

Critical Brazilian Aid Area

By Ralph Nader Special to The Christian Science Monitor

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Government Supervisor Heads Work Project in Northeast Brazil
The Alliance for Progress faces a tough, seemingly unyielding problem in this area

Problems Pile Up

Critical Brazilian Aid Area

This is the first of three articles on problems faced by the Alliance for Progress in Northeast Brazil.

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Recife, Brazil

It is widely agreed that in scope and urgency one of the Alliance for Progress's most important area programs is in northeastern Brazil. This region is larger than Argentina and has a population of 24 million (one-third of all Brazilians), most of whom live under some of the most miserable economic and social conditions existing anywhere in the world.

There is also near unanimity, though for different reasons, that the Alliance in the northeast has still not overcome the serious problems and delays which have plagued the program since the \$131 million two-year agreement was signed between the two countries in April, 1962.

On a number of occasions in addresses before Brazilian audiences during the past year, United States Ambassador Lincoln Gordon has taken note of the delays, attributing them to legal and administrative problems on the part of both countries.

Slowness Admitted

In January, Mr. Gordon mentioned the slowness in getting the necessary qualified United States personnel to the northeast during 1962 but said he believed this roadblock was being eliminated and a firm foundation built for "a thoroughly effective program whose results will be visible in geometric progression as the months of 1963 pass by."

But the anticipated progress has not been forthcoming. Thus far, with the program, in terms of time, nearly three-quarters over, only \$60 million have been obligated, mostly in cruzeiro loans and grants.

These funds have dealt primarily with the fields of school construction, a water supply systems, public health, and a few housing projects. There is a great determination by the United States Agency for International Development (AID) mission to obligate the remaining \$71 million before February of next year when mission director John C. Diefenderfer plans to terminate his tour of duty.

Areas Untouched

Yet in by far the most important area, agriculture, the Alliance has scarcely begun working, even in the fields of technical assistance. Nothing is even in the project development stage for manufacturing industry.

Thus, after a great deal of publicity and raised expectations, the Northeast Alliance agreement stands the grim prospect of having all its funds committed with hardly a beginning made to attack the underlying causes of the region's low productivity.

The United States AID mission in Recife has faced and

become enmeshed in a web of difficulties whose irresolvability appears to be increasing with the passing weeks. The overall context in which the mission finds itself has an important bearing on its work.

The signing of the Northeast Alliance agreement in 1962 was a response to the intensifying social unrest reverberating through the impoverished countryside and slum-burgeoning cities.

Forces considered extreme by both United States and Brazilian Governments were on the rise. Francisco Julião was organizing more Peasant Leagues; the Communist Party, though legally banned, was active in urban politics and trade unions and had marked out the entire northeast as an area most ripe for its efforts. Non-Communist leftists were gaining in strength as well.

Capital Fleeing

As never before, the northeast was generating political forces which were overriding issues of social reform.

These forces drew attention to the flight of capital to the more prosperous south around São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro which, in their comparative affluence, had neglected the northeast's development. Without doubt the northeast is the center of turmoil and tension in Brazil. Alliance operations have become, perhaps unavoidably, an issue in domestic politics.

This political involvement

was sharply accentuated by the election last fall of Miguel Arraes to the governorship of Pernambuco — the northeast's most populous and important state. Mr. Arraes is rapidly emerging as a leader of the nationalistic Left in Brazil which views with distrust what seems to it to be unreasonable controls, supervision, and interference attached to AID loans and concurrent activity by AID personnel.

Objections Many

Their objections range from the kind of United States participation in teacher training programs to accusing the United States of not being interesting in helping increase productivity but instead concentrating on palliatives or programs such as schools, food distribution, and housing.

Furthermore, the nationalistic Left, whose viewpoint is supported by the Communists, fears that the Alliance has become a sophisticated instrument of the United States Government to take control of the currents of change so as to direct them in the way that benefits United States business and security interests.

This belief, coupled with the judgment that United States interests, as conceived in Washington, are fundamentally in conflict with the nature and pace of change that Brazil needs, is sincerely held by many Brazilians who cannot be conveniently shrugged off as being Communists.