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AN INTERESTING CASE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Among the tasks nowadays incumbent upon the economically advanced countries, the granting of help to those still developing is perhaps the most important and the most urgent. Faced by poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy in most parts of the world, the privileged countries must make every effort to help their less favoured fellows to overcome these difficulties and attain a reasonable standard of living.

Switzerland never expected to stand apart from this work of international co-operation. Over recent years, she has participated in different ways in the task of helping the underdeveloped countries, both on the technical and on the financial plane. In general, Switzerland's contribution is much appreciated, especially as, coming from a neutral country, it has no political strings attached to it. Switzerland intends to continue her efforts, expanding them more and more to correspond to what the developing countries are entitled to expect from her.

Swiss help has in the past often taken the form of loans, export of capital, investment, granting of the guarantee against risks of export and, more recently, the granting of a transfer credit to India. But it is probably on the technical plane that Switzerland can render the most valuable assistance to the younger nations, by putting the great experience of her specialists at their disposal.

Firmly convinced of the importance of such technical help, certain circles in Swiss industry created in May 1959 a *Swiss Foundation for Assistance in Technical Development*, whose purpose is to encourage economic development in the new countries by collecting funds to be used for running technical schools for apprentices.

The first concrete step in this direction has been taken. On 24th March 1961, an agreement was signed in New Delhi and Zurich between the said Foundation and the *Indian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research* relative to the creation of an *Indo-Swiss Training Centre* to instruct young Hindus in precision engineering and instrument manufacture.

The aim of the Indo-Swiss Training Centre is to give young Hindu apprentices of 18 or 19 with some previous practical knowledge a thorough grounding in precision engineering, so that they can then form the cadres for the industries manufacturing instruments and apparatus of all kinds and be capable of servicing and repairing the machines and tools entrusted to their care. There will be three courses of study, lasting a year each. Those passing through the Centre will receive a diploma. Adult workers wishing to improve their capacity in a particular branch are also to be admitted. Each course will be attended by an average of thirty apprentices, so one hundred in all will be able to work at the Centre.

The originality of this scheme lies in the fact that the two signatories of the agreement are collaborating in its execution, and that it is not a one-sided gift from Switzerland. The Foundation is paying for the machines, tools and instruments worth 1½ million Swiss francs, and is also responsible for engaging and paying a salary to the chief instructor and his six or seven subordinates. For her part, India is providing the building and dwelling accommodation required, remunerating the Hindu assistant instructors and bearing all sundry expenses. So the Centre is a joint venture, with all responsibilities and outlays fully shared. There is no question of Switzerland making India a present,

but rather of her showing and transmitting to India Swiss methods of professional training. Hindu instructors will be side by side with the Swiss teachers from the very beginning, so that after six or seven years they will be able to take over complete control of the Centre.

One can already now state with confidence that the new centre will be called upon to play an important part in India's economic development for it will fill, say the experts, a particularly unfortunate gap in the sector of professional training. This interesting scheme is a first step towards an ever growing collaboration with the developing countries. Similar ventures are planned in other countries, notably in Pakistan and in Africa.

The Swiss authorities realize that help to the young nations is a means of working for peace, intend to pay increasing attention to the matter and will encourage all private initiative directed towards the same end. The Federal Council was recently authorized by parliament to take all steps necessary for technical co-operation with developing countries and obtained for this purpose a credit of sixty million Swiss francs to be utilized over the next three years or so. Switzerland is thus stressing her resolve not to stand apart from a general movement of solidarity which is perhaps the best approach to a new, peaceful world order.

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