

BUSINESS AMBASSADORS

by JACK LONG

preparation for executives going abroad could help them do a better job for both their companies and their country. It became evident, however, that facilities for such training hardly existed, particularly in a form suited to mature men with a limited time to cover a broad range of subjects. The BCIU chose Dr. Harold M. Randall, an Iowa-born educator and former career diplomat, to direct its Training Course for International Executives. His deputy is John S. Walter, a former Jersey Standard executive. Washington was picked as the location in order to draw on the faculties of the six universities in the area plus the Foreign Service Institute, other government agencies, and the staffs of foreign embassies. Several days are devoted to studying the organization and working methods of various departments and agencies of the federal government, especially those involved in foreign affairs. Participants visit the White House and Capitol Hill and are briefed by members of Congressional committees and officers of the State Department, AID, and the USIA.

Once installed in their Washington hotel rooms, the BCIU students, whose ages range from the thirties to the sixties, are in for a busy time. They have already received an armload of books for advance reading. They will hear some fifty different lecturers—anthropologists, sociologists, historians, linguists, information and public opinion specialists, and professors of art, literature, and music.

A basic aim of the course is to prepare the international executive and his wife for "culture shock." This term sums up the package of miseries—disturbing as weightlessness in outer space—that afflicts an individual transplanted to a new environment. People who have lived abroad say that it occurs when their own behavior and manners—which they have always assumed to be more or less universal—turn out to be only local customs, and they find that others take an entirely different view of what is "normal behavior." The result can be a breakdown in personal relations in the new culture, and frustration and failure in both business and social life.

Course lecturers cite many examples of cultural differences that affect the conduct of business abroad. They point out

that in many parts of the world Americans must adjust to a new tempo in business negotiations. They must adopt a more formal approach than they are used to at home. In the Orient, for example, lengthy conversations over tea usually precede important business transactions. Any subject may be discussed so long as it has nothing to do with the business at hand. The foreigner who loses patience runs the risk of failure.

A woman lecturer, with long experience abroad, made a similar point while talking recently to a group of wives. She explained that, when shopping in Asian countries for a piece of furniture or a painting, the direct approach is usually inadvisable. A shopkeeper will probably not discuss price until perhaps the second or third visit to his shop. He must grow to like the prospective purchaser before he will sell her any item of real value.

Another problem for an overseas American is the different concept of time that exists in many other cultures. In some regions promptness is the rule in keeping appointments, but in other areas to arrive on the dot is looked upon as rude and inconsiderate.

Students learn that in a number of countries a great deal of deference is paid to age and rank in business organizations. American junior executives, who are used to expressing their opinions frankly to the boss, often find themselves in hot water through lack of tact in dealing with older men abroad.

Even the distance at which people stand from one another while engaged in conversation can be a problem. A Foreign Service linguist explains that an American or an Englishman is accustomed to a face-to-face talking distance of about arm's length, or approximately thirty inches. Latins, on the other hand, like to discuss things at a range of about eighteen inches. When living in the other man's country, therefore, it is necessary to adjust to his "invisible boundary."

The BCIU seminar for wives is directed by Dr. Esther Cole Franklin, associate professor of international relations at American University. Her course includes specific, practical information on housing, clothing needs, health facilities, schools, and other subjects that will make it easier for a woman to run a

home in a new country. The wives learn the status of women in the area where they will live. They are told that in one country a servant customarily receives a month's pay as a Christmas bonus. In another the labor laws make it difficult to discharge a servant. Opportunities for community service are outlined, and many alumnae of the course are abroad today teaching English, cooking, sewing, and nursing, or engaging in other types of voluntary welfare work.

Social pitfalls are explained. In certain Oriental countries it is risky to admire any object too enthusiastically in a home that one visits, because the host will feel compelled to give it to his guest. In some countries a wife is expected to know nothing of politics or business, while in others she will be asked penetrating questions about the American system.

The overseas wife is warned that as an American woman abroad she will be watched and criticized, and her mistakes will seldom be overlooked or forgotten. "There have been many charming and discreet American women in Rangoon," Dr. Franklin says, "but the one they have never forgotten there is a young creature who, some years ago, wore Bermuda shorts on a visit to the bank. *She* is the one they still talk about."

The course teaches that, for better or worse, Americans abroad are a highly visible minority wherever they go. The international executive in his foreign post is looked upon by most local people as an American first and a businessman second. He is judged and measured, not by the standards he has been accustomed to, but by standards that are meaningful to people with different yardsticks of conduct. This is inevitable in a world that is 95 per cent non-American, 70 per cent non-white, and 65 per cent non-Christian.

As Fred C. Foy, chairman of BCIU and head of the Koppers Company, has said, there are nearly a billion people in the uncommitted and developing nations who are potential friends and customers for American enterprise. Our businessmen abroad are working hard to win them.

How are they doing? Better all the time, it seems. A recent check of BCIU graduates indicates that fewer than one per cent have failed and been brought back from their overseas assignments. ■

BUSINESS AND FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAS / 1

Among the forces working for progress in Latin America are forward-looking companies whose investments strengthen the economic underpinnings essential to a free and progressive society.

ADELA: BOLD VENTURE IN LATIN AMERICA / 3

A unique instrument for supplying capital to new and expanding industries in Latin America has just approved its first investments—a total of nearly \$6 million in equity and loan funds to seven enterprises. Behind ADELA are \$40 million and 120 industrial firms and banks in North America, Europe, and Asia.

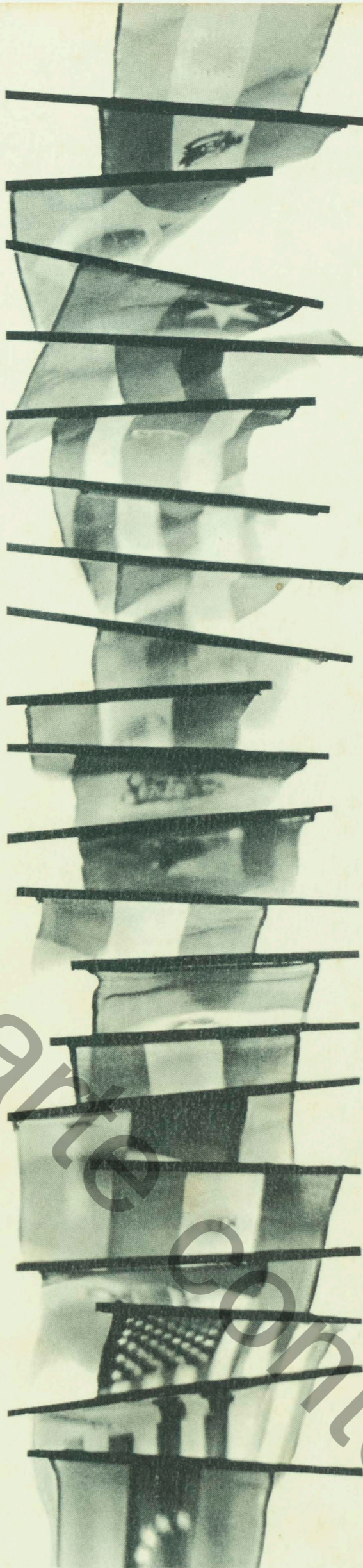
THE ST. AUGUSTINE STORY / 6

by Frank Gervasi

The oldest city in the United States, founded 400 years ago this September, is gradually being restored as a living memorial to our Hispanic cultural heritage. The author spent many years as a foreign correspondent in European countries, including Spain, is a contributor to national magazines, and has written a number of books.

NEW ART FROM LATIN AMERICA / 10

An exhibition of prize-winning art from seventeen countries and Puerto Rico helped mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the inter-American system. Some of the paintings and sculpture are reproduced on pages 12-15.



PANORAMA / 16

In Latin America, as elsewhere, Esso companies are engaged in a variety of community activities, especially in the arts and education. Esso Chile, for example, recently built a schoolhouse in a remote mountain valley to aid the nationwide government schoolbuilding program. The Creole Foundation in Venezuela is helping to provide manual training courses for children in poor areas. A traveling show brought basic lessons in traffic safety to large towns in Central America. Colombia encouraged good writing through a novel prize; Brazil conducted a press contest to improve the quality of journalism. Peru held an art auction, and Esso Argentina sent music and theater to the provinces. In New York, Jersey's shareholders elected two new directors, both with extensive backgrounds in Latin America.

COMPUTERS COUNT THE CARS / 20

Traffic engineers are finding new ways to untangle traffic jams in cities around the world. With the aid of electronic computers they are building signal systems that speed the flow of vehicles, reduce accidents, and increase the capacity of city streets.

SCHOOL FOR BUSINESS AMBASSADORS / 24

by Jack Long

Private industry's "school for foreign service" in Washington, D.C. helps prepare executives and their wives for living and working overseas.

On the front cover are the flags of the twenty-one republics that make up the Organization of American States.
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L. F. MIHLON, *Editor*

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