Peace

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- 4 See Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception. The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2008); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Amy L. S. Staples, *The Birth of Development. How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945-1965* (Kent: Kent University Press, 2006). On the use of international aid as a central element of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, see Jeffrey F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as a Foreign Policy. The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2007).
 - 5 Regarding the relationship between large development projects and the Peace Corps, see Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology. American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 109-150.
 - 6 Robert F. Clark, *Victory Deferred. The War of Global Poverty (1945-2003)* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005).
 - 7 Some of the most influential books are: Elizabeth Cobbs-Hoffman, *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Fritz Fischer, *Making Them Like Us. Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1960s* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), and Gerard T. Rice, *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).
 - 8 Bibliography on the Peace Corps in South America is still scarce. See, Cecilia Azevedo, *Em nome da América. Os Corpos da Paz no Brasil* (Sao Paulo: Alameda, 2008); Molly Geidel, "Sowing Death in Our Women's Wombs: Modernization and Indigenous Nationalism in the 1960s Peace Corps and Jorge Sanjinés' Yawar Mallku," *American Quarterly* 62: 3 (2010): 763-786; James F. Siekmeier, "Sacrificial Llama? The Expulsion of the Peace Corps from Bolivia in 1971," *Pacific Historical Review* 69:1 (2000): 65-87; and Glenn F. Sheffield, "Peru and the Peace Corps, 1962-1968" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1991). Regarding the volunteers' community work in the United States, see discussion within a broader examination of poverty in the United States during the twentieth century in Alyosha Goldstein, "On the Internal Border. Colonial Difference and the Locations of Underdevelopment," in *Poverty in Common. The Politics of Community Action During the American Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 77-110, Kindle Edition.

Corps interaction with the ideas and community development projects generated within the host societies—a serious oversight considering that the vast majority of young people who traveled to South America collaborated with local public and private institutions, many of which had been operating long before the Peace Corps arrived. These institutions had their own notions of community development, which did not always coincide with those of the Peace Corps. Countries such as Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru had their own initiatives to fight poverty on a local level. When they welcomed the Peace Corps, it was not simply so that they could learn from the proposals brought by the young foreigners, but rather because they sought to strengthen their own institutions and projects, which were often tied to needs and initiatives related to social order.

Studies of the Peace Corps tend to emphasize a unidirectional logic according to which development discourses originated in the First World during the Cold War and focused on the need to bridge the gap between modern and traditional societies through actions and projects that emanated from the center of the modern world. The attention paid therein to how volunteers lived in the Third World and what they did, or attempted to do, overshadows discussion of how local efforts and realities decisively shaped what volunteers ultimately accomplished.

This article problematizes the analysis of the Cold War by questioning the unidirectionality of community development and contrasting the linear core-periphery discourses with a historical reality in which the “periphery” had a great deal to say and propose in terms of the fight against poverty. It focuses on two fundamental elements that break with the unidirectional core-periphery historiographical narratives regarding the Peace Corps. First, many volunteers had already confronted situations of poverty in the United States before heading abroad. Second, as soon as they arrived in South America, they realized they were not the only ones who had something to contribute. They had to contrast their own visions with those held by local people and institutions, many of which had been working in community development long before the Peace Corps was created in 1961. In order to highlight the multi-centrality of the global war on poverty, this article adopts a global view of the Peace Corps and its role in the eradication of poverty. Hence, it diverges from approaches to world history that structure narratives around localized axes related to dominant European or Western cultures.⁹ The argument here is that through their training in impoverished communities in the United States

9 On the limitations of world history, see Hugo Fazio Vengoa, “La historia global y la conveniencia para el estudio del pasado y del presente,” *Historia Crítica* Edición Especial (2009): 317. On the plurality of Cold War scenarios, see Odd Arne Westad, “Exploring the Histories of the Cold War. A Pluralist Approach,” in *Uncertain Empire. American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, eds. Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 51-59.

and their intervention in similar contexts in South America, the volunteers connected diverse visions of community action aimed at the eradication of poverty. Moreover, the political and social realities they encountered decisively shaped not only the realms and places where they worked but also the ways in which they worked on community development.

A global view, such as that proposed by Odd Arne Westad, contributes to the decentralization of Cold War studies by revealing how agents in the Third World—South America, in this case—generated and implemented community development proposals.¹⁰ Although these proposals generally complemented those of the Peace Corps, they also had their own particularities that often conflicted with the visions of the young American volunteers.¹¹ Finally, the contribution of this article consists of its exploration of Cold War narratives that highlight the role of non-state agents whose actions were not limited to the violence and terror of the period. Although these aspects are highly important for understanding conflicts in the region, they tend to overshadow other relevant aspects of the Cold War experience in South America.¹² With the inclusion of new actors and a global perspective that questions nation-centrism, this article explores different layers of Cold War history in the region.

1. The Peace Corps and Training in the United States

Describing some Peace Corps volunteers' impressions after doing community development work in Washington, D.C., evaluator R. William Tatge stated in 1966 that, "Some even wondered why they were going to Brazil when there is much to do right here."¹³ As part of their training, these young people had gone into the poor communities of Cardozo and Takoma Park, where many Brazilian immigrants lived. The idea was for volunteers to live with Brazilian families in order to familiarize themselves with Portuguese and to confront challenges similar to those they would find in South America. One of the basic Peace Corps principles regarding community work was that participants needed to prepare themselves in

10 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

11 On efforts to decentralize visions of the United State's role in the world, see Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, *Decentering America* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

12 An important book that has called for such visions is Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser, *In from the Cold. Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

13 "Report by R. William Tatge, Distribuido el 8 de noviembre de 1966," 8 November, 1966, in National Archives II (NARA II), College Park-United States, *Record Group (RG)* 490, Training Evaluation Reports, 1964-1969, Box 3, Folder "Brazil School Lunch. University ED Georgetown University," 14. Tatge worked for the Peace Corps and was one of dozens of people in charge of evaluations during the two to three-month training periods volunteers experienced before traveling to the Third World.

conditions similar to those they would face in host countries. Deborah Jones made this clear in a Peace Corps report, stressing that volunteers needed to learn about and adjust “to a new way of life, and becoming aware of the role of an alien in a new way of life.”¹⁴

When Deborah Jones wrote about the “real world,” she was referring to the importance of training in host countries. Yet this approach was only put into practice at the end of the 1960s. How, then, could the Peace Corps achieve its objective of finding social contexts in the United States similar to those in South America during the bulk of the decade? The question is relevant because the core of Kennedy’s Peace Corps project rested on the need to bridge the gap between traditional and developed societies. This of course presupposed the existence of an abysmal asymmetry in terms of education and technical capacity between the United States and the Third World. However, as the domestic poverty-eradication campaigns launched by President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society project in 1964 revealed, the United States had its own contradictions. Proposals from universities interested in securing training contracts with the Peace Corps further evidenced these contradictions. Authorities from the University of New Mexico, which prepared most of the volunteers who went to Latin America during the 1960s, offered a fitting setting for training. “It should be emphasized that the underprivileged Spanish-speaking communities of New Mexican cities such as Albuquerque and Santa Fe constitute a living laboratory for the trainee, as well as a useful linguistic environment.”¹⁵ They insisted that “the unique environmental features (with islands of primitive peoples and underdeveloped communities) provide the State with unparalleled environmental resources.”¹⁶

Indeed, the 1960s saw the United States at a crossroads of its own in terms of poverty, a point the Soviet Union was eager to exploit. Consequently, the U.S. government took on new responsibility by attacking domestic poverty just as it was approaching racial problems.¹⁷ After witnessing stunning poverty during the presidential campaign in West Virginia, Kennedy timidly began by enacting social policies that aimed to safeguard the well-being of families

14 “Report by Robert Joy, Distributed 12 September 1969,” in NARA II, RG 490, Training Evaluation Reports, 1964-1969, Box 5, Folder “Training Evaluation Peru Agricultural Extension,” 2. Although the Peace Corps Training Office closed in 1967, thereby increasing the autonomy of the Training Directors in each of the four areas into which the institution divided the Third World, there was still a certain amount of accumulated experience and ideas that had gained strong currency within the Peace Corps. Deborah Jones, “Looking at the Trainee ‘83 Model,” *Peace Corps Volunteer* 7: 6 (1969): 24-28.

15 “Proposal for a Peace Corps Training Center,” Albuquerque, 10 November, 1962, in Center for Southwest Research [University of New Mexico] (CSWR), Albuquerque-New Mexico, *New México Digital Collections*, 13, <<http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ULPhotoImag/id/1494>>.

16 “Proposal for a Peace Corps Training Center,” 2.

17 Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

whose heads of household were unemployed.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it was Johnson who declared an “unconditional war on poverty” in his State of the Union address of January 1964. Shortly afterwards, Congress responded by approving the Economic Opportunity Act, which created the Office of Economic Opportunity to coordinate efforts to diminish the grinding poverty in which almost 20% of the U.S. population lived.¹⁹ The effort included the creation of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) in 1965, which replicated on a domestic level what the Peace Corps had been carrying out on the international level since 1961.²⁰

Despite its internationalist vocation, the Peace Corps participated in concerns about domestic poverty through the training programs for its volunteers. Whether in New York, Washington, D.C., Sacramento, Los Angeles, Taos, or Michigan, the institution always attempted to expose its people to the experience of poverty.²¹ It further complemented this by recreating precarious environments on university campuses where volunteers undertook important aspects of their preparation.²²

Whether in concrete community activities or in recreating impoverished environments, the Peace Corps collaborated in the “unconditional war on poverty,” though this was not part of its initially declared mission. Its varied community efforts in the United States helped to strengthen institutionally the government and private agencies involved. More importantly, Peace Corps training engaged volunteers in a global campaign that exposed them to diverse visions of community work and they interacted with academics, professionals, and public and private institutions dedicated to the same general objectives. Some volunteers even had the opportunity to work in the United States with Latin American community development workers, such as the group of thirty Colombians from *Acción Comunal* with whom volunteer Prudence Barber worked in settlements in upper Manhattan in New York.²³

One of the many examples of Peace Corps work in the United States was when a group of 100 volunteers headed to Brazil conducted part of their training in California in 1966.

18 Frank Stricker, *Why America Lost the War on Poverty and How to Win It* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2007), 37-41.

19 Annelise Orleck, “Introduction. The War on Poverty from the Grass Roots Up,” in *The War on Poverty. A New Grassroots History 1964-1980*, eds. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 1-28.

20 T. Zane Reeves, *The Politics of the Peace Corps & VISTA* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1988), 14-15. During the Nixon administration, both programs were combined into a single agency known as ACTION.

21 As a complement, volunteers often underwent training programs in their host countries in the initial weeks after their arrival.

22 Noel Greenwood, “Peace Corps Lives Chilean Life,” *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles, 8 October, 1967, n/p.

23 “Interview with Prudence Barber,” 22 September, 2006, in John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (JFK), Boston-United States, *Returned Peace Corps Volunteers*, Oral History Interview, MR2007-10: 1.

They worked with fourteen California agencies in Sacramento, Stockton, Richmond, San Francisco, Oakland, Westley and the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles for three weeks,²⁴ and their experience working directly in these communities was intense. In several projects, as a report noted, the agencies “provided lists of families, from which the trainees had to find one with whom to live.” Then, “once a week, the trainees at each locale met for a two and half hours’ discussion of their work. All trainees kept a log of their experiences, and each agency evaluated its trainees.”²⁵ Such experiences were not taken lightly. Although the internal documents clearly established that “the training is for Peace Corps service,”²⁶ the Peace Corps was entirely committed and its training had real impact on communities. A leader of the indigenous community of Chama, New Mexico even requested a longer-term relationship in 1964. As he argued, Peace Corps leaders at the University of New Mexico “were the spark plugs of a new feeling and inspiration that Chama has never before experienced.”²⁷

As their letters and memoirs show, many volunteers found their community work experiences in the United States profoundly moving. University training programs stressed that they would experience culture shock when living far away from home, but many volunteers—such as Rachel Cowan from Wellesley, Massachusetts, who grew up in a suburb of wealthy, white Protestants—already suffered it in the United States. Recalling, years later, the experience of leaving her comfortable Massachusetts town to attend training at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, she wrote, “We were already leaving America behind, at least the America we knew.”²⁸ Encountering poverty in her own country was a shock, especially given the contemporary prevailing discourse that conceived of poverty as a foreign reality, alien to the United States.²⁹

Fieldwork was a fundamental aspect of training that required adequate theoretical preparation. Universities were charged with proposing courses according to the academic specialties of each and the areas determined by the Peace Corps, which carefully evaluated

24 The experience occurred in 1966, a year after race riots in August 1965 in Watts that resulted in the death of more than 30 people, hundreds of injuries, and more than 3,000 arrests. This generated certain anxiety for many volunteers.

25 “Training Evaluation ATP-Brazil Urban Community Development by Joseph C. Kennedy,” 22-24 August, 1966, in NARA II, RG 490, Training Evaluation Reports, 1964-1969, Box 3, Folder “Brazil UCD ATP/1 Sacramento State Summer 1966,” 5.

26 “The Peace Corps Training Program: A Guide to its Basic Components, Division of Training, Fourth Revision,” 15 June, 1962, in CSWR, *Peace Corps Collection*, Folder “Training Guide to Basic Components, 1962,” 1-3.

27 “Letter from K. R. Lively to Heyt Trowbridge,” 6 February, 1964, in CSWR, *Peace Corps Collection*, Folder “Correspondence Community Feedback 1964,” n/p.

28 Rachel Cowan, *Growing Up Yánqui* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 34.

29 Alyosha Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*, Position 991 to 1001 of 4859 [Kindle Edition].

the training programs. This did not imply homogeneity; each university had its own specialists and focused on its own particular strengths. Moreover, internal Peace Corps documents recognized the diversity of approaches and outlined up to eight different definitions of community development.³⁰ For instance, Michigan State University, where a significant number of volunteers destined for South America did their training, emphasized a “holistic approach to community development.”³¹ This urged volunteers to perceive the relationships between different parts of a community “so as to press forward the job of development on as many different fronts as possible, coordinating each developmental plan with what is already happening in the community and with what is already being planned.”³²

Like anthropology students with notebook in hand, volunteers in Michigan were trained to observe, survey and carefully register everything they saw before starting any action. The designers of this community intervention paradigm believed that trained volunteers would achieve an “understanding on firmer scientific ground than other [community development] training systems are able to furnish.” More than an alternative, the holistic approach was a retooled version of traditional methods that emphasized the formation of action committees for self-help projects. At Michigan, though, volunteers were not pushed “to try and solve the problems of his community by rushing to form co-ops, clubs and committees that may or may not be needed.”³³

Regardless of the type of activities developed or whether training took place in Albuquerque, Taos, or New York, volunteers tended to familiarize themselves with different social intervention paradigms, at least on a theoretical level. After several weeks of training at the University of New Mexico, Jane Bales wrote her parents that, “perhaps it is about time I start explaining a few of the ideological concepts that we are becoming saturated with.” Before going into detail, she pointed out that, “although we don’t know now with what organization we will be working, we do know what we will be doing! And although it sounds as vague as heck to say ‘community development,’ there are a few specific ideas behind it.” She summarized these ideas as “the process through which a group of people learn to identify and solve their own

30 “Some Definitions of Community Development,” in CSWR, *Peace Corps Collection*, Folder “Training Guide to Basic Components, 1962,” 1-3.

31 This method of community development was devised by MSU-men Edmon Alchin, John Donoghue, Iwao Ishino and Stewart Marquis.

32 “Training Evaluation. Chile Community Development. Michigan State University by Meridan H. Bennett,” 9 December, 1965, in NARA II, RG 490, Training Evaluation Reports, 1964-1969, Box 4, Folder “Chile CD Michigan State 12/9/65 Bennet,” 4.

33 “Training Evaluation. Chile Community Development,” 6.

problems with the materials they have at hand [...]. When a Peace Corps person leaves a community, he should leave a strong structure that is capable of organizing and leading itself into action.”³⁴ Bales thus reflected the impact of the theory courses she attended at the University of New Mexico, where the prevalent approach was self-help—helping the community to recognize its own needs—in contrast to other models such as Michigan’s.

Finally, beyond everything volunteers had learned in the United States, including the paradigms they embraced, they had to grapple with the difficulty of submitting their service to the initiatives generated by local governments and institutions that had invited the Peace Corps. These bodies sought to further their own community development projects, many of which had clearly political objectives and often sprang from a deeply paternalistic relationship between the state and citizens.

2. Working on Fertile Ground

Nevertheless, the Peace Corps found fertile ground in South America. Convinced of the need to ameliorate poverty, in the late-1950s and during the 1960s several Latin American governments set out to pursue development through the creation of a series of bureaus and ministries charged with economic and social planning that complemented earlier offices charged with promoting industrialization after the Great Depression.³⁵ Thus, South America entered into what the Chilean historian Mario Góngora defined as the era of global planning, a period marked by an enormous influence of the social sciences on the design of social intervention policies.³⁶ In countries such as Peru, Chile and Colombia, government initiatives focused on community development, albeit with an eye on political objectives. Supported by the Alliance for Progress, such initiatives promoted reformist processes that aimed to prevent Latin America from falling into the hands of the communists.³⁷

The existence of national development initiatives explains the warm welcome the Peace Corps received upon arrival in South America. Like other countries, Peru had developed its own community development projects throughout the 1960s. President

34 Fred Bales and Jane Bales, *Chilean Odyssey. The Peace Corps Letters of Fred Bales and Jan Stebing Bales* (Bloomington: Author House, 2007), 25-26.

35 Adolfo Garcé García y Santos, *Ideas y competencia política en Uruguay (1960-1973)* (Montevideo: Trilce, 2002), 162.

36 Mario Góngora, *Ensayo histórico sobre la noción del Estado en Chile, siglos XIX y XX* (Santiago: La Ciudad, 1981).

37 Jeffrey F. Taffet, *Foreign Aid as a Foreign Policy*, 1-10.

Table 1. Number of Volunteers 1961-1970

COUNTRY	VOLUNTEERS 1961-1970
Colombia	4,142
Brazil	4,057
Peru	2,624
Chile	2,155
Ecuador	2,002
Venezuela	1,947
Bolivia	1,819
Paraguay	222
Uruguay	217
TOTAL	19,185

Source: "Twelve Year Summary: Volunteers in a Country at the end of the Calendar Year, June 1971," in *Peace Corps. Congressional Presentation. Fiscal Year 1972*, in Peace Corps Digital Library (PCDL) Washington-United States, *Congressional and Legislative Material*, 4.

Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1963-1968) launched the most ambitious of these programs in August of 1962 when he institutionalized the *Programa de Promoción Popular* (Program of Popular Cooperation). Belaúnde insisted that communal actions had deep historical roots and emphasized the "millenarian practices and customs inherent in communal work."³⁸ As Peru looked for solutions to community problems, this discourse sought to bolster the country's autonomy by appealing to the "creative potential that made the Incan Empire great."³⁹ Three years after its establishment, an official brochure argued that "by drawing on the roots of our glorious millenarian past," Popular Cooperation had "modernized the noble tradition of communal work that is already yielding its first fruits."⁴⁰ As authorities from the Institute of National Planning stressed, the "*minca* and the *ayni* are the origin of popular cooperation and among many peoples, especially in the Andes, these ancestral practices are still in use."⁴¹ As such, locals did not see the volunteers as the only people authorized to speak and do something about this reality.

38 Octavio Mongrut, coord., *Fernando Belaúnde Terry. Peruanidad, democracia e integración* (Lima: Auge, 2006), 197.

39 *3 años de Cooperación Popular* (Lima: Programa de Cooperación Popular, 1966), 1.

40 *3 años de Cooperación Popular*, 2.

41 Eduardo Orrego V., "Cooperación Popular y Desarrollo," *Cuadernillo de Divulgación* 18 (1966): 2.

The Belaúnde administration also argued that the program's roots were found in the people and not in government. Officials "only intervened as a catalyst to orient the program, democratically and gradually, toward the creation of new forms of coexistence and productive work."⁴² In reality, though, the "people's" actual contribution was often limited to providing material goods and labor, while the government provided equipment, tools, and technical oversight. The program's objective, then, was clearly two-fold: on the one hand, to attend to the immediate infrastructural needs of the poor and, on the other, to insert executive authority into provincial and district councils through a decentralized structure.⁴³ The program's motto—"The People Did It"—reflected the people's contribution: living in conditions of dire poverty, they put their efforts toward the solution of urgent problems through the construction of such public works as roads, clinics, schools, potable water projects, and irrigation.

Belaúnde Terry's government celebrated "the roar of Popular Cooperation's motors and the noise of picks and shovels" to be heard in the most remote corners of the mountains.⁴⁴ Yet, unlike other approaches to poverty in the region, the Peruvian program did not emphasize communal initiatives through, for instance, the formation of local leaders and training that could yield the paradigmatic self-help. Ultimately, the program strengthened initiatives that focused on material development and the growth of a state that, through this decentralizing effort, managed to consolidate an administrative structure. Soon, twenty-six major Popular Cooperation centers, and 144 basic centers, appeared all over the country.⁴⁵ This structure was similar to other Belaúnde initiatives throughout the decade that sought to strengthen the state while developing policies of territorial integration in keeping with the "Conquest of Peru by Peruvians" as championed by Belaúnde's Acción Popular party.⁴⁶

For all of these projects, Belaúnde Terry relied on Peace Corps collaboration. The more than 2,600 volunteers who arrived in Peru in the 1960s became involved in dozens of communities, especially in the Andes and in large cities such as Lima and Arequipa.⁴⁷

42 Octavio Mongrut, *Fernando Belaúnde Terry*, 197.

43 Complementing Cooperación Popular, Belaúnde launched in 1966 the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo e Integración de la Población Indígena* that sought to incorporate the indigenous world into the national society through actions coordinated by the Ministries of Health, Education, and Agriculture. The program's motto was "The Last Will Be the First." Much like Cooperación Popular, the program emphasized the improvement of material conditions through the development of irrigation works, bridges, roads, as well as supervised credit for artisans and agriculture. Octavio Mongrut, *Fernando Belaúnde Terry*, 217.

44 *3 años de Cooperación Popular*, 1 and 2.

45 Octavio Mongrut, *Fernando Belaúnde Terry*, 197.

46 Fernando Belaúnde Terry, *La Conquista del Perú por los Peruanos* (Lima: Tawantinsuyu, 1959).

47 "Twelve Year Summary," 4.

At the same time, though, the Peruvian initiative was among the huge governmental projects in South America that differed the most from the paradigms of community intervention which motivated the volunteers. As will be discussed below, these differences generated more than a few conflicts.

Acción Comunal (Communal Action) in Colombia was another ambitious development project that collaborated with the Peace Corps. Indeed, Colombia received more volunteers than any other Latin American country in the 1960s. The Colombian government had launched the project in 1958 in response to discussions that emerged within Colombian society about the establishment of nationwide planning criteria.⁴⁸ A 1958 law authorized municipal councils, departmental assemblies and the national government to confer “functions of control and oversight of certain public services, or certain intervention in the management of these services” on Communal Action councils. The principle of local autonomy thus merged with the extension of state services for small urban and rural communities.⁴⁹

Underlying the project was the notion of “popular integration.”⁵⁰ As an agent of the Colombian Ministry of Public Works pointed out, lower classes, and particularly peasants, lacked forms with which to adequately express their problems.⁵¹ The initiative therefore intended to create political and social dynamics that incorporated the lower classes. The renowned sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, an enthusiastic defender of Communal Action, stressed in 1961 that “the principal of autonomy, which is fundamental in community development, implies the acknowledgement of talents and strengths of the groups of people who have generally been ignored by the dominant classes.” Fals Borda was not speaking only as a theorist, but rather as a precursor of social intervention projects. Indeed, at the time, he was working on development projects in the rural neighborhood of Suacío in the municipality of Chocontá (Cundinamarca) and had a deep influence on the initial phase of this large government project.⁵²

48 In Colombia, Lauchlin Bernard Currie became one of the great precursors of social planning, which ceased to be the exclusive providence of politicians and involved the work of academics and intellectuals. Currie encouraged urban planning, regional development, and environmental studies. He was also the founder of the Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo, established in the Universidad Nacional in 1967. See Elba Cánfora Argandoña, “Lauchlin Currie,” in *Pensamiento Colombiano del siglo XX*, vol. II, eds. Guillermo Hoyos, Carmen Millán y Santiago Castro (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2008), 169-196.

49 *Legislación Nacional Sobre Acción Comunal* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional/Ministerio de Gobierno, 1970), 9-33.

50 *Acción Comunal 1960-1966. Bogotá D.E. una ciudad en marcha para beneficio de todo el país* (Bogotá: Talleres Editoriales Distrito Especial de Bogotá, 1967), 76.

51 Robert A. Karl, “State Formation, Violence, and Cold War in Colombia, 1957-1966” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2009), chapter 7. The author generously shared his unpublished dissertation.

52 Orlando Fals Borda, *Acción comunal en una vereda colombiana: su aplicación, sus resultados y su interpretación* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1961), III-IV.

Communal Action was defined as “the result of communities taking charge of their own problems and organizing in order to solve them, developing their own resources and potential, and utilizing resources outside the communities.”⁵³ This approach hoped to discard state paternalism—“this is not charity”—in favor of the principles of “solidarity,” an emphasis that reflected, in part, the presence of Catholic priests. Interestingly, this was also part of the Chilean project *Promoción Popular* (Popular Promotion), to be addressed below. Government authorities were to act only as “coordinators, promoters, guides, and supporters of community efforts.” In sum, this was an initiative in which the state made the community responsible to “identify its needs and how to address them.” In theory at least, these ideas coincided with the predominant concepts in the Peace Corps volunteers’ training.

The United States showed its enthusiasm for Communal Action by sending volunteers and showcasing the program in Peace Corps related publications.⁵⁴ To the degree that Colombian officials embraced the collaboration of volunteers in this grand government project, the National Front governments received credit and economic cooperation in exchange for reforms.⁵⁵ The project was relatively successful. In 1961, 1,456 Communal Action councils had been established; five years later, the number reached 8,812 and surpassed 15,000 in 1970.⁵⁶ This expansion occurred in tandem with the growing presence of the Peace Corps, and as had happened in Peru, it helped consolidate the power of the state.

It is important to note that the Peace Corps did not work exclusively with government-driven projects such as Communal Action; especially in the early part of the decade, it also worked with the National Federation of Coffee Growers, an institution that had worked for decades to improve living conditions and to address social and economic problems in the country’s coffee-growing regions. However, the coffee growers in Colombia, much like the Popular Cooperation in Peru, aimed only to improve the material conditions in rural communities. They financed an important part of the projects but, unlike the Peruvian case, did not actively involve the communities.⁵⁷ Indeed, hired labor constructed everything,

53 “Acción Comunal,” *Colombia Campesina* vii: 19 (1960): 13.

54 *Acción Comunal en Colombia. Progreso por propio esfuerzo* (Bogotá: Alianza para el Progreso, ca. 1965), n/p.

55 John V. Kofas, *The Sword of Damocles. U.S. Financial Hegemony in Colombia and Chile, 1950-1970* (Wesport: Praeger, 2002), 37-51.

56 Camilo Borrero García, *Acción Comunal y política estatal: ¿un matrimonio indisoluble?* (Bogotá: Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular, 1989), 32.

57 Morris I. Stein, *Volunteers for Peace. The First Group of Peace Corps Volunteers in a Rural Community Development Program in Colombia, South America* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966), 86-87.

which led to tensions with volunteers who argued that the approach increased community dependence on producers without strengthening the organizational and political potential of community members.⁵⁸

In Chile, the government of Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-1970) sought to incorporate marginalized sectors through the creation of organizations such as neighborhood councils, unions, mothers' clubs, cultural centers and cooperatives. Independent organizations within the Catholic Church had been sponsoring similar organizations with the participation of Peace Corps volunteers from 1961 to 1964. Popular Promotion followed Social-Christian thinking that emphasized solidarity over private and governmental paternalism. It aimed to "recognize and promote institutions; create and grant services and resources, when necessary, so that the people can organize and assume their position in a modern society."⁵⁹

Frei Montalva and his government appropriated many of the principles of community work that came from Catholic think tanks.⁶⁰ The intellectual circle of the Belgian priest Roger Vekemans, who resided in Chile, was particularly influential. Instead of attributing social problems to capitalist exploitation, Vekeman argued they reflected conditions of marginality, understood broadly to include social, economic and political marginalization. Marginality, he argued, explained why a large portion of the impoverished population had not taken part in the country's modernization process and had instead suffered internal social disintegration. Social scientists posited that this disintegration entailed a "situation of non-participation," which extended to the plane of "enjoyment and utilization of spiritual and material goods" including decision-making in the political sphere and personal activities and interests.⁶¹ The development of community bases could activate these groups and foment their incorporation and future integration in the path to modernity.⁶² As the ruling Christian-Democrats declared at the time, this was the only way to give "voice to the masses with which to dialogue with the government and participate effectively in the Liberation Revolution."⁶³

58 Morris I. Stein, *Volunteers for Peace*, 86-87.

59 *Promoción Popular. Hacia la comunidad organizada* (Santiago: Consejería Nacional de Promoción Popular, ca. 1965), 7. [Colección documentos Núm. 1, 3ª edición].

60 On Eduardo Frei Montalva and his administration, see Cristián Gazmuri, [with Patricia Arancibia and Álvaro Góngora], *Eduardo Frei Montalva y su época*, 2 vols. (Santiago: Aguilar, 2000).

61 Angélica Cabalá, *Estudio de participación dentro de un tipo de asociación voluntaria: Junta de Vecinos* (Santiago: Conserjería Nacional de Promoción Popular, 1968), 1.

62 Roger Vekemans and Ramón Venegas, *Seminario de Promoción Popular* (Santiago: Desal/Secretaría General/Departamento de Difusión, 1966), 1-8.

63 "La Democracia Cristiana y la Revolución en Libertad," *Juventud Demócrata Cristiana* 1: 1 (1965): 46.

Upon assuming the presidency in late 1964, Frei Montalva quickly established the Popular Promotion National Council whose purpose was to create and strengthen different types of community-based organizations in Chile in order to incorporate them into the institutions of power.⁶⁴ As the president declared, “The family, the neighborhood, the municipality, the labor union, the region, the private company are all assets that must be fully expressed. They must take on responsibilities and participate in all economic, social, cultural, and political processes.”⁶⁵ Consequently, neighborhood assemblies and mothers’ clubs experienced significant growth, as did labor unions, which increased from 634 in 1964 to 1,440 in 1970.⁶⁶ Seeing this development, the Peace Corps set aside its initial work with organizations tied to the Catholic Church in order to collaborate with universities, the Forestry Institute, the Corporation of Agrarian Reform, the Direction of Indigenous Affairs, the Housing Corporation, the National Health Service, the Ministry of Education, and other governmental institutions focused on redistributing public resources.⁶⁷ The Office of National Planning, established by the Frei administration, became the government’s technocratic center that subsequently defined the areas and institutions with which Peace Corps volunteers would work.⁶⁸

These are just three examples of large government projects in South America (Bolivia, with its National Program of Community Development,⁶⁹ and Ecuador carried out similar programs) that served as umbrellas for the placement of thousands of volunteers in urban and rural communities. These cases hardly represent the multiplicity of community development actions of the period, but they do provide a good idea of the varied approaches to community development that existed in South America, as well as their autonomous nature. These programs also show that the Peace Corps worked in countries where community development was very close to local interests. Indeed, the volunteers arrived on a terrain that was fertile for community action.

64 Angélica Cabalá, *Estudio de participación*, 9.

65 Eduardo Frei, *Dos discursos: Marcha de la Patria Joven y Proclamación de los profesionales y técnicos en el Teatro Caupolicán* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1964), 46.

66 Luis Moulian and Gloria Guerra, *Eduardo Frei M. (1911-1982). Biografía de un estadista utópico* (Santiago: Sudamericana, 2000), 184.

67 “Program Memorandum. Chile Part II,” 1967, in NARA II, RG 490, Country Plans, 1966-1985, Box 10, Folder “Chile 1967-1972,” 1-76.

68 Patricio Silva, *En el nombre de la razón: tecnócratas y política en Chile* (Santiago: Universidad Diego Portales, 2010 [2009]), 131.

69 G. F. Baumann, “The National Community Development Programme in Bolivia and the Utilization of Peace Corps Volunteers,” *Community Development Journal* 5: 4 (1970): 191-196.

3. Confronting and Connecting Realities

Once in South America, thousands of young volunteers encountered the challenge of facing poverty in urban and rural communities. Despite their links to a U.S. governmental organization that required constant reports and work evaluations, they enjoyed relative autonomy in their daily lives. The majority were recent college graduates; they brought idealism, as well as diverse and pragmatic interests. As Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman points out, many were motivated to enlist in the Peace Corps by a spirit of adventure that complemented their individual goals and objectives.⁷⁰ In this sense, their personal motivations and life projects combined with the mission of the Peace Corps, despite intentions in Washington to reduce them. Indeed, the young people eagerly wanted to leave a tangible legacy in the communities where they worked. When their personal ideals clashed with the complex realities they encountered, this impatience led to a high degree of frustration. This was apparent early on among the Peace Corps staff, as an evaluator in Chile noted, recommending the setting of realistic goals because “several have naively high notions of what in fact can be accomplished in the American environment, much less what can be done in a developing society.”⁷¹

Frustrations grew when volunteers felt that their training was insufficient for the realities they encountered. Improvements were made during the decade but the problem still existed as late as 1967. Gerold Baumann, director of the Peace Corps in Bolivia, celebrated new curriculum at Utah State University that aimed to provide the technical skills that he required of volunteers: “This is a refreshing experience compared with the non-existing relationships that at times existed between field and training site.”⁷² But the problem went beyond technical training. Volunteers often complained about how little they knew about the local organizations and political practices that directly impacted their work since most ended up working with the government-run community development programs described above.

Volunteers were also frustrated to discover that behind community development projects, such as Promoción Popular in Chile, lay a clearly political background. Indeed, this discomfited some volunteers who rather naively believed they were part of an apolitical crusade. Their community development training in the United States had emphasized a

70 Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All You Need is Love*, 123.

71 “Chile. Evaluation Report,” 1963, in NARA II, RG 490, Peace Corps Evaluations, Country Program Evaluations 1963, Box 3, Folder “British Honduras-Costa Rica,” 62.

72 “Letter of Gerold Baumann to John F. Dwan, Assistant Project Director, Peace Corps Training Program, Utah State University,” 22 September, 1967, in Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (LBJ), Austin-United States, *Personal Papers of Gerold F. Baumann*, Box 1, Folder “Chronology File: June-Oct 1967,” n/f.

discursive stripping of ideology, and they were surprised to find that the community work in South America had political ends. Volunteer Jan Bales, who worked in Chile in a project to establish mothers' clubs in outlying neighborhoods of Santiago, complained about the fact that politics distorted community intervention. "I observed this mothers' club in action and was struck by the inadequacy of the material and presentation of Eleonor (a girl I like), but she and other middle class do-gooders here seem to be missing the boat when it comes to defining these people's real needs."⁷³

Other frustrations sprang from the difficulty of adapting paradigms learned in American universities to local realities on the ground. Interventions in South America emanated from different notions of community development, which, combined with paternalistic state practices, led community members to expect that volunteers would help them in whatever ways they considered necessary. A local storeowner in Villa Rivero (Bolivia) surprised volunteer Stuart Goldschen by saying that he "had never heard of the Peace Corps, and after listening to our explanation, he thought we were missionaries who had brought money to help the people. He seemed to accept the fact that we were here to help where possible without the use of heavy financial aid, but he didn't really believe it." Frustrated, Goldschen contrasted the storeowner's view with his own action plan that reflected the paradigms he had learned during his training. Goldschen was "interested in developing an attitude of progress that would endure more than a physical symbol of monetary response that would wither away. It was a long-range goal and a difficult one to achieve." Nonetheless, his insensitivity to the cultural reality he encountered, in addition to his adherence to the theoretical intervention strategies he had learned, caused significant difficulties. For example, when his neighbors asked him for poison to kill *vincuchas* (*triatoma infestans*, a parasite known as the "Kissing Bug" in English), he accepted but insisted that they pay for it. Even though the poison was inexpensive, he wanted to "avoid the misconception later that the new gringo was in town to give away money and goods." He made explicit his concern when he noted that, "We would never institute self-help programs among the people if we couldn't teach them to tap their own resources before seeking help."⁷⁴

The frustration was greater still when the tenets of community development caused problems regarding cultural insensitivity or misunderstandings of the context of communities. One group of volunteers wanted to maximize profits for a mountain community in Peru by strengthening its ceramics production, but got caught up in a real disaster when the

73 Fred Bales and Jane Bales, *Chilean Odyssey*, 54-55.

74 "Face to Face: The Diary of a Peace Corps Volunteer in Bolivia by Stuart Goldschen," in JFK, *Returned Peace Corps Volunteers*, Box 36, Folder "Bolivia. Goldschen, Stuart. Diary of PC Volunteer: Face to Face," 24, 35 and 39.

neighboring indigenous community accused them of witchcraft. The volunteers “had developed a high-firing kiln which will better preserve the glaze on the local pottery and thus give the people a better market in Lima.” Nonetheless, by pushing a market-driven notion of production, they altered the relationships among mountain communities that practiced the same trade. Then, as a report noted, “rival potters, have spread the word that the Peace Corps Volunteers are witches.”⁷⁵

An incident in Vicos, Peru, where a group of volunteers was expelled, was even more serious. Together with the government of Peru, Cornell University had established an experimental anthropology project in this mountain community.⁷⁶ The project sought to break a chain of social and economic problems by quickly bringing the “sixteenth-century feudal society” into twentieth-century civilization, as a *Washington Post* article dramatically put it.⁷⁷ In 1962, Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Vicos; after a year of work, reports in the U.S. press suggested that everything was going well. *New York Times* correspondent Juan de Onis enthusiastically wrote that “the Indian peasants of this Andean community have moved in a decade from servitude and subsistence agriculture to self-government, a share in the money economy and ownership of the land they work.”⁷⁸ However, a group of volunteers were determined to develop the community through production projects that ignored the environment and local cultural realities.

The volunteers seized an opportunity to buy land with hot springs near Chancos, where they decided to resuscitate an old hotel and establish a restaurant. They drew up a business plan, certain that the rest of the community would share their enthusiasm. The community accepted the project reluctantly, without understanding that the profits “would go into community coffers.” Through the volunteers’ efforts, the community secured two loans, including one from the Bank of America, with which to buy the land and refurbish the hotel. These loans generated deep distrust, but the volunteers further antagonized the community by imposing strict work norms on the indigenous laborers they directed. They fired workers who were “lazy” and drank alcohol, including the community’s most respected leaders.⁷⁹

75 “Memorandum Peace Corps Country Director in Peru to Jack Vaughn,” in NARA II, RG 490, Records of the Peace Corps Latin America Regional Office, Correspondence of the Peace Corps Director Relating to Latin America, 1961-1965, Box 4, Folder “RSS & WWW CHRON FILE LA MAY 1964,” n/f.

76 Henry F. Dobyns, Paul L. Doughty y Allan R. Holmberg, *Measurement of Peace Corps Program Impact in the Peruvian Andes. Final Report* (Cornell: Cornell University, ca. 1966), 59-60.

77 “Peruvian Indians are Studied,” *The Washington Post*, Washington, 17 December, 1956, A1.

78 Juan de Onis, “Indians in the Andes Advance from Peonage,” *The New York Times*, New York, 5 September, 1963, 3.

79 Paul L. Doughty, “Pitfalls and Progress in the Peruvian Sierra,” in *Cultural Frontiers of the Peace Corps*, ed. Robert B. Textor (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1966), 235.

The Lima press widely published the consequences. Robert Roberts, who thought up the project, and seven other volunteers had to flee Vicos because of threats of violence and were later expelled from Peru entirely. As much as the Regional Director for the Peace Corps in Latin America, Frank Mankeiwicz, tried to give it a positive spin, the experiment was a total failure. He defended his position saying, “I think it was a great triumph for community development. Where else will the native population vote out gringos? And in their own language!”⁸⁰

Not all the relationships between Peace Corps volunteers and the institutions they worked with were so conflictive. Otherwise, it is doubtful that 20,000 volunteers would have arrived in South America in a single decade. Many volunteers were able to comprehend the need to adapt to the realities they encountered. In a “Pragmatic Approach to Community Development in Peru,” it was noted for example that “with less and less presumptuousness and increasing humility the Peace Corps in Peru have recognized that refined arts of Community Development, learned in a highly developed technological society, did not apply per se in the land of the Incas.”⁸¹ Elsewhere, in the mountains of Ecuador, for instance, volunteers learned to appreciate and take advantage of traditional communal collaboration. One volunteer acknowledged that the idea of self-help was already an integral part of mountain communities in the form of the *minga*, “a collective work party sometimes representing the entire community that works on projects of common benefit.” His positive description, and ability to make use of the *minga*, was clear in his account: “Nearly every able-bodied man and boy from Buena Vista and the surrounding neighborhood was there. Everyone was hacking away with some kind of tool which was anything from a machete, ax, berretta, shovel or hoe.”⁸²

Other volunteers carried out successful projects by working with institutions such as the Catholic Church, while still others knocked on the doors of NGOs, as well as various public and private institutions to request material support, among other things. Volunteers called on USAID, CARE, foundations and NGOs that were willing to provide materials for educational projects and community development initiatives. In order to advance their projects, volunteers took advantage of the support among Peace Corps authorities for such alliances.⁸³ In this

80 “An explanation of Community Development as it is practiced by the Peace Corps in Latin America by Frank Mankeiwicz, Regional Director Latin American Programs,” in LBJ, *Personal Papers of Gerold F. Baumann*, Box 20, Folder “Peace Corps in Latin America: Reports and Projects,” 6.

81 “The U.S. Peace Corps in the Slums of Latin America: A Pragmatic Approach to Community Development,” in LBJ, *Personal Papers of Gerold F. Baumann*, Box 20, Folder “Peace Corps in Latin America: Reports and Projects,” 2.

82 “Tom Trail. The pcv in Ecuador. The Voice of Experience,” 1964, in JFK, *Returned Peace Corps Volunteers*, Box 63, Folder “Tom Trail. The pcv. in Ecuador. The Voice of Experience,” 18-19.

83 “Tom Trail. The pcv. in Ecuador. The Voice of Experience,” 2.

way, Peace Corps volunteers formed part of what Akira Iriye has called a global community characterized by individuals and institutions that pushed toward a global interconnectedness, in this case for the global war on poverty.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The presence of young Peace Corps volunteers gave rise to a dialogue between different existing paradigms and connected varied community development efforts—private and public—both in the United States and in South America. They brought ideas that were shared with local developers both on the ground and through training programs. These training programs (formal and informal) linked them with private institutions and efforts including the Catholic Church, trade associations, NGOs and public programs. In this sense, the Peace Corps collaborated in the broad process of connecting diverse spaces and efforts that constituted a global fight against poverty. As Yun Casalilla has underscored, “what could really lead to a new global history, in precise terms, is the study of the interaction between distant areas, situated in diverse cultural contexts all over the world, taking up the effects of these at a local level.”⁸⁵ To the degree that its volunteers operated as connectors of diverse forums where the problems of community development were discussed, the study of the Peace Corps clearly reveals this process.

This is a phenomenon best grasped through a global perspective. As A. G. Hopkins argues, “globalization was a multi-centered phenomenon and that, even today, it can be understood fully only by recognizing that it is not simply the result of a dominant center activating lesser peripheries, but is jointly produced by all parties to the process.”⁸⁶ This did not occur uniformly; every global phenomenon has different rhythms and densities. What ultimately becomes global originates in the local. Along these lines it could be argued that, unlike the argument found in many narratives about the Peace Corps, the political and social realities that volunteers encountered in countries like Chile, Colombia and Peru decisively shaped not just the realms and environments where they worked but the way they did community development as well.

84 Akira Iriye, *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

85 Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, “Localism, Global History and Transnational History. A Reflection from the Historian of Early Modern Europe,” *Building on the Past Online Papers* 3 (2007): 4.

86 A. G. Hopkins, “Introduction: Interactions between the Universal and the Local,” in *Global History. Interactions between the Universal and the Local*, ed. A. G. Hopkins (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 5.

The conflicts that emerged about how to approach community development, together with the autonomy with which South American governments and institutions carried out their own projects, show that the Peace Corps was not an isolated organization that acted according to unidirectional intervention designs. On the contrary, only the broad context of a truly global war on poverty—in which multiple institutions and individuals interacted, joined efforts, clashed, and conflicted—can elucidate the actions of Peace Corps volunteers during the 1960s.

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