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BUILDING A BETTER HEMISPHERE SERIES NO. 5

Boomtown, South America

THE STORY OF TINGO MARIA

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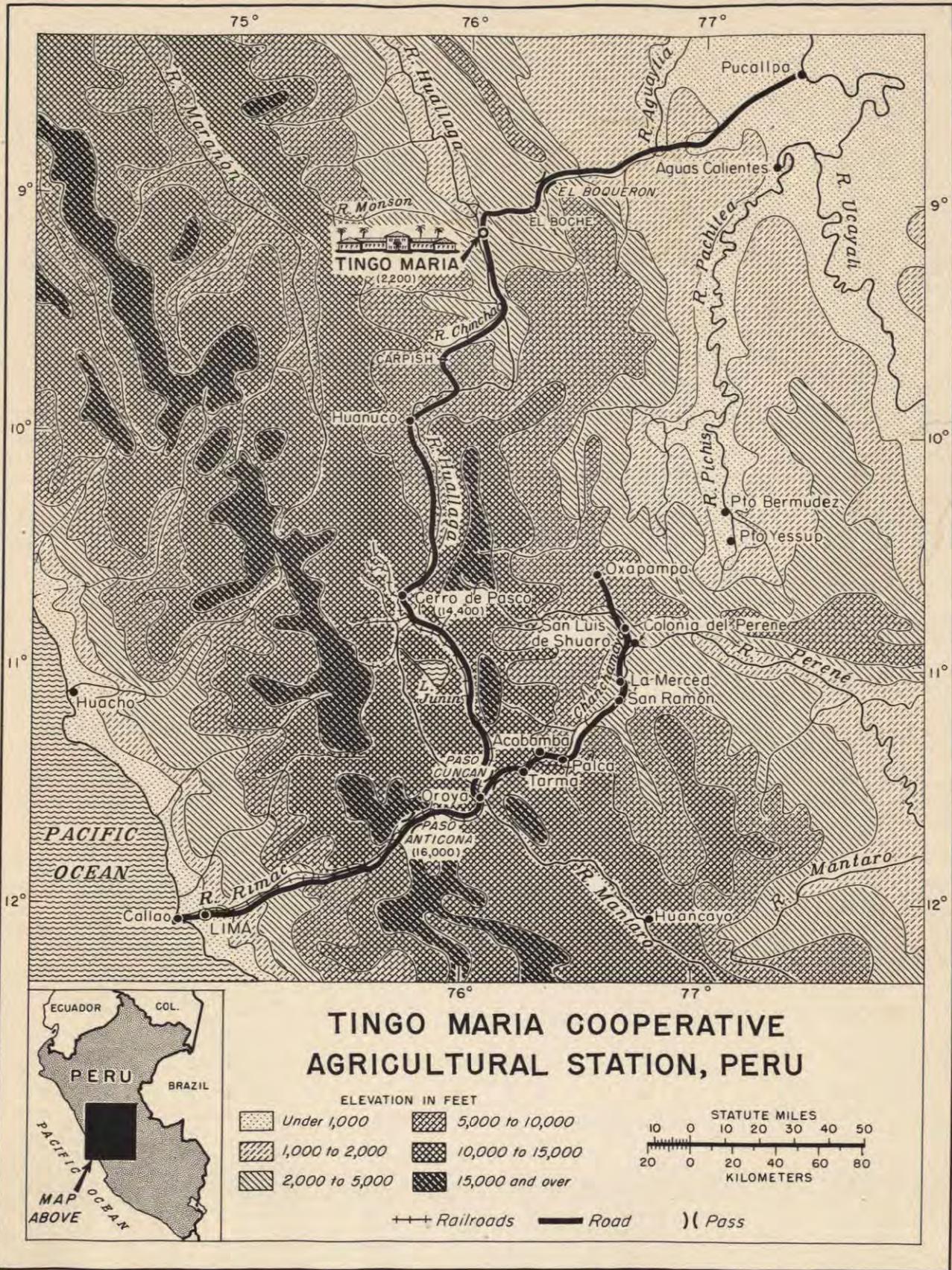
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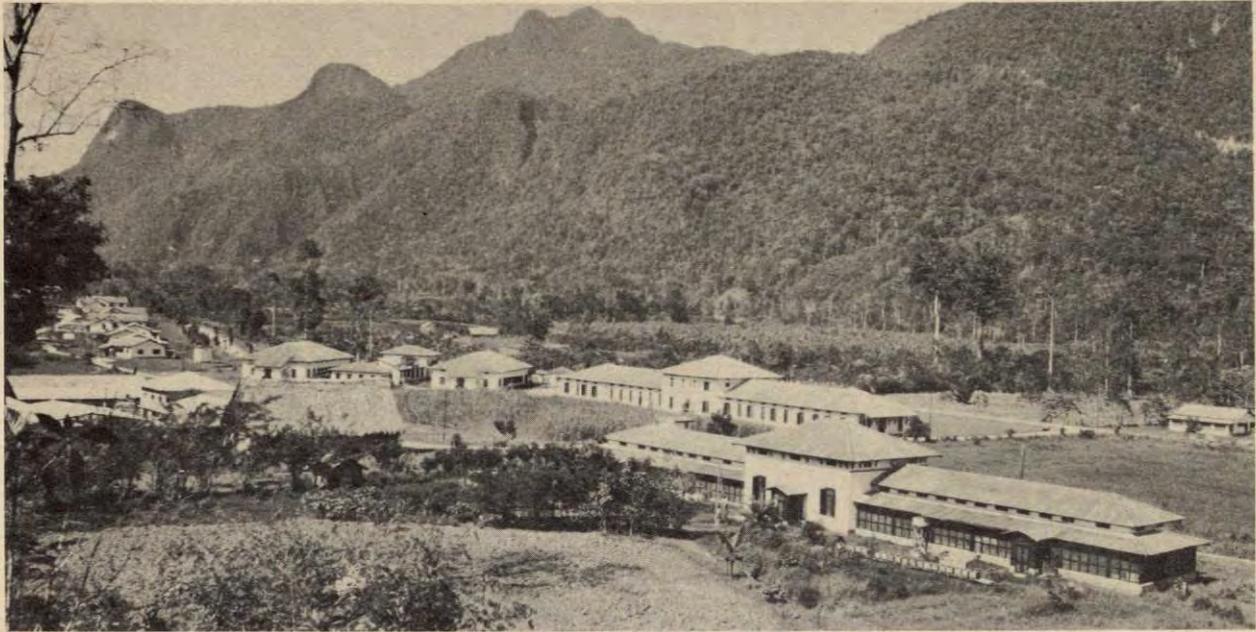
POINT 4 IN ACTION

THE INSTITUTE OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

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TECHNICAL COOPERATION ADMINISTRATION





Boomtown, S. A.— The Story of Tingo María

A report on how a new road and technical cooperation, in 10 years, have carved a progressive farming community and village out of the Peruvian jungles.

by GEORGE A. WOOLLEY



It is at times assumed that regions, countries, or communities of Spanish influence and customs are inclined to be less progressive, content rather to drowse in the warm sun with little regard for either the past or the future. Rapid development, under "boom" conditions as we know them in the United States, is sometimes regarded as out of harmony with tropical ways of life. In the jungles of eastern Peru, however, a new boomtown is proving the error of such assumptions.

Tingo María is that village. It lies east of the precipitous Andes Mountains, 350 miles northeast of Lima, in an area that provides part of the headwaters of the great Amazon River. Ten years ago Tingo María and the surrounding farming community numbered no more than a few dozen newly settled families. Today, although no official census has been taken, it is estimated by the padre of the local Catholic Church (who for many years has

traveled extensively over the district) that there are about 20,000 people permanently located in the Tingo María valley and on adjacent hillside farms. And Tingo María continues to grow.

The story of Tingo María is, in the first place, the story of a road—a new road built not only for reasons of national security but also for opening up a vast new area for agricultural development. It is also the story of technical cooperation—technical cooperation between the Governments of Peru and the United States so that the settlers who followed the new road could avoid failure by having expert advice on crops to grow and farming methods to follow.

It is at this time singularly appropriate to take stock of the growth and development of Tingo María, for it was 10 years ago this month—on April

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The road that made Tingo María possible. Carretera Numero 2 (Highway No. 2) opened up for settlement an agricultural area that previously was isolated jungle.

21, 1942—that the two governments signed their agreement to join forces in giving technical advice to the colonists, the same sort of agreement to work together that today is known as Point Four.

The New Road

The fantastically high regions of the central Peruvian Andes have always been a barrier to settlement of the interior. In 1904 a railroad, Ferrocarril Central del Peru, was laboriously completed. Later, when gasoline transportation became more common, a highway, Carretera Numero 2, was constructed along the same route. Paralleling and criss-crossing one another, the two units ran from Lima some 210 miles northeast to reach Cerro de Pasco, the great copper, lead, zinc, and silver producing plateau at an altitude of nearly 14,500 feet.

From that "jumping-off" place on the eastern slope of the Andes, finally the road was extended in 1932 down to Huanuco in the heart of a fruitful, old-time, irrigated valley on the Huallaga River (which rises just below Cerro de Pasco). Only the highway continued—the railroad gave up the struggle at Cerro.

As time passed the road pushed onward toward its goal of reaching Pucallpa on the Ucayali River,

thereby to provide an east-west crossing of Peru and to make an ocean-to-ocean connection by way of Iquitos and the Amazon River. In 1936, about 350 miles from Lima and at an altitude of 2,300 feet, the road builders reached the junction of the Monson and Huallaga Rivers—the present site of Tingo María.

The New Town

The Tingo María area in 1936 gave the appearance of undisturbed and unpopulated jungle. Actually, it had a long-time previous history of attempted settlement. In 1580 a Franciscan mission had been established at the junction of the rivers and in 1625 the Jesuits had set up a mission at the mouth of the Chinchao River. About 1830 the name Tingo María was given to a small settlement at the junction of the two rivers, but it remained for the greater part a village in name only. When the road reached the townsite a century later, there still was practically nothing there by way of population or progress.

With the coming of the new road, however, the agricultural possibilities of the area became apparent. In 1938 the Peruvian Government established a station to explore agricultural potentialities. A year later, as an aid to prospective settlers, the Division of Colonization of Peru's Ministry of Agriculture set up a Centro Oficial de Colonización in Tingo María. At that time the town consisted of few more than ten buildings, all of the palm-thatch type, one of which was a church and two or three of which were called hotels.

Technical Cooperation

With the road completed, and an experiment station and colonization office established, the idea of technical collaboration was advanced as a means to speed up the sound development of a primitive area that was rich in agricultural resources and would provide areas for settlement by people from the crowded coastal strip and by foreign immigrants. All of these people would need help—some of it financial but, even more important, good guidance in making homes for themselves, making their own living, and producing an exportable surplus of the strategic crops then badly needed for wartime hemispheric defense. Peru had the people, the land, and the climate. The United States could supply technical know-how, as well as equipment and materials. Why not combine them?

Thus, in 1941 negotiations were started between the two countries to perfect a cooperative program

of agricultural research and advisory services, dedicated to the needs of the vast underdeveloped area of eastern Peru. An agreement providing for the establishment of the Estación Experimental Agrícola en Tingo María was signed on April 21, 1942. Under the agreement the United States Department of Agriculture was to assign to the station a small staff of scientists and technicians, and furnish needed scientific and technical equipment. The Peruvian Government, in turn, was to supply a staff of its own agricultural specialists, and in addition was to provide land, buildings, and laborers, and meet all general costs of keeping the station operating.

That the agreement has been highly satisfactory is indicated by the fact that after 10 years it continues to be in full operation, now as part of the new Point Four program. The Department of Agriculture continues to carry out agreement responsibilities, performing the work in cooperation with the Institute of Inter-American Affairs (which, in turn, is today the Latin American regional office of the State Department's Technical Cooperation Administration).

The role of the North American technicians has consistently been that of advisers, teachers, and trainers. A total of 23 Americans have served at the Tingo María station during the decade. An average of five have been on duty at any one time. Always their aim has been "to work themselves out of a job" by training Peruvians to take their places. The success of their efforts is shown by the fact that today the Department of Agriculture has six representatives stationed in Tingo María while Peru's portion of the combined staff is three times as large: 18 technicians who include a director, agricultural chemists, extension specialists, agronomists, horticulturists, animal husbandmen, a soils specialist, a plant pathologist, a rubber specialist, a forester, a civil engineer, and a mechanical engineer. The permanence of the Peruvian staff is indicated by the fact that 10 of the members have been on the job for 5 years or more—three for 8 years, three for 7 years, one for 6 years, and three for 5 years.

Problems of the Settlers

The lure of new lands brought thousands of new people to Tingo María from the western coastal regions. Many of them had been tradespeople who knew nothing about farming. Also, a number of settlers came from Huanuco where they had been irrigation farmers, or had planted the steep slopes,

or had been landless farm workers. About 5 percent were immigrants from Europe—Italian, Belgian, French, German, and Slavic people.

The first job was to clear land by cutting down trees and jungle growth and burning the dead foliage. The customary pattern was to plant corn first—any variety available. Then later crops were interplanted, such as yuca. Many farmers began to set out bananas. Subsistence crops were the first concern; cash crops were less important.

The settlers had much to learn about their new soil and climate. Generally, they found the soil of only moderate fertility, rather acid in character, and generally lacking in nitrogen. At the same time they found that the "hot-house" climate of high rainfall, high humidity, and uniform subtropical temperatures was ideal for the development of many fungi, blights, and molds affecting their crops. They were further handicapped by lack of adequate tools and equipment for the challenging job at hand. Obviously, there was a ready need for the helping hand of agricultural technicians who could spend full time in solving Tingo María's particular problems.



Ten years ago the thatched huts at the top were Tingo María's "hotels"; today the modern building at the bottom is one of two hotels in Tingo María.

The Station's Contribution

Because of wartime conditions at the station's beginning, considerable emphasis was given to strategic crops—such as rubber, cinchona for quinine, and barbasco for the insecticide rotenone. At the same time, there was obvious need to determine best methods of producing food crops. Throughout the years this combination of effort on crops for sale and crops for local food has proved practical.

Today the farmers of Tingo María can come to their station and receive advice on an impressive list of subjects:

Corn, beans, cowpeas, soybeans, rice, sweetpotatoes, yuca, barbasco or cube, bananas, abaca, kenaf, tea, citrus fruits, cacao, coffee, papaya, avocados, mangos, pineapple, garden vegetables, oil palm, rubber, reforestation, cultural methods, fertilizers, crop processing and storage, grass and legume pastures, dairying, livestock and poultry production, disease and insect pest control, and soil analysis.

Experiments with natural rubber production have led to importation of high-yielding and disease-resistant stock from all over the world. A three-part tree has been developed by grafting together a disease-resistant root, a high-yielding trunk, and a leafy crown that resists the South American leaf blight. Thirteen thousand of these trees have been distributed to growers.

Cross-breeding of native cattle with zebu and European dairy breeds has been done successfully, providing improved dairy breeding stock for sale to settlers. Beef animals are being improved similarly.

Settlers are learning, without costly trial and error, the best uses to make of their lands as a result of the land classification program, which so far has covered nearly 75,000 acres.

A total of 1,594 new varieties of food, forage, fiber, and industrial crops have been introduced and tested. A new variety of corn has more than doubled yields and has largely replaced earlier varieties. Similarly, new varieties of beans and rice have more than doubled earlier yields.

The Tingo María station does not overlook the womenfolk in its assistance to community development. A program of domestic science teaching for the wives of colonists was started in 1947. A "profesora de ciencias domesticas" was employed in the Department of Extension to start the program. Sewing machines, dishes, kitchen utensils, and a kerosene stove comprised the equipment. Later the



African oil palm, one of the world's highest-yielding vegetable oil plants, has been introduced to Tingo María's colonists by the cooperative agricultural station.

program was expanded to include the services of two domestic science teachers. Classes in foods and clothing work are held in Tingo María the year around, and in 9 additional communities for 3 to 6 months during the year. It is estimated that 300 homemakers have benefited from this work. This year 367 girls have been receiving domestic science instruction.

TABLE 1.—Crops shipped from Tingo María area, 1946 and 1950

Commodity	1946	1950
	Short tons	Short tons
Total for 30 commodities . . .	3,727	21,977
Ajies, green (red peppers) . . .	12	64
Bananas	766	17,505
Cacao	263	484
Coffee	¹ 48	55
Corn	980	689
Cube (barbasco)	334	967
Hides, green	172	185
Oranges	58	295
Rubber	626	592
Yuca	13	343

¹ For 1949.

Tingo María Today

The boomtown of Tingo María, exclusive of the surrounding agricultural population, today numbers more than 6,000 inhabitants. Its population increased sharply in 1946, when the services of the agricultural station became known, and again in 1948, as land values began to rise rapidly.

The community profitably supports three large sawmills, six small brick plants, a cement block plant, and three carpenter shops that turn out mill work. Also, construction has begun of an extensive plant to process daily some 2,000 pounds of the confection, dried banana "figs."

Two banks are doing a brisk business in their new buildings, and a third banking institution maintains a full-time representative in Tingo María.

Earlier simple houses of the townspeople are being replaced by more modern brick homes with concrete or tile floors.

Progressive Tingo María is determined to provide education for its young people. Its present public school, built in 1943, was crowded with 575 pupils in 1951. There is good news from the Ministry of Education, however, that this year a million soles (\$175,000) will be spent for new school construction in Tingo María, and the expanded organization may include school bus service to adjoining communities.



Women, too, benefit from the guidance of the cooperative agricultural station. Here, Rosa Valdevieso, a home demonstration agent, teaches two Tingo María girls how to sew.

Both Catholic and Protestant churches are active in the area. Two padres and an assistant serve the parish headquarters and large Catholic Church in Tingo María and also travel for services and other religious activities to all parts of the zone.

Early Tingo María had few recreational or entertainment facilities, but those of today are like those of any modern small town. A motion picture theatre, a swimming pool, three well-organized "social clubs," two public pool halls, a so-called night club, a boxing arena, and a cock-fighting ring. The agricultural station maintains a community tennis court, which is also used for basketball, small court "football," and volley ball.

Successful Settlers

Every town takes some measure of pride in the success gained by its citizens. Tingo María is no exception. Everyone knows about Sr. Alejandro Caycho, for example. He saw no future in his small truck garden near Lima, and accordingly moved to Tingo María in 1939 with his family and modest possessions. His grant of land was 37 acres. He and his sons worked hard, cleared the land, and planted rice, corn, yuca, and tobacco, and raised a few chickens. He was able to feed his family but that was about all. In 1942, he came to the agricultural station for advice and became a faithful cooperador, following the advice diligently. Soon he was successfully growing commercial crops of coffee, rubber, oil palm, and bananas. He bought more land, and purchased two trucks to transport bananas to the markets of Lima. Now he is building a new, large brick and concrete home. Sr. Caycho has recently turned over management of the farm to his grown sons and is able to live in retirement in his former home city of Lima. Tingo María, in 13 years, has given the family independence and a future.

Then there is Sr. Federico Tong, of Chinese parentage, a resident of Peru for 40 years. He sold a small business in Lima and moved to Tingo María where, beginning in 1942, he also sought the advice of the agricultural station. Today, Sr. Tong's operations are many and extensive, including production of tea, yuca, rubber, avocados, hogs, and sugarcane for manufacture of commercial alcohol. Two of his daughters are now receiving education in Lima to become dental technicians. Last year, on the occasion of National Agricultural Day, Sr. Tong received from the President of Peru a gold medal award in designation of what North Americans might call a "Master Farmer."

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