

# HUMAN PROBLEMS IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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## Introduction

THIS PAPER IS LARGELY BASED ON EXPERIENCE WITH Indian and German technicians working and living together in Rourkela, India.

In the 1950s, in the jungles of the State of Orissa, about 270 miles west of Calcutta, the small village of Rourkela was selected to become the site for one of the new large steel plants of modern India. From 1957 to 1962 in this entirely rural area of northern Orissa, amidst wooded hills and a predominantly tribal population, large numbers of Indian and German engineers and technicians were jointly engaged in the erection of the 1-million-ton steel plant of Rourkela.

This paper concerns itself with selected aspects of overall studies of the social, psychological, socio-economic, managerial, and technical problems experienced while planning, erecting, and operating Rourkela Steel Plant.<sup>1</sup> The paper is mainly concerned with the difficulties experienced by German technicians and their families while working and living in India. It fits into the growing number of empirical studies (particularly carried out in the U.S.) on the type, performance and experience of persons from highly industrialized countries who take up assignments overseas in connection with Technical Assistance projects. What is the experience of these people who as a rule have to live in a strange cultural environment for a limited span of time? What are the main problems deriving from their cross-cultural relation with the local population, especially with their counterparts, with their colleagues at work? How do they adapt to the strange environment and which are the main factors impeding or favouring this adaptation? What were their expectations before they came to India, before they reached their destination Rourkela, and what in particular was the pre-view of their role at work? How did these expectations compare with reality? Had the technicians undergone any special orientation and briefing anticipating problems in their assignment? These are the questions which this paper endeavors to deal with in view of finding answers and conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus Roeh, *Rourkela als Testfall*. Hamburg (Weltarchiv), 1967; Jan Bodo Sperling, *Die Rourkela-Deutschen*, Stuttgart, 1965; Jan Bodo Sperling, *Rourkela*, Bonn (Eichholz), 1963.

The years from 1957 to 1961 were the main years of construction of the Rourkela plant. Thereafter most of the plant's unit were complete. During this period most of the Germans in Rourkela consisted of the construction personnel and their families. After the first units had been commissioned some of the construction personnel were relieved and replaced by the operation and maintenance personnel. The latter remained for a longer period of time, and some are still there.

For the years 1958-1962 the statistics on Germans in Rourkela are as follows:

<i>Year</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i> <sup>3</sup>	<i>Children</i>
1958	615	80	54
1959	1,210	250	110 <sup>4</sup>
1960	640	220	176
1961	408	112	80
1962	254	148	116

The majority of personnel held 18-months contracts; some stayed for a longer span of time, some (usually specialists in a narrow technical field who were needed only for particular tasks) came out for a few months stay only. Thus there was a strong fluctuation among the Germans at Rourkela which means that since the short-term assignments by far outnumbered those exceeding 18 months, actually more individual Germans stayed in Rourkela during all those years than the above table indicates.

The bulk of the German personnel in Rourkela consisted of engineers (generally not exceeding 10%) and technicians (fitters, operators, foremen etc.). The figures show that there was a growing tendency to send personnel with their families; the average age of the men (over a period of five years) was 34, that of the women, 32. During the first years construction personnel were slightly younger (and included more bachelors), while operation personnel of the years 1961-1962 and thereafter were older and usually married.

The field study upon which this paper is based was conducted during a four-year stay at Rourkela. While living with the German personnel the author had ample opportunity to study their performance, the difficulties they experienced, and the manifold problems of their relations with the Indian partner. Many data were collected in hundreds of casual conversations, during a great number of individual and group discussions, and from planned interviews—with Germans as well as with Indians.

<sup>2</sup> For all the years the figures given are mid-year figures.

<sup>3</sup> Most of them wives; only a small number of women and girls were employees (secretaries, teachers, medical personnel, etc.).

Recent studies on the "art of overseasmanship"<sup>4</sup> depict the experiences of western Technical Assistance personnel in the strange environments of foreign countries as "cross-cultural" phenomena. The western technician (or expert) embarked on the assignment of a Technical Assistance project in a developing country overseas has "crossed the culture bars"<sup>5</sup> and most of the difficulties he might experience are believed to be consequences of the two different cultures meeting, converging or even conflicting. Some authors consider the patterns generic to the intersections of societies to be a new development on the way to the ONE WORLD and call this complex of patterns the "third culture"—defined broadly "as the behaviour patterns created, shared, and learned by men of different societies who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other."<sup>6</sup> To follow this system in connection with the case of Rourkela this would mean having to refer to the cultural patterns of those Indians regularly interacting with Germans as "the first culture" and to the set of patterns incorporated in the "Rourkela Germans" as "the second culture." These three different sets of culture patterns will, however, not explicitly be made use of in this paper. It seems, in the case of Germans and Indians in Rourkela, it might be more fitting to speak of the "disposition of the Germans," the "disposition of the Indians" and of the "situational factors."

#### Disposition of Germans

As already mentioned the German personnel in Rourkela mainly consisted of two different categories: construction personnel and operation and maintenance personnel. Part of the differences between these two categories was to be noticed in their motivations to go abroad as well as in their professional background. Fitters (the majority of construction personnel) are men used to short- and medium-term assignments to different sites even in foreign countries; operators (the majority of operation and maintenance personnel) as a rule come from stationary jobs in Germany and more often than not had no experience of working in a foreign country.

It was found that men of both categories showed personal and professional peculiarities which, although most definitely highly appreciated at home,

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<sup>4</sup> Harlan Cleveland and Gerard J. Mangone, *The Art of Overseasmanship*, Syracuse, 1957.

<sup>5</sup> John D. Montgomery, "Crossing the Culture Bars: An Approach to the Training of American Technicians for Overseas Assignments," *World Politics*, July 1961, pp. 544-560.

<sup>6</sup> John and Ruth Useem and John Donoghue, "Men in the Middle of the Third Culture: The Roles of American and Non-Western People in Cross-Cultural Administration," *Human Organization*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Fall 1963), pp. 169-179.

See also: John Useem, "The Community of Man: A Study in the Third Culture," *The Centennial Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Fall 1963), pp. 481-498.

in the environment of Rourkela turned out to be problematic. Here, for example, must be listed: 1) the tendency to consider and to treat a particular difficulty as "a problem sui generis," a problem as such; 2) to accept only perfect solutions, perfect methods and perfect results as years ago while still apprentices they had been instructed to do as an inherent part of master craftsmanship; 3) a certain blindness to the merits of indigenous traditional working methods; and 4) a tendency to over-emphasize the "teacher's role" in one's own performance in the firm belief of having the only access to the proper "know-how." All this boils down to what has been observed in many Technical Assistance projects: the personnel from the industrialized country tend to superimpose—mostly subconsciously—patterns of thought and action-plans that run counter to traditions and habits of those with whom they have been sent to cooperate. Professionalism and perfectionism turn out to be the weak points.<sup>7</sup> In Rourkela this particularly applied to the group of fitters. Their main task being building and assembling of parts under the pressure of tightly timed contracts, of the impatience of their Indian customers and of unforeseeable organizational, climatic or other difficulties, they above all wanted to get on with the construction work and often did not even have the time to reflect upon ways and means most fruitful for their Indian counterparts or personnel. For the operators later on this was much easier; here the problem did not arise to the same extent.

Another dispositional factor of the Germans that made dealings with local population less easy was their tendency to rush things instead of tolerating a gradual development and accepting the Indian "day after to-morrow" phrase according to local practice, i.e. *any* time in the future. Apart from the time factor this certainly is a matter of temperament, tolerance and experience. The Western (particularly US-American) concept of the man-made world where everything is "makable" certainly does not always harmonize with the more contemplative way many Indians prefer to look at things. Intolerance and impatience lead to irritation on the part of the Germans, an irritation which often tends to affect a person's whole attitude towards the people whom he considers to be the cause of his irritation. This may unintentionally be amplified by certain peculiarities of Western technicians, e.g. to accompany hard work with swearing of all kinds, a custom that is practically unknown and even despised in India. In Rourkela it was found that after a while a number of "good old German swear words" were well-known to a great many Indian counterparts. It was also observed that the rather direct, sometimes even rough approach of Germans towards their (Indian) colleagues, though not meant to be offensive at all, caused dislike and resentment. Indians who never had had the opportunity to witness

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Hendry, *The Role of Groups in World Reconstruction* (New York 1952), p 180.

the rough interpersonal communication and atmosphere which is customary in a factory or at a site in Germany often misinterpreted the attitude and manners they were facing in their German partners in Rourkela.

Similar observations apply to the German habit of ending a day of hard labour with one or more glasses of beer or whisky. Many Indians—themselves teetotaler—in Rourkela did not look too sympathetically at their German colleagues' oft-celebrated custom of spending their "Feierabend" (evening after work) sitting around a table covered with beer bottles, singing and chanting loudly and thus disturbing other people in the neighbourhood. Whatever dislikes, misunderstandings and misinterpretations arose from such dispositional factors of the Germans they all tended to be taken over-seriously and in fact were generally over-emphasized because language problems prevented them from being explained and easily overcome. The majority of the German technicians spoke little or no English. Their language capacity was usually sufficient to get along with their Indian colleagues at work, where signs, symbols and demonstration worked to mutual satisfaction. However, when it came to conversation or even to a point where different opinions, or different conceptions had to be reconciled, or when misunderstandings needed explanations communication failed entirely. This proves that in Technical Assistance the "working knowledge" of a language does not only mean that it should make successful work possible in a foreign country; it should in fact include the technical assistant's ability to communicate generally with the local population. Without this communication in the broadest sense of the word the technical assistant will find it almost impossible to adjust to local conditions and to adapt his "know-how" to new environments—both being vital preconditions for the success of his mission—for Germans in Rourkela as well as for any technical assistant in any country.<sup>8</sup>

While dealing with the dispositional factors a last but nevertheless very important group must be mentioned: that of stereotypes and prejudices. Unfortunately everybody has stereotypes. It starts with overgeneralizations: *the* Indians as such do not exist. An Indian from the north for example may differ from an Indian from the south as much as a Sicilian differs from a Swede. The same applies to so-called national characteristics. And still everybody is inclined to say, "The Indians are. . ." (then follows a list of characteristics according to the speaker's stereotype). The technical assistant coming to the country of his assignment carries such stereotypes—and he is usually not inclined to permit personal experience to revise his stereotyped preconcept of that country and its people. The reason being that prior to his arrival the stereotypes formed his expectations and the picture he had of

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<sup>8</sup> Yonah Alexander, *International Technical Assistance Experts, A Case Study of the UN Experience* (New York, Washington, London, 1966), p. 173.

what he was going to see. He rested in this sort of concept and this gave him comfort and security and that makes the stereotypes extremely rigid as can be observed in practice. The stereotypes may be called "second hand stereotypes" because they are based on second hand information. The German who set out to work in Rourkela based his (stereotyped) concept of "the Indians" on other people's experiences (magazine articles, stories he heard from colleagues, television, etc.). These—whether true or not, he could not judge—he picked up and amalgamated into an unduly generalized picture which he carried with him on his assignment to India. The picture proved to be fairly incorrect and did not compare with reality. Since, however, such stereotyped pictures or concepts in spite of being far from resembling reality tend to withstand revisions on the basis of direct first hand information (for reasons mentioned above) and they become an obstacle to adjustment to the environment. This poses a problem to everybody going to a foreign country, but the more so if the respective country is what might be considered to be an "exotic" country (seen from the visitor's point of view) on which the information and knowledge is less well-founded or even non-existent.

All that has been said so far on the dispositional factors of the Germans in Rourkela and technical assistants in general must be seen in the context of the necessity of briefing, information, orientation, etc., for persons going on "cross-cultural assignments." In the case of the Germans who were sent to Rourkela nothing had been done to ease the dispositional factors some of which have been mentioned here. No special preparation had been given to them to gear these factors to the particular situation they were to face in their duty station in India. Suggestions as to how this could have been done or should be done in future cases will be dealt with in the final chapter of this paper.

#### **Disposition of Indians**

The Indian population of Rourkela and vicinity resembles something like a cross-section of the Indian people in general, particularly since the work of the steel plant had caused an immediate influx of labour from many parts of the country. Their dispositional factors only shall be dealt with here as far as they were of importance to the relationship between Indians and Germans.

Most striking, from the point of view of the Germans, was the reserved, sometimes cold or even hostile attitude with which many Indians in Rourkela approached their German partners. Most Germans had expected to be received as friends and to be welcomed accordingly; they did not understand the ambivalent attitude of a great number of Indians towards Technical Assistance in general and aid from a Western country in particular. They did

not know enough about the historic and especially the colonial background of India and its people to realize that this past had created fear towards economic and political dependency, mistrust, nationalism, envy and many other sentiments still prevailing in many Indians of the present generation. As a consequence Indians often appeared to be arrogant, claiming superiority on the grounds of their cultural heritage—and at the same time seemed to be suffering from an inferiority complex. The mixture of these extremes puzzled the Germans and made understanding difficult. Whereas the Germans—as discussed earlier—behaved in a rather rough, straight-forward manner, often stepping on other people's toes, their Indian counterparts tended to be extremely sensitive at one moment and at the next they could be "assertive, even vain and arrogant," as it has been put by the Indian professor of Sociology, Narain, in his recent analysis of the Indian character.<sup>9</sup> Whereas the Germans frequently overemphasized their belief in success and material progress and pointedly demonstrated how "to get things done" without much cultural empathy or patience, the Indians showed a tremendous amount of patience but very little perseverance. The above mentioned author, Narain, explains this disposition of Indians: "Torn between his own and western culture, an Indian is precariously poised, unsure of any position, unable to give his whole-hearted commitment to any thing longing for a synthesis of both."<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising that this obvious difference between the two dispositions caused problems for mutual understanding and cooperation.

#### The "Situational Factors"

A recent study on Americans in Technical Assistance<sup>11</sup> suggests that the "culture shock" which occurs quite often in "cross-cultural" relations is minimal and of short duration compared to the "role shock" experienced by a technical assistant from a Western society while working in a developing country. Although this is probably true the far reaching—often subconscious—consequences of initial (cultural) shock situations should not be underestimated. To find out more about both cultural shock and role shock it is not only important to evaluate the *dispositions* of the two partners concerned but also to focus strongly on the particular *situation* in which these two groups meet. Knowledge of the situational factors which determined the daily life atmosphere of Germans and Indians in Rourkela were of course manifold and numerous.

<sup>9</sup> Dharendra Narain, "Indian National Character in The Twentieth Century," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 370 (March 1967), p. 127.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> Francis C. Byrnes, *Americans in Technical Assistance: A Study of Attitudes and Responses to their Role Abroad*, New York, Washington, London, 1965.

For instance all the aspects of climate and acclimatization are of importance in this connection; living conditions, housing, and servants play a significant role; special problems of bachelor life, social activities of the Germans and Indians, the question of how to spend leisure time and what to do about school children—all these issues should be looked at while scrutinizing situational factors. As this paper cannot cope with all these aspects in detail, a few issues have been selected to be presented here, issues that are of particular interest because they have been found to be a hindrance to acclimatization and adjustment of the Germans as well as an impediment to harmony and mutual understanding between Indians and Germans in their cooperation.

There is the general experience that in industrially less developed countries technical know-how is above all lacking in middle-level manpower. This also applied to the Rourkela situation. Whereas highly qualified Indian engineers with outstanding university background were available there was a shortage of engineers with long-standing experience in the practical day-to-day work of a steel plant. And there was an even greater shortage of experienced skilled technicians and foremen. Consequently most of the foreman posts had to be filled with Indian university-trained engineers working side by side with German technicians who usually had a lot of practical experience but no academic background. The immediate result was that from the educational point of view those Indians felt considerably superior to their German counterparts whereas those Germans—although lacking a university background and, as a rule, even high school education—proved to be more than a match for their Indian colleagues on the grounds of their long-standing experience in steel making. This entirely different level of education and even social standing was a causal factor of constant disharmonies and misunderstandings in many individual cases. No doubt this is not unique to the Rourkela case but poses a problem in general for a great number of Technical Assistance projects in many countries.

The entirely new and strange environment was another important situational factor for the Germans in Rourkela. Almost everything was different from what they were used to at home: climate, trees, flowers, colour of soil, animals, insects, diseases, people and their way of life, their habits, religion, customs, taboos—everything was alien, disturbing or even frightening. Maybe Germans are particularly susceptible to home-sickness and therefore the "exotic" environment of Rourkela impressed them beyond the average. Home-sickness found its expression in songs and poems written by Germans in Rourkela to praise their home country, the city or village they came from, their girl friend or family at home and—also—to point out the difficulties and the stresses they had to endure in this place far away from Germany. This situational factor "home-sickness caused by exoticism" must be considered

important because it prevented those suffering from it from being sympathetic or at least positively interested in their host country, in the place and the people of their present duty station. If, however, technical assistants do not endeavour to take interest in the new environment they find themselves in the host country, they will hardly be able to adjust fully to strange and difficult conditions; they are liable to fail in their mission.

During the very first years of the German colony of Rourkela it was felt that a certain situation of loneliness and seclusion on the part of the Germans could be overcome by allowing many fitters to take their wives with them to India. The increasing number of women in fact improved the morale within the German colony. On the other hand it was soon found out that the German wives were more susceptible to suffer from a number of negative effects the situational factors provided. The wives who, as a rule, came directly from German homes and were used to smoothly running households equipped with the most modern gadgets found it difficult to adjust to the less perfect surroundings. The fact that all of a sudden they were released from household work by local servants did not improve this situation; they had, on the contrary, too much time to themselves while their husbands were working at site and they spent the time gossiping with each other or—even worse—sitting about not knowing how to kill the time. Thus they could not help concentrating on what occupied or troubled them most: the frequent power breakdowns that made air-conditioners stop, the shortage of water, the nonavailability of the kind of food they were used to, the heat, the monsoon, the rice-flies, the scorpions, the snakes, the constant danger of catching dysentery, and many other things. Thus the wives in many cases turned out to be a liability rather than a stabilizing factor. Again it must be mentioned that this observation seems to apply to technical assistants in general.

Cleveland reports similar observations and says in this context about the US-American technical assistant's wife: ". . . in many cases she will make or break her husband's career."<sup>12</sup> Other authors stress similar findings and some even add that often the arrival of the technical assistants' wives stop the man from further contacts with the local population—an observation that fits also into older reports on Europeans working overseas: "Whatever may have been the reason, it appears to be true that when the European women joined their men. . . the community withdrew into itself. . ."<sup>13</sup> In Rourkela this withdrawal could not be noted for the simple reason that due

<sup>12</sup> Harlan Cleveland, "The Pretty Americans: How Wives Behave Overseas," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1959, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Leslie H. Palmer, "Indonesia and the Dutch," London, New York, Kuala Lumpur, 1962, p. 33. See also: Percival Spear, *The Nabobs*, London, 1963, p. 140; Han Suyin, *Der Wind ist mein Kleid*, Frankfurt, 1957, p. 64; Lily Abegg, "Knigge fuer Asien," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22, July 1961.

to lack of language knowledge and difference in social standing between the majority of the counterparts, "free mixing" was mainly restricted to a few German engineer families (who spoke English and had social relations with Indian families) whose social contacts as a rule included their wives.

The situation the Germans found themselves in at Rourkela showed that the previously mentioned difference between fitters and operators also had a distinctive functional side to it. Fitters whose main job was to assemble the parts their companies had sent over from Germany and thus erect the plant were more judged by their *performance*, whereas the operators who were sent to assist the Indian personnel to run the plant and show them how to pick up know-how and experience in steelmaking were mostly judged by their skill to get these things across to their counterparts, which is above all a matter of communication. This differentiation according to functional characteristics of the mission to be fulfilled bears upon important aspects of recruitment and training/orientation of technical assistants in general.<sup>14</sup> Experience in Rourkela and elsewhere proves that technical know-how, knowledge, craftsmanship, skill, and professional perfection do not suffice to make an ideal technical assistant; outstanding performance must equally include many human qualities. Probably many technical assistants are judged more by their performance as an understanding mature human being than by technical expertise. Those whose main task lies in the field of transferring know-how are above all evaluated by their knowledge and skill in communication.

Communication in the broadest meaning of the term also applies to the relations the technical assistants have with the local population outside the work sphere. Here the example of Rourkela showed that this is particularly difficult if there is a large group of foreign technical assistants, especially if circumstances favour isolation of this group. In Rourkela where the German community started off in a camp-like situation, as there was no settlement except the old village of Rourkela at the time of the first arrivals, the growing number of Germans made them cling together and thus an in-group/out-group situation was created. The more Germans arrived the more they tried to gear living conditions to a way of life with which they were familiar. "Little Germany ideas" were turned into reality and thus for many of them the "we-feelings" of the in-group and the "they-feelings" towards the Indian out-group were stronger than any possible interest they might have taken in the environment of the foreign country and its people. Although this unfortunate development may have been favourably influenced by a number of factors which could perhaps be considered typical for Rourkela/India and the Germans in this particular situation, it appears to be well known from

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<sup>14</sup> See: John Ohly, "Planning Future Joint Programs," *Human Organization*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer 1962), pp. 137-153.

other experiences too, as numerous reports and case studies seem to prove.<sup>15</sup> That such situational factors do not only occur in connection with assignments in what is termed a developing country is demonstrated impressively in a novel dealing with the in-group/out-group situation brought about by personnel of a U.S. air base in Europe.<sup>16</sup>

### Briefing, Orientation and Training of Technical Assistance Experts

What can be done for technical assistants to overcome these problems and difficulties posed by dispositional and situational factors in their assignments?

Apart from a number of self-evident preconditions to be fulfilled in the process of recruitment there must be a briefing, orientation or training program for Technical Assistance experts prior to their taking up new assignments in a developing country. This requires a well-planned syllabus based on the wide range of experience and knowledge so far gathered in many projects of Technical Assistance all over the world.<sup>17</sup>

Such a syllabus should start with language training, which is most essential, particularly for those who are going to be in a pre-dominantly teaching or instructing capacity (technician-advisor, etc.). Efficient language teaching in Technical Assistance should be based on the latest techniques available, combining film-strips or slides with classroom teaching and taped repetitions in an experienced language laboratory. For languages posing specific pronunciation difficulties the "oreille method"<sup>18</sup> may be used as an extraordinary aid for conditioning the ear to unfamiliar phonetics and enabling the trainee to hear frequencies typical in that language, which the human ear would normally not register. This language training should be carefully planned against the background of future assignment and the country of assignment. Such an "area-study" or "background-study" approach is particularly important since it familiarizes with certain termini technici, local expressions, etc., and avoids unnecessary burdensome vocabulary. This implies that language training is at the same time used as an additional instrument of orientation. Following this pattern trainees without any advance knowledge of the language

<sup>15</sup> Karl Heinz Pfeffer and Muneer Ahmad, *Die Ausländerkolonie in Lahore-Pakistan, Harburg* (Deutsches Orient Institut), 1966. See also: D.H. Radler, "Our National Talent for Offending People," *Harpers Magazine*, August 1961, pp. 63-70; John C. Caldwell, *Lets Visit Americans Overseas*, New York, The John Day-Co., 1958; Harlan Cleveland et al., *The Overseas Americans*, New York, Toronto, London, 1960.

<sup>16</sup> John Masters, *Fandango Rock*, London, 1961.

<sup>17</sup> See for instance: Robert J. Foster, *Examples of Cross-Cultural Problems Encountered by Americans Working Overseas: An Instructor's Handbook*, Alexandria, Virginia (George Washington University, Human Resources Research Office), 1965.

<sup>18</sup> The "oreille-method" is presently used by the American College, University of Tours, by SHAPE, and by the Ecole Normale Superieur de St. Cloud and others.

can be expected to master normal situations of life in the area of their future assignment after a two weeks course only.<sup>19</sup>

Language training in Technical Assistance is, however, not only a means of orientation and communication. It is equally important as an instrument of empathy: even a few words of a local language will open many doors for the Technical Assistance expert because the local population will consider this as a tribute to their way of life, their country and their culture.

Apart from language training the general orientation for Technical Assistance experts should incorporate:

1. Thorough briefing on (mostly administrative) matters concerning all dealings between the expert in the field and his agency at home;
2. Detailed information on the project and related objects;
3. Overall-knowledge on the people and the country of his assignment;
4. An introduction to the specific problems of cross-cultural nature (field relationship);
5. Advice on medical and hygiene matters; and
6. Methodology for reporting and preparation for "de-briefing" after the assignment, for the sake of transference of experience.

There should be no "left-handedness" about the implementation of such a training program; even more experienced trainees should clearly be made to understand that the program is of outstanding importance for *all* the trainees because the outcome in many cases may "make or break their mission."

There is no doubt that a thorough briefing, orientating, and training of Technical Assistance personnel prior to their taking up assignments in developing countries could help considerably to improve their performance and ability to communicate. And yet this is by no means an easy task. In the case of the Germans in Rourkela, the German authorities responsible for recruiting and sending the personnel at that time did not have sufficient experience with such a vast project to be able to foresee the manifold implications this would bring about. Consequently there was hardly any briefing or training involved. The majority of the Germans who came to India had little or no fundamental information about the country or the people they were going to assist in their work. A well known German journalist who once visited them in Rourkela reported on their life and work in the jungles of Orissa: ". . . there they sit and play cards, the young fitters from the 'Kohlenpott' [industrial district around the river Ruhr in West-Germany]. Their companies and the governments concerned unfortunately

<sup>19</sup> Hans Josef Vermeer *et al.*, *Sprache und Entwicklungshilfe*, Heidelberg (Julius Groos), 1963, p. 76.

omitted to tell them where they are. . .”<sup>20</sup> And another author remarks: “The German fitters failed to appreciate that things in Rourkela were not the same as in the Ruhr. . . Nobody had taken the trouble to tell them the difference in customs, deriving from century-old tradition.”<sup>21</sup>

In other Technical Assistance projects the problem may not always be lack of experience on the part of the agency sending unprepared personnel but the extreme shortage of the needed specialists. These experts are difficult to find and expensive, too. In many instances the demand seems to exert such a pressure on the agencies concerned that there appears to be no possibility to allow these men to undergo a thorough but time-consuming period of briefing and orientation. The agencies simply hope that previous personal experience and above all the technical and human qualification the particular men are supposed to possess will ultimately make their mission a success; and it must be admitted that in many cases this has come true. The number of failures, however, does not allow us to neglect the fact that well-prepared orientation and training geared to give the trainees the necessary detailed background for their particular assignment (including information on the country and the people who are to become their hosts, their counterparts and their colleagues), will be of utmost value for their performance as well as for their personal well-being and therefore for the success of their mission on the whole.

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<sup>20</sup> Carl Weiss, “Im Indischen Ruhrgebiet rauchen deutsche Schlote, *Deutsche Zeitung*, 14, November 1959.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Maria Hunck, *India To-morrow: Pattern of Indo-German Future*, Düsseldorf, 1963, p. 97.