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BUILDING A BETTER HEMISPHERE SERIES NO. 4

PROGRAM OF

The Rio Doce Valley

A SERVIÇO IN ACTION



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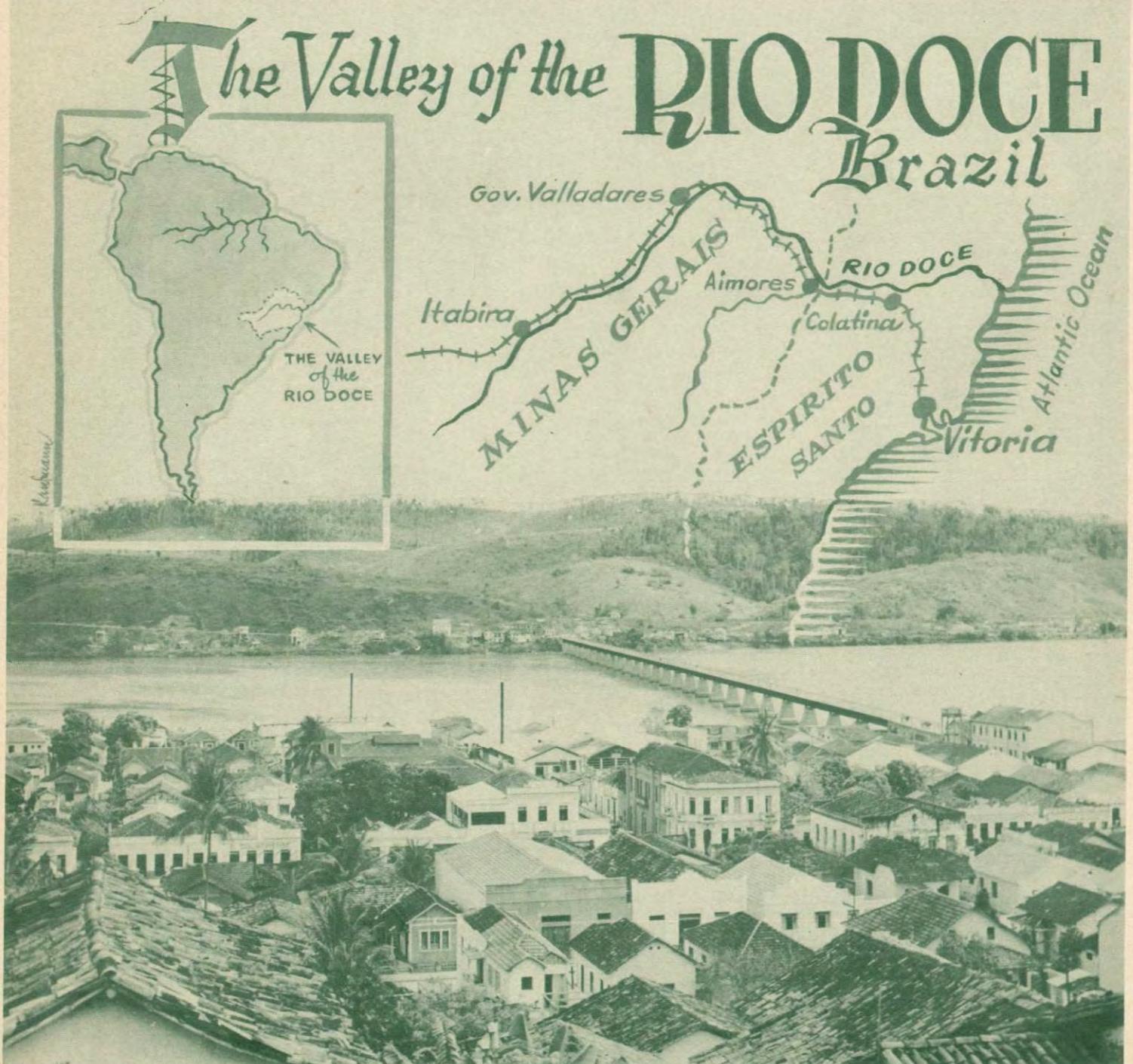
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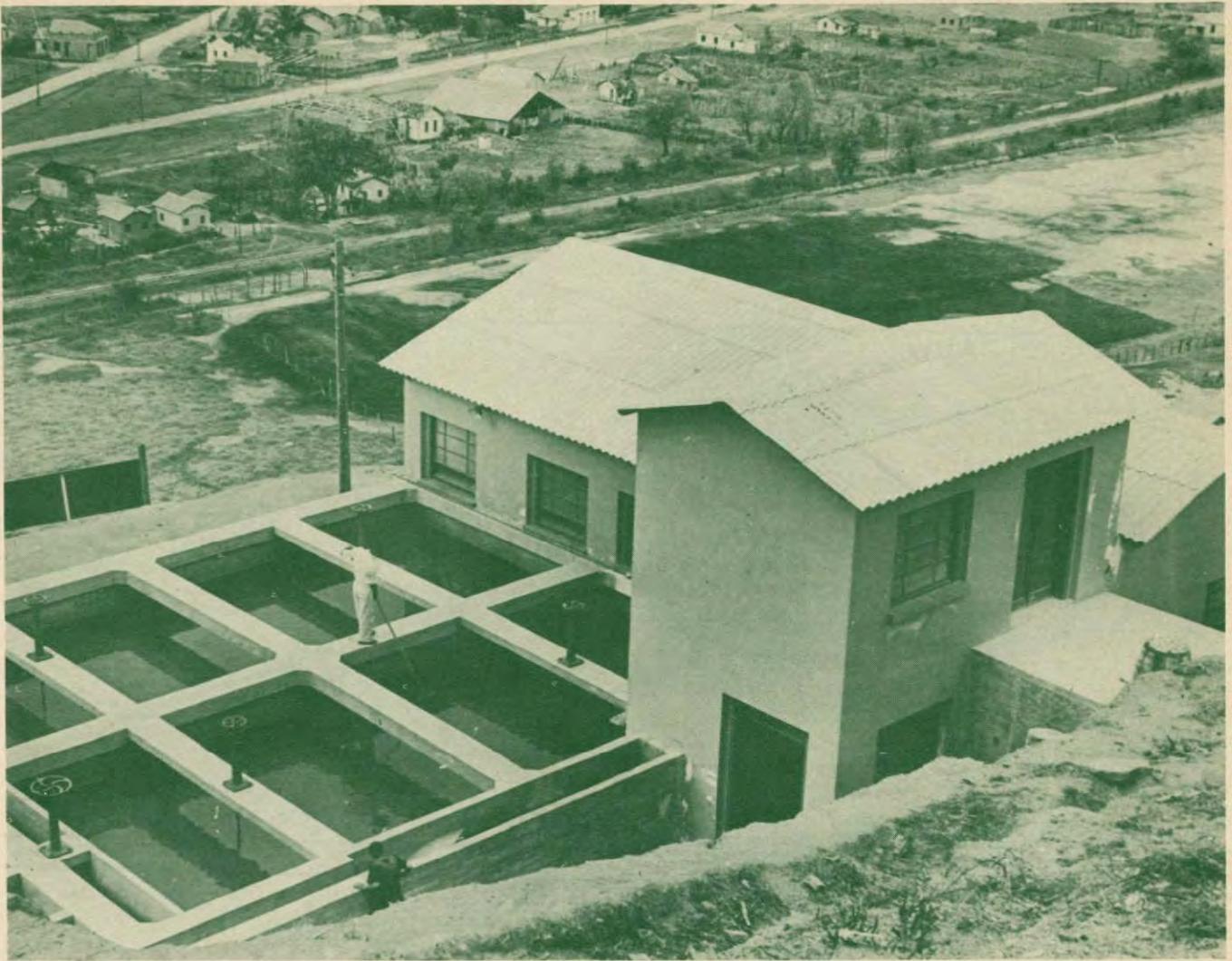
The Institute of Inter-American Affairs

Presents

The Program of The RIO DOCE VALLEY

A SERVIÇO IN ACTION





The Valley of the Rio Doce is of exceptional importance since it is the natural route of export of the metallurgic production of many mines and steel mills. The Victoria-Minas railway, which serves this region, has constructed a quay in the city of Victoria exclusively to handle ores and ensure the quick turn round of ships calling at that port. Owing to its great present and future importance, the valley is being made healthy by the SESP, the special service of public health.

A SERVIÇO IN ACTION

IT was in January of 1942 that the whole thing started. The world was at war and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics were meeting in Rio de Janeiro to find solutions to their common problems. One of the outcomes, and probably about the most important one, led to the development of what is today known as the "serviço".

This is a special governmental service within a ministry set up by joint agreement between the Latin American countries and The Institute of Inter-American Affairs representing the United States of America, to carry out a program of development in specified fields of operations. But why is this so important? Because it has set a new pattern in international cooperation that may yet lead the world to a permanent peace. No nations which are participating in a successful "serviço" program would even think twice about going to war against each other.

The Serviço Especial de Saúde Pública

Take for example the Serviço Especial de Saúde Pública (Special Public Health Service) or SESP, as it is affectionately called by the people it serves. In the begin-

ning the United States of America provided most of the money and technicians. At the present time, ninety per cent of the money comes from Brazil and 98% of the personnel are furnished through the Ministry of Education and Health while the U.S.A. contributes a few specialists and the remainder of the funds through The Institute of Inter-American Affairs.

The Superintendent of SESP, Dr. Ernani Braga, is on a full time basis like all



THE RUSTIC PRIVY — Starting point of SESP's sanitation program.

the rest of his 1500 doctors, engineers, nurses and other personnel and this fact is one of the major reasons for its success. In addition, it is free from political pressures, its personnel remains the same even though the government changes and there is more flexibility in financial matters than is usually the case. All of these important points are an integral part of the cooperative spirit of the program and it is due to them that the "serviço" has such a splendid record. The 20 North Americans in SESP, headed by Dr. Eugene P. Campbell as Chief of Party, are able to make a distinct contribution to the work because they have already been through many times the experiences we are just now starting. The whole philosophy is one of sharing ideas and jointly working out as partners the best methods of solving the problems confronting us.

Through agreement with the various states, SESP operates five programs as follows:

Programs	States
1. Amazon	Pará and Amazonas
2. Northeast	Pernambuco and Paraíba
3. Bahia	Bahia
4. Rio Doce	Esp. Santo and Minas Gerais
5. San Francisco	Minas Gerais and Bahia



SESP'S Hospital at Colatina

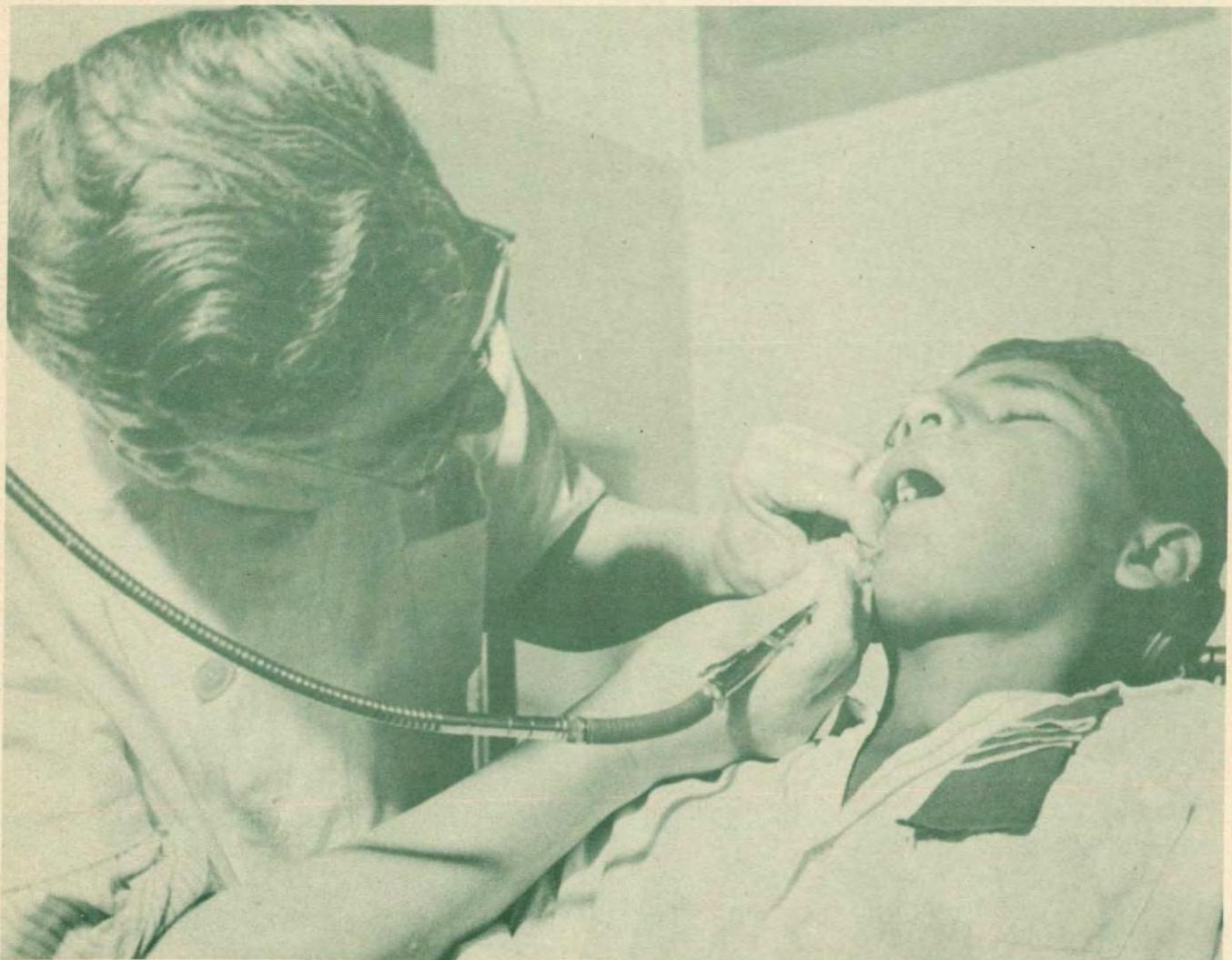
All, except the San Francisco Program which has just been started and which so far consists only of operating a chain of hospitals, include basic medical care and public health services. It is impossible to describe in words what this means to the people involved, many of whom had never been to a doctor in their lives and who had nothing but polluted water to drink. The changes SESP has produced in the lives of these people has been tremendous.

*The Program of the Rio Doce Valley
Wartime Emergency Basis*

The Rio Doce Program is a good example. It started early in 1943 with only emergency sanitation projects to protect the health of laborers in camps of the Vitória-Minas Railroad. Remember that this was during the war and the large

deposits of iron ore and other strategic materials in the valley were desperately needed by the allied nations.

More than 30 camps of about 50 buildings each had been established in relocating the railroad along the lower line from Vitória to Baixo Guandu and there were many sanitation problems to be solved. Drinking water was apt to be contaminated, sanitary excreta disposal facilities were almost entirely lacking and malaria



was very common. SESP rolled up its sleeves and went to work.

Safe water was provided from springs or wells, with a manual pump at the source of supply, a temporary covered reservoir, and public faucets easily accessible to everyone in the camp. Temporary individual latrines were built for each house. The laboratory division started anti-verminosis treatments and sub-posts were established for the control of malaria where both treatment and prophylaxis were given.

The small towns along the railroad were not neglected either, with the same basic approach being used. Throughout this region, so rich in natural resources, there were few facilities for care of the sick and none for the prevention of disease. A number of towns had small water distribution systems which carried untreated river water, highly contaminated and very dirty. Sewage disposal was also inadequate and the incidence of disease was high.

Laboratory surveys showed that in many areas well over 50% of the people had malaria and from 84 to 98% of those examined were infested with one or more types of worms. Infant mortality was extremely high while yaws, leprosy, schistosomiasis, bacillary dysentery, tuberculosis, tropical ulcer and malnutrition all were helping to run up the risk of living in the valley of the Rio Doce.

The Permanent Service

Even during the war it was obvious that if real progress were to be made in improving the health of the residents of the valley, some type of *full time local health service* must be developed. For this reason the three basic parts of a modern public health service — water supply, sewerage system and health center — were planned for each of the three main towns along the railroad, Colatina, Aimorés and Governador Valadares.

The health centers at Colatina and Aimorés opened their doors in June, 1945 and the one in Governador Valadares started functioning in November, 1946. The water treatment and distribution systems as well as the sewage disposal facilities followed in 1946 and 1947.

The general appearance of the health centers is the same for all three towns, the one shown in the photograph at Colatina being typical. It is through these centers that all health services in the district are provided. Each one is under the supervision of a full time public health doctor with a staff of full time assistants such as other doctors, nurses and engineers as well as auxiliary personnel.

The major emphasis at the center itself is on women and children with clinics devoted to prenatal cases, infants, pre-school and school children. The dental

clinic is for these same groups. Other services include the control of communicable diseases, examination and treatment of adults, and a milk dispensary for infants. The nurses provide classes and supervision of the mid-wives, thereby greatly reducing the number of infections and deaths due to unhygienic practices.

Auxiliary nurses, under the supervision of graduate nurses, visit the homes and schools of the community, teaching, demonstrating and showing how to prevent illness. They give guidance to health clubs in the schools and are the chief link between the health center and the community.

The sanitary inspector is responsible for assisting those homes which are not connected with the sewerage system to build and maintain sanitary privies. He also inspects hotels, restaurants, markets, schools and homes to discover sanitary problems and then help to get them solved. In addition, engineering consultation and supervision is available from the headquarters office of the program.

Today any one of these towns can serve as a good example of the progress SESP has brought to the valley. Diseases and deaths have been reduced, production has increased and the people are happier than ever before. They take pride in the health centers and what has been accomplished.

The Smaller Towns

Nor were the smaller towns neglected either. Even though a health center could not be built in each village, there were other basic problems which could be solved. A safe water supply was one of the most important and such supplies plus a distribution system were installed in the towns of Baixo Guandu, Conselheiro Pena and Fundão. In order to be safe, the water had to be passed through a treatment plant before being distributed and so today the inhabitants of these towns have plenty of pure, clean water for drinking and other purposes.

Engineering studies and plans for water systems have been completed for the following towns, awaiting only the money to start construction: Linhares, Resplendor, Santa Tereza, Marataizes, and Itueta. Similar studies for sewerage systems have been completed for Coronel Fabriciano and Cachoeiro do Itapemirim. Considerable money has also been spent in constructing privies in still smaller communities of both Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais.

Hospitalization

Even though medical treatment was included in the services of the health centers from the very beginning, it soon became apparent that there would often be needed more complete facilities for taking care of people who were seriously ill. As word spread that a health center was operating, sick people from farther and farther away would arrive and wait pathetically to be treated. Cases of typhoid fever and other diseases needing isolation created a serious problem but there was no place else to go. Many of the women attending the prenatal clinics needed hospital care at delivery but again there was no place to go.

Early in 1949 SESP took over an unfinished hospital building at Colatina right across the street from the health center, finished and equipped the building, landscaped the grounds and opened the doors



Health Clubs in the Schools

for patients in September of that year. Thus began a new phase in the program.

The hospital has a capacity of 56 beds, both medical and surgical wards, a maternity section and a pediatric unit. The doctors work both at the hospital and at the health center and the two are coordinated under the direction of the chief of the latter. Thus Colatina has become a "medical center" and cases are now received there from a huge area including parts of both Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo.

At Governador Valadares SESP will start construction during 1951 of a 60-bed hospital to serve the needs of that large and growing area. This hospital will also be near the health center and will be operated in conjunction with it.

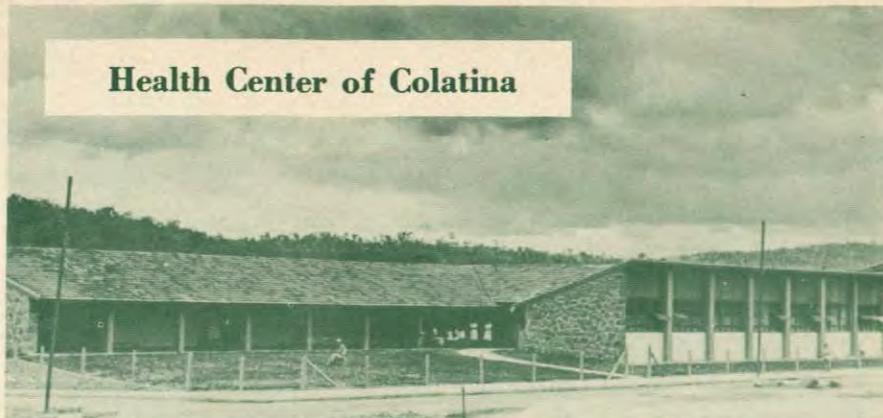
Serving the Rural Areas

In order more adequately to meet the health needs of the people in the rural areas, SESP has two plans in mind. During the coming year, in the county of Colatina, there will be three supplementary health posts developed in the towns of Baixo Guandu, Ibiracú and Linhares. These units will offer about 80% general medical care and 20% public health activities. In addition, in each of the county's eight districts there will be smaller sub-posts which will have a resident nurse but to which the doctor will come only once a week. Thus the health services will be brought closer to the rural people.

An even more interesting plan is developing in the county of Governador Valadares. This is a cooperative project between the fields of agriculture, education, health and transportation. It has been called the "Núcleo de Cooperação Rural de Chonin" because the first year of the demonstration will be in the Chonin district of the county. A second district will be developed the second year and a third during the third year, thus covering the entire rural part of the county where are appreciable numbers of people living.

The objectives of the project are to demonstrate:

1. An economically feasible formula and a practical mechanism whereby



Health Center of Colatina

official agencies on the federal, state and local level may work together effectively in the utilization of public funds to improve both human and economic resources in a specified rural area.

2. The importance of a cooperative and coordinated approach in such fields as agriculture, education, health and transportation.
3. The value and the methods of securing community participation or "helping the people to help themselves" in improving their own welfare.
4. The combination of a community center with a nuclear system for providing services in a rural area.

The headquarters office of SESP in Rio took the lead in developing the plan which now includes the National Department of Education, the Rural Credit and Assistance Association of Minas Gerais, the three Secretaries of Agriculture, Education and Health of Minas Gerais and the county of Governador Valadares. Representatives of these groups constitute a Joint Committee to administer the project and have selected an educator from Minas Gerais to act as local coordinator.

It is felt that through this cooperative and coordinated approach the work of each agency will be more effective than when it acts alone. The agricultural service

furnishes an agronomist and home economist, SESP provides a doctor, nurse and sanitary inspector while the educational group contributes the elementary school teachers and adult educator. The staff works out of a community center building in which demonstrations and classes are also given.

The project started in April, 1951 and is still working within the small town of Chonin. Soon, however, it will establish sub-posts on several strategically located farms in the surrounding district, thus developing a nuclear system. The same process will be repeated in the other two districts of the county until the entire rural area is covered.

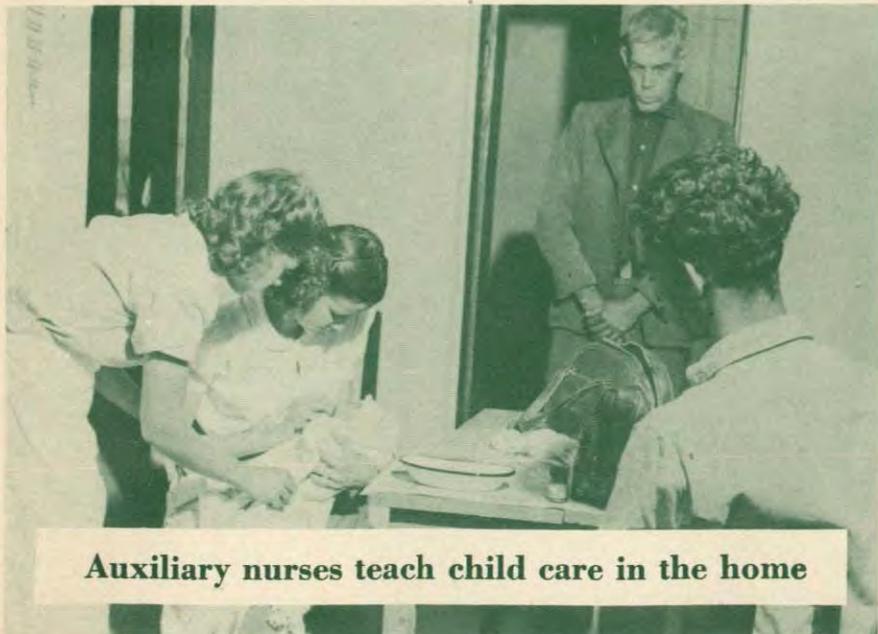
The project will be greatly assisted in each district by a community council, composed of representatives of the people. Through this council the participation of the public in raising the level of life in the community will be secured. Instead of depending so much on the government to render services, the people will be encouraged to do as much as they can themselves.

Plans For The Future

A "serviço" is not intended as a permanent program to function forever in a routine manner. Once it has demonstrated the value of a project and there is a well trained group of technicians functioning in a stable service with a budget adequate to insure a continuation of the work, the project is turned over to that service. The "serviço" then goes on to another area or another activity.

SESP has already turned over a number of water purification plants to the county governments after training operators to run them. So it will be with larger projects. When state health departments are ready, able and willing to assume the operation of SESP's health centers on a permanent basis with the same high standards that SESP maintains, they will be turned over to that state. SESP will thus be free to turn its attention to the demonstration of other essential aspects of public health work.

This, then is a rapid resumé of the work done in one valley by a "serviço" set up originally during the war to protect the health of workers in strategic areas. The results were so beneficial that it was later expanded during peacetime to bring modern public health medical care and hospitalization to both urban and rural residents. It is now training local technicians to eventually take over the work. The "serviço" technique will very probably go down in history as one of the most useful devices developed between nations.



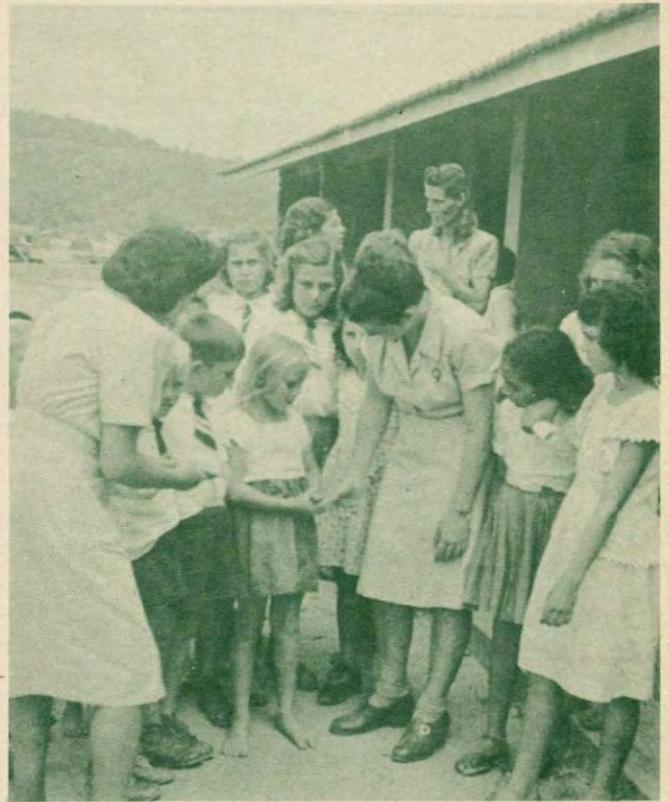
Auxiliary nurses teach child care in the home



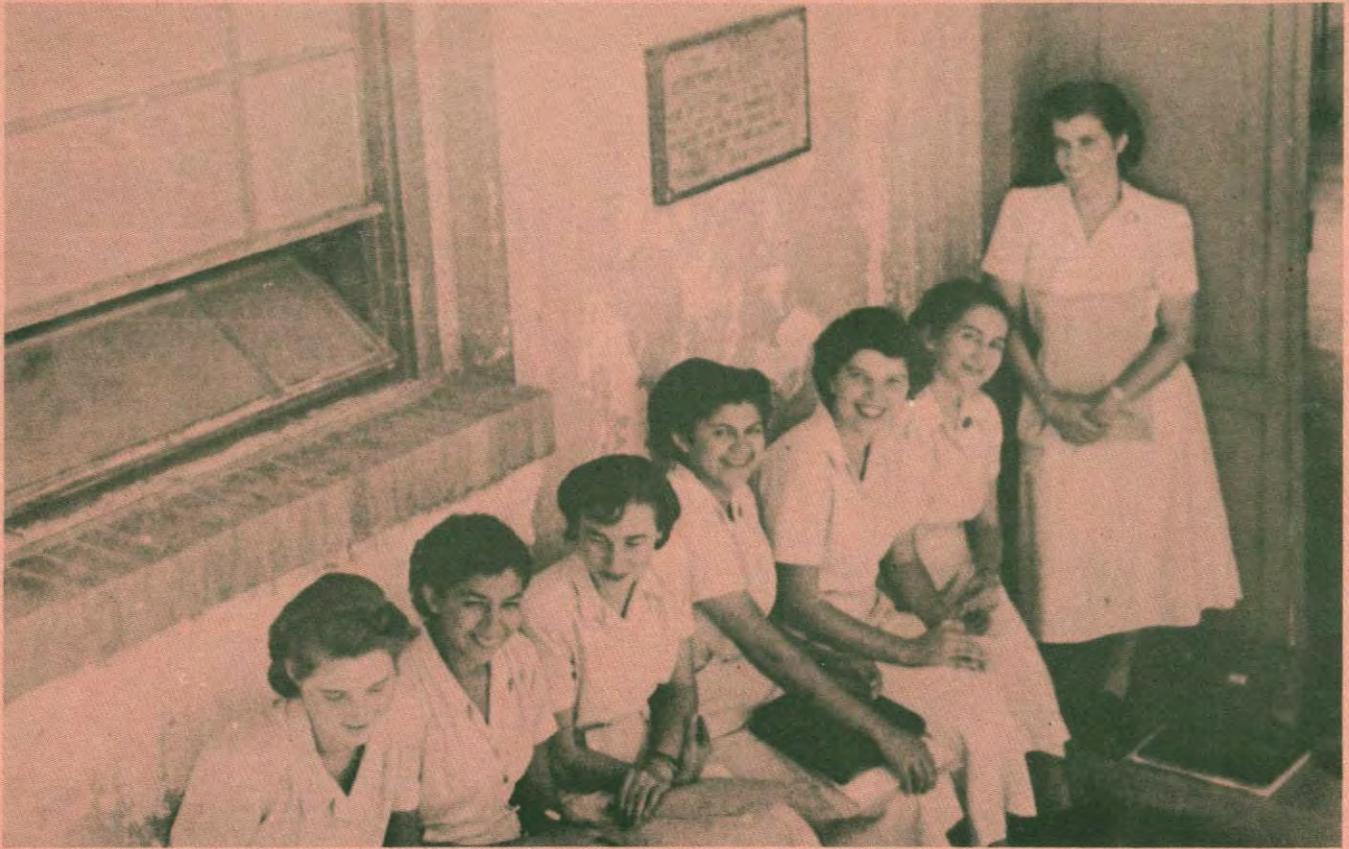
Children taking milk home from the milk station in Governador Valadares. This part of health aid has been an important feature of the health and sanitation program in the Rio Doce Valley.



A regulated plan of vaccination is incorporated in the general health program in the Rio Doce Valley. School children are treated at their schools by visiting nurses from the health centers.



At Colatina, Espírito Santo, visiting nurses check the school children at regular intervals. This controlled checking has resulted in great improvement in the general health of the children in this area.



Student nurses prior to lecture at water treatment station at Aimorés. Plaque was placed on wall at the inauguration of the station built by SESP.

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