

PUBLIC HEALTH

Pan-American Health

The United States has joined all our neighbors to the south in the greatest program of health ever attempted to increase all-American strength.

By GLENN SONNEDECKER

► AMERICANS hacking through Amazon jungles today carry weapons of science and sanitation. Planes drop health supplies instead of lethal bombs from South American skies.

Uncle Sam has grasped the hand of our powerful neighbor. But tropical diseases and growing pains demand the greatest inter-American health and sanitation program ever attempted, to bolster her strength. An all-out project is now being pushed by the Office of Inter-American Affairs in Washington in collaboration with authorities in the other Americas.

With efficiency of workers thus protected, South America can throw millions of tons of vital materials into the war effort. Rubber, quinine, vegetable oils and metals—all formerly obtained from

Jap-held territory — could be produced entirely or in part. Most Far Eastern plants, such as important drugs and manila hemp, can be grown in South America; they will be grown there, many authorities believe, even after the war.

Fifteen rubber-producing Americas have signed up to sell the United States their exportable rubber surplus. And we cannot minimize its value. Despite the synthetic program, natural rubber is irreplaceable for some uses. Relatively small amounts, such as we shall obtain from this hemisphere, will increase efficiency and go a long way when mixed with the man-made product.

Health projects are tied closely to rubber production. United States specialists and technicians are the advance guard, preparing the way for thousands of additional tappers who collect rubber for the United States market.

Aerial attacks from mosquitoes can be as deadly to these men as bombs and bullets are to those fighting on other fronts. Here malaria kills thousands. Control includes elimination of swamps and other mosquito-breeding places; dwellings are mosquito-proofed; drugs are distributed. Millions of atabrine tablets, the new anti-malarial, have been flown to rubber-producing areas. More are on the way.

A hospital is being built at Tingo Maria, Peru. Others are proposed for strategic producing areas there.

"Most of the projects which have been started or projected should yield the American republics substantial benefits, both for the war period and for the post-war years," declares Gen. George C. Dunham, physician directing the inter-American health and sanitation program.

Battle Malaria

Deep in the mysterious, rich, undeveloped Amazon valley, some 2,000 miles up the great river, a typical project has been started at Guayara Merin, Bolivia. Rubber collected in the hot, humid forest, passes through this port on its devious journey to a distant battlefield. Malaria raged through the town. The campaign conducted by Dr. E. H. Payne and his associates against malaria here, is only a skirmish in the main war on disease in the Western Hemisphere rubber areas. But it is typical of the part being played by American health authorities in the United Nations strategy of supply.

Dr. Payne saw a desperate need for hospital facilities. Construction material from the jungle itself was lugged by foot and mule to a native sawmill. Planes packed with medical supplies answered his urgent call to the United States. A patrol of mosquito fighters was trained; chemical warfare shot oil into mosquito breeding places, larvae were dusted with Paris green. Eliminating nearby swamps, improving the water supply and sanitation facilities are the problems now being attacked by Dr. Payne, according to the last report from this distant outpost of war workers.

Besides malaria, authorities must combat other hazards of the tropics—yellow fever, amoebic dysentery, snake and scorpion bites, and attacks by animals. Rubber tappers sloshing through



HEALTH IMPORTANT—These workers are constructing a road to the site of a 300-bed hospital to be built in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The all-America health program will make workers strong for war.

jungle streams are warned by medical men to avoid the dangerous sting rays, electrical eels and the piranhas or cannibal fish. Heavily booted men show wary respect to blind worms, ants, hairy larvae and spiny plants.

Medical treatment of the odd mishaps which befall men developing South American resources, is handicapped by difficulty of obtaining and transporting supplies.

Most drugs were formerly supplied by Germany. With imports cut off, South Americans are increasingly dependent on United States drug manufacturers. Increased plant capacity has been developed in many countries, augmented by large shipments from U. S. laboratories.

Brazil and Mexico have taken over the assets of German pharmaceutical laboratories, and Nicaragua seized German drug stocks. In some countries prescription drugs obtained from the Nazis are still being sold, but American firms are also gradually taking over this trade.

Drugs and health workers are transported into the Amazon country by river boats. At six strategic centers along the way, hospitals are planned. Laboratories operate in the shipping centers of Belem and Manaus, for examination of mosquito larvae.

Plans for 50 to 100 clinics to treat the sick and to give advice in disease prevention and diet are also announced by

the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

The program includes mining regions which supply United Nations war industry. Gold was the yellow lure for early explorers of our neighbor republics; now interest centers on less glamorous metals like lead, and manganese.

Biggest copper producing mine in the world is gouged into the Andes mountains 10,000 feet up.

Other mines have been developed into major supply sources of essential copper with the aid of United States technical skill and machinery. War demands have pushed output to a new high, including large-scale mining of low-grade ores. Accounts of this new development say that an American engineer, William Braden, used 2,500 oxen to drag the machinery up the Andes heights.

The Chilean Andes also yield quantities of nitrates, now going principally to United States industry for making explosives and other war products.

A great core of other undeveloped resources is veneered with modern civilization. For most South Americans still live within a hundred miles or so of the coast.

But American technology is supplying them with tools and medical science is making them strong. Thus a great continent stirs under the impetus of war.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Vaccination Stops Smallpox

► THE SMALLPOX outbreak in Pennsylvania is nothing to get panicky about. It does, however, serve as a reminder of the importance of having oneself and one's family vaccinated, because successful vaccination gives protection against smallpox. That is the opinion of health authorities in Washington.

Latest reports to the U. S. Public Health Service show 52 smallpox cases in Pennsylvania and a total of 17 cases for the rest of the nation. The latter were scattered over five different states.

The Pennsylvania cases were in a community isolated by both geography and custom from other communities. The cases were mild. Vaccination was given promptly to thousands who, in the opinion of Pennsylvania state and city health officers might be in danger of getting the disease. Pennsylvania is one of the states requiring vaccination for school atten-

dance, so that much of the population has already been protected against smallpox. All these facts have kept health authorities generally from being unduly alarmed over the situation.

In some states and cities, health officers are urging all people to be vaccinated or revaccinated. This is thought to be a wise move, particularly in communities where vaccination has not previously been general and where there has been a large influx of possibly unvaccinated war workers from other parts of the country.

Vaccination or revaccination is also advised for persons who daily come in contact with people from all over the country, for example those working in large railroad stations and hotels.

The question of how far this smallpox outbreak will spread can be answered as follows: It will not spread to persons