Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen:

It is a source of deep pride and satisfaction to us in Puerto Rico to be hosts during this week to the Conference of Mission Directors and Program Staffs of the Latin American Area, sponsored by the International Cooperation Administration. We welcome you not only as fellow-citizens and friends, but also as good partners in a common undertaking which is very close to the hearts of our people: the Technical Cooperation Program.

We have worked together over the years in making Puerto Rico a training and observation center for thousands of visitors from all parts of the free world. Ever since Puerto Rico took the initiative in 1950 of suggesting that the island become a laboratory for the U.S. technical assistance program, we have joined our efforts and resources in making available the Puerto Rican experience as a useful tool in furthering the great humanitarian objectives of the program. Within the Commonwealth, unstinted support has been given to this undertaking by all parties and by people in all walks of life. If our financial contribution has been modest, our faith in the program has been boundless.

This faith stems from a basic conviction, rooted in our vigorous struggle to emerge out of extreme poverty and make
freedom a tangible reality. We believe that the cause of human solidarity can only be permanently advanced if we share generously our skills and wisdom with other peoples, to promote human betterment in a free society. We do not conceive it as an emergency measure to face a troubled period in world affairs, nor as a stopgap remedy to gain support for strategic aims. We do not see it as a reaction to the insidious and powerful menace of Russian totalitarianism. Sharing the technological treasures of our civilization has values of its own, far transcending the cold war or the dramatic rush to hit the moon.

Military security for our way of life is a must, and no effort should be spared to hold our protective shield with strong, powerful and well trained arms. And neither are we to fail in the field of scientific ingenuity as man prepares to leave this baffled planet behind and be, for the first time in history, a pioneer of cosmic space. The Russians and their allies will always find us willing to enter into any competitive bidding, with a resolution and a strength far surpassing any external hesitation, any momentary failure of our hopes, any transitory weakening of our concerted action.

But our true battleground does not lie in the limitless fields of space. It lies in the recesses of the mind, in the inner springs of our views on man, on society and the concept of
the good life. It stretches through the intangible horizons of freedom and justice and the yearning, as old as the world of man, for some measure of dignity and security and self respect.

Our fight is to show that the human creature can best express himself in terms of freedom.

This is not a fight against a power oligarchy and a despotic system. Dictatorship and despotism are ephemeral riders of the crest of history. But the stubborn enemies are extreme poverty, ill health, ignorance --and hopelessness, the worst of them all. They have been with us throughout the centuries festering the minds and plaguing the bodies of countless millions, as the totalitarian rulers have risen to their hey-day only to go down to defeat or oblivion. The stubborn enemies, on the other hand, have been everywhere at all times. Only within our generation have we begun to have the tools and arms and skills to match their universal hold. Only within our times have we realized that Utopia can be achieved with the tools and the energies of freedom.

Here in Puerto Rico we have shown how the stubborn enemies can be licked. We have used different approaches, different weapons in the stiff fight. Provided a basic respect for freedom and human rights is always there, we have not hesitated in using a complex of social and economic innovations. This is not a struggle in which one type and only one type of ideological
weapon can be mustered. We have used the power of government to release and direct energies. We have encouraged private enterprise to do a job. We have experimented with cooperatives for healthy group action and improved distributive social justice.

A basic requirement in the battle against want is the rejection of any set doctrine which would commit us to mere imitation of what the richer countries have done. If the peoples of the underdeveloped areas are to find a way in freedom, they will undoubtedly use their creative courage to develop their own indigenous solutions.

I think that the Puerto Rican contribution to the U.S. technical assistance program lies precisely in this quality of our experience. We have not been afraid to experiment with an open mind and a resolute heart. What our friends from so many countries and cultures discover in our island is this spirit of self-reliance, this creative energy to do a job well and fast enough in the face of hard odds, and this conviction that only in freedom can the goal be achieved. And they see that this is done with U.S. encouragement and support, with no strings attached, save the strings of mutual trust and respect. This is the acid test of U.S. attitudes regarding colonialism and economic imperialism, and the whole big problem of how to deal with a people from a different culture, emerging out of an agrarian status. This is a show-window for U.S. intentions.
The success or failure of our experiment is a measure of the success or failure of U.S. policies towards the countless millions from the underdeveloped areas. The stakes are great and thus we stand in Puerto Rico ready to expand our contribution and strengthen our partnership with your organization, in the crucial adventure of making available to other peoples the fruitful products of our brains, our muscles and our hopes.