



**Gulf of Mexico**

**Cuba**

**JAMAICA (BR.)**

**GUATEMALA**

**HONDURAS**

**EL SALVADOR**

**NICARAGUA**

**COSTA RICA**

**PANAMA (U.S.A.)**

**SOUTH AMERICA**



Map labels include: Joplin, Springfield, Tulsa, Muskogee, Ft. Smith, Little Rock, Hot Sprs., Ardmore, Texarkana, Dallas, Tyler, Shreveport, Alexandria, Beaumont, Houston, Galveston, Corpus Christi, Brownsville, Matamoros, Mississippi, Nashville, Chattanooga, Memphis, Birmingham, Greenville, Gadsden, Atlanta, Columbus, Savannah, Macon, August, Charleston, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Tampa, L. Okeechobee, Orlando, Daytona Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Nassau, Key West, C. SABLE, Straits of Florida, ANDROS IS., BAHAMA IS., WATLIN (COLL.), (BR.), Havana, Matanzas, Santa Clara, Cienfuegos, Camaguey, ISLE OF PINES, Yucatan Channel, Progreso, Mérida, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, C. CATOCHE, Bay of Campeche, Campeche, Veracruz, Chetumal, Villahermosa, Belize, Flores, BR. HOND., Tuxtla, Gutierrez, Puerto Cortes, Trujillo, GUATEMALA, Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, Santa Ana, Tegucigalpa, San José, San Salvador, EL SALVADOR, La Unión, CORINTO, León, NICARAGUA, Managua, Bluefields, San Juan del Sur, L. Nicaragua, AMERICA, Puntarenas, San José, RICA, San Juan del Norte, Cartagena, Limón, Mosquito Gulf, Barranquilla, PANAMA (U.S.A.), CANAL ZONE, Panama, Gulf of Panama, Gulf of Darien, SOUTH AMERICA, TOLIN (VOI), 18.43

# *A Step in the Right Direction*

## *O.U. has a part in tiny El Salvador's battle against poverty and illiteracy*

By PAUL V. GALLOWAY

FROM a distance, the scene is beautiful, idyllic. A tourist would murmur appreciatively and instinctively reach for his camera at the sight of the small Central American village sitting peacefully in its opulent, emerald-hued valley. But let him take a closer look.

Except for two narrow cobblestone streets which curve to a square in the center of town, the streets are dirt, usually mud. A pervading stench hovers in the air. There is no sewage system in the town and only two latrines. Most of the 3,000 inhabitants cannot read and write. Disease is not uncommon, and the mortality rate for infants and young children is abnormally high. The fountain in the town square is spring-fed. Its water is impure because the latrines have been dug upstream near the spring's source. After dark the only light is from lamps, fires, candles. There is no electricity. But there is plenty of hunger.

The village could be in any of the six countries of Central America, for the problems of illiteracy, poverty and disease are widespread in each. The village happens to be in El Salvador, the smallest republic in the western hemisphere. Wedged between Guatemala and Honduras on the Pacific coast of Central America, the tiny nation packs almost three million people into an area one-ninth the size of Okla-

homa, making it also the most densely populated country in the hemisphere.

El Salvador is concerned about its king-sized perplexities, and in early June a significant step in the right direction was taken to better the situation. The Social Progress Corps, designed along the lines of our Peace Corps, was created by El Salvador in cooperation with the International Peace Corps Secretariat. The Corps, composed of 20 brigades of five members each, will work exclusively in its own country, becoming the first such organization to be created. United States Peace Corps leaders and the El Salvadorians seem to be equally delighted and optimistic.

"Industrialized and developed nations are training their own Peace Corps-type groups to aid developing nations, but El Salvador is the first *developing* nation to do so," a Peace Corps official explains. (The term "underdeveloped nation" is frowned upon as diplomatically and semantically incorrect. The preferred term is "developing nation.")

Twenty of the El Salvadorian Social Progress Corps volunteers flew to Norman in June to begin an eight-week training period at the Center for Continuing Education.

Accompanying the El Salvadorians upon their arrival at O.U. were Dr. Richard

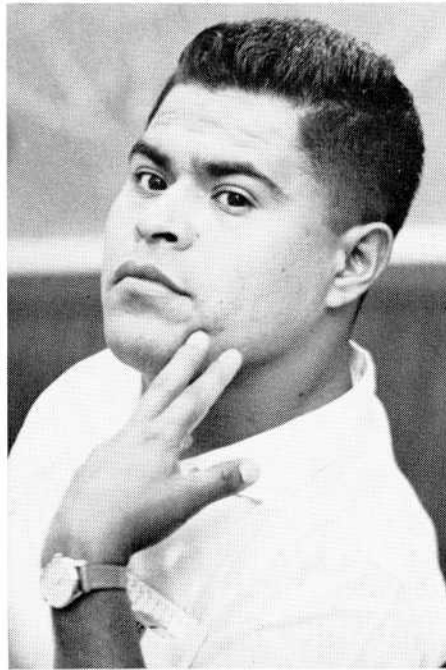
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Translations of English lectures into Spanish are heard through earphones by Corps trainees.



Group leader Salvador Reyes explains the organization of El Salvador's Social Progress Corps.



Julio Mena will specialize in health instruction for one of the Corps's 20 five-member brigades.



Home economics will be the area in which Elsa Contreras will concentrate in her brigade work.

## A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

*"it's a new type of youth with  
a new sense of surging purpose"*

Hancock, director of the U.S. Peace Corps in El Salvador, which is composed of agricultural specialists, and James M. Silberman, director of secretariat affairs for the International Peace Corps Secretariat. Both are enthusiastic about the program El Salvador has undertaken.

"When our Peace Corps was formed, it was hoped that other countries would join in," Silberman said. "In October last year ministers from 43 nations—Vice President Johnson was our representative—met in Puerto Rico to form the International Peace Corps Secretariat whose purpose is to foster the creation and expansion of assistance to developing countries.

"I am very excited," he continued, "about the young people who are in the Social Progress Corps. It's a new type of youth with a new sense of surging purpose. They have a real hope, drive, mental alertness."

Dr. Hancock broke in. "I am convinced that the brigades are the best way to teach the people a grass roots democracy which will be the salvation of the country. The government now is authoritarian. The people take no interest. To them the government is 'they.' Even the mayors are ap-

pointed by the central government and may not even be from the town to which they are appointed."

Dr. W. Eugene Hollon, O.U. professor of history and coordinator of the Peace Corps training program, agrees. "The people are apathetic and even contemptuous of the government. I accompanied one of the country's top officials to a town 60 miles from the capital city. Although he had been to Paris, London, New York and Washington, he had never visited this town. The people were totally unimpressed—about as impressed as an O.U. senior would be with an O.S.U. freshman. That illustrates the relationship between the government and the people. But the president of the country, Julio Rivera, is very much interested in changing and correcting conditions. He's a former military man but is a product of the lower class which explains, to a great extent, his concern."

El Salvador has been fighting illiteracy through "education brigades" for some years. Most of the 16 young men and four young women training at O.U. have had experience in working as members of these brigades. Formerly there were six such

groups operating in El Salvador, and the lessons learned through them are being used as a foundation for the expansion of the brigades and the formation of the Corps.

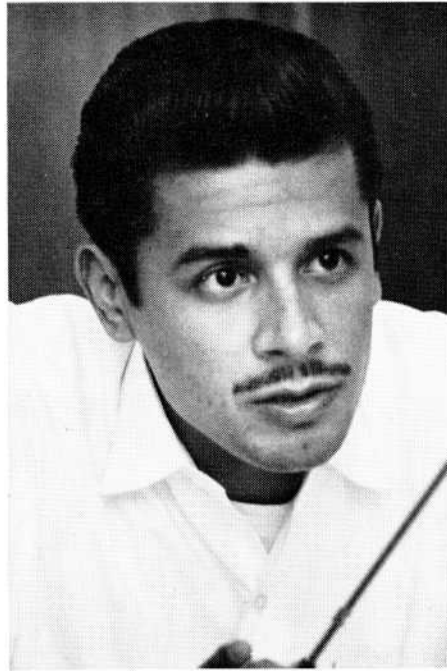
The five members of each brigade will have a specialized field—in home economics, health, recreation, agriculture or basic education (reading, writing and arithmetic).

The Social Progress Corps plans its attack with the thoroughness of a general staff preparing a military campaign. The leader of the 20-member group, an intense 31-year-old named Salvador Reyes explains: "First we select the village, town or section of a city in which a brigade will work. The brigade then enters, living in homes, renting rooms, whatever. Then begin evaluation and investigation of the section. The economic and political situations are examined, problems classified, a program planned, each specialist forming his own and coordinating it with the others. Next we promote the projects.

"The promotion," Reyes continues, "is crucial. We must win the confidence and cooperation of the people. There is always a certain resistance at first. We combat this by making visits, talking with the people, explaining our plan to them. We make it clear that we are not spreading religious or political propaganda. We give parties, gatherings, show films. Usually it takes about three months—a 'motivation period.'



Agriculture specialist Adolfo Perez has a degree in agronomy from a university in Honduras.



Rafael Guerrero believes that sports and recreation can do much for the youth of his country.



Combating illiteracy is the demanding job waiting when Carlos Funes returns to El Salvador.

we call it—to gain the people's confidence. We make a final evaluation and begin the implementation of our program.”

The brigades will stay in each community two years. The first year intensive concentration is given to the community. In the second year the brigade begins study and promotion in a second, neighboring community. At the end of the second year, it will move to the new community and begin the cycle again, keeping its ties firm with the first community. Eventually a circle of four communities in close vicinity will be reached by the brigade over an eight-year period. By this time it is hoped that other neighboring towns and villages will show interest, and new brigades can enable them to receive help.

Five of the specialists in each of the five fields last week had a chance to talk about the work they have chosen. Julio Mena is 28 years old, has a bachelor's degree and will specialize in health instruction for the brigades. Elsa Contreras, 24, has worked in a home for girls, has taught home economics and has organized home economics clubs in rural areas throughout El Salvador.

Rafael Guerrero is 27 and will serve as a recreational specialist. Adolfo Perez, 34, has a degree in agronomy from a college in Honduras and will work for a brigade as an agricultural specialist. Carlos Funes, 30, will serve in basic education.

The five were asked to talk about why

they joined the corps, what problems exist in their fields and what they feel can be accomplished.

*MENA*—“There are two well defined areas in health instruction. First, basic sanitation, such as sewage disposal and purification of water sources. The people must be taught methods of converting sewage to fertilizer or burying it . . . Proper placement, construction and maintenance of latrines must be taught so that water sources will not be contaminated. Second, preventive and curative medicine . . . First aid, inoculations, vaccinations . . . The problem is functional rather than academic. We will not teach the scientific name for the flea—this is a mistake that has been made in Latin American education for years—we will teach that fleas spread disease and how to kill them.”

*CONTRERAS*—“I first became interested in teaching because of my mother's interest in home economics. I have had the opportunity to work in a center for the study of the problems of children from low social levels, an inspiring work. I want to lead a useful life, and I believe this work is worthy. There is much to be done in home economics. I will visit homes and schools and organize home ec clubs for groups of all ages and abilities. I will concentrate on food care, cooking, sewing and general habits. One of the things that must be done is to teach the women and mothers to care.”

*PEREZ*—“The biggest problem? One-crop cultivation. We must teach the farmers to diversify, to organize their crops. They are timid at first. There is the problem of convincing them that there's a better way to do things. But they come around when they understand. They are eager then to learn new methods, but there is a great need for modern equipment.”

*GUERRERO*—“Recreation is important because the youth—and all the people—are crying for things to do. They are impoverished recreationally as well as economically. We will give them things to do with their spare time—games, arts, crafts, sports. We believe that sports and sportsmanship can greatly aid El Salvador and overcome the rigidity in some traditions.”

*FUNES*—“I am interested in helping my nation. We are an underdeveloped country, and we are determined to better it. We are capable of doing so. I am putting my faith in this program. I know we are not expending energy uselessly. We have studied the situation, and we are certain we will be successful.”

The inhabitants of our seemingly idyllic El Salvadorian village two thousand miles from Norman are unaware of the preparations for war against the enemies which occupy their community. Soon the battle against Illiteracy, Ignorance and Disease will begin there and in other El Salvadorian towns. O.U. can be proud that it helped to train the winners.