

Closeup

Richard Goodwin

International Peace Corpsman

By MILTON VORST

Washington.

AT 31, RICHARD GOODWIN is an old-timer on the New Frontier. Following politicians have vilified him. Bureaucrats have denounced him. Columnists have written his political epitaph. But, in the third year of the Kennedy Administration, he shows few signs of wear and tear and holds one of the most exciting, most responsible jobs in Washington.

"There are only three secretary-generals in the world, U Thant of the UN, Jose Mora of the Organization of American states and me," said Goodwin. But lest the company create a mistaken impression, he added, "And I take orders from Sargent Shriver."

Goodwin is the head of the International Peace Corps Secretariat, a body created last October at a meeting of 45 nations in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Still relatively unknown, both in the U. S. and abroad, it has the task of stimulating and guiding the establishment of organizations like the U. S. Peace Corps in countries throughout the Western World.

As secretary-general, Goodwin is legally the employee of the San Juan nations. Actually, he is "on loan" from the U. S. government, which pays his salary and provides him with office space in the headquarters building of the U. S. Peace Corps. His staff is small. It is made up of young people like him from a variety of foreign countries—Israel, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Germany—also "on loan" from their governments.

Because the U. S. Peace Corps, a mere two years old, has been so successful and is the "granddaddy" of national voluntary service organizations, Sargent Shriver, its director, exercises great influence in the dissemination of the "Peace Corps" idea throughout the world. Still, for all practical purposes, Goodwin is his own boss, empowered to make his own decisions on where he will go and whom he will see to do a job that a growing number of western leaders consider vitally important.

"This isn't simply a means of getting more technicians into underdeveloped countries or getting our allies to share the burden of helping these countries to stand on their feet," Goodwin said. "It is that but it's more."

"We're trying to spread the notion of service among the young people of the free world. The cynics said it was impossible, that privileged South Americans and Europeans cared only about enhancing their privileges. We've found that's only partially true."

"It's been a revelation to see that young people in other countries, like so many in the U. S., were waiting for the Peace Corps idea to come along. And when it did, their response was overwhelming."

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ALREADY, SUBSTANTIAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE programs are under way in Argentina, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

France for instance, plans to begin this month to train its first 100-man pilot unit of the "Volontaires du Progres," which soon will be off to Africa to work on rural development projects.

Perhaps even more important, many underdeveloped countries themselves are setting up volunteer corps to work either independently or in conjunction with groups from abroad on projects within their own frontiers. It is hoped that these volunteer groups will provide the manpower for ever-expanding social service within the underdeveloped world.

The tiny Central American republic of El Salvador, for example, has established a Social Progress Corps composed, according to its director, of "the cream of El Salvador youth." Throughout the summer, its leaders joined U. S. Peace Corps volunteers in an intensive training course at the University of Oklahoma. This month, the first of the five-man community development teams—composed of two Americans and three Salvadorans, under the leadership of a Salvadoran—go out to the towns and villages to promote a better way of life.

"The government of El Salvador," said the director, "is facing the fact that we have a long way to go. . . This Social Progress Corps is a great step forward."

The El Salvador experience—adapted to the needs of each individual country and the capacities of the volunteers—is precisely what Goodwin and the International Peace Corps Secretariat are seeking to re-



RICHARD GOODWIN
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produce throughout the Western World. Because the idea is new, it permits a freshness of approach that older organizations lack. But this very newness requires the development of procedures and techniques and often demands improvisation to cope with the unforeseen.

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IN THE EIGHT MONTHS THE SECRETARIAT HAS been in existence, Goodwin has been on trips throughout Europe and Africa, lecturing, persuading, assisting, demonstrating, consulting, cajoling. In Washington, he has had to consolidate his successes abroad by turning promises and commitments into reality.

It has meant finding money, sometimes out of the Peace Corps budget, sometimes out of the AID budget, sometimes from some agency with only tenuous relationship to international affairs. Most officials, Goodwin said, have been sympathetic and cooperative, most notably Peace Corps chief Sargent Shriver, who he says possesses and unbelievable capacity to get things done.

Goodwin's secretariat also serves as a liaison between countries and between a given country and U. S. government bureaus. It acts as a collector and disseminator of information that can be useful in any variety of ways.

"I received a phone call the other day," he said as an illustration, "offering me the use of dozens of radios that American Hams are willing to donate. I had to think of a way to put them to work. It occurred to me that in the wilds of South America there are doctors who serve wide areas but who have no way of knowing where they are needed. We can set up a program to provide the radios and train the doctors to use them, thus multiplying the value of a single man."

The secretariat has also put its mind to training

problems. Several foreign groups have already gone through special courses here. Trainees have been put to work in the Washington office of the Peace Corps, to become familiar with procedures found successful here and apply them when they get home. Goodwin is already thinking of establishing a training camp somewhere in Europe, where volunteers can receive the kind of rugged preparation Americans now get, most of them at a camp in Puerto Rico, before going into the field.

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"WE'VE BEEN GETTING EXCELLENT COOPERATION, on the whole, from the governments we've dealt with," Goodwin said. "I think it's possible that by next year the participating nations will begin bearing costs jointly—my salary and office expenses, for instance—and relieve the U. S. of much of the expense."

"That's one of our objectives: we want to identify the Peace Corps idea with the free world as a whole. We want all the participating peoples to pitch in to supply training sites, professional personnel, equipment and supplies. The Dutch government has already offered to set up a European office of the Secretariat in the Hague. We'd like to get a training camp from the Italian government in Sicily. We recognize that the organization and the idea are still new but we're making headway."

"One problem we recognize is the need to keep the international volunteer groups meticulously non-political. So far, at Shriver's unrelenting insistence, the U. S. Peace Corps has stayed out of international intrigue. Its objective, of course, is to give a return to the U. S. but it must do this indirectly, by showing the peoples of the underdeveloped countries the willingness of Americans to serve."

"We recognize the danger that other countries may not share this objective and we're constantly campaigning for it. We don't want volunteer corps, for instance, to be used to pave the way for later commercial exploitation, for any propagandizing in behalf of a political or an economic philosophy, for any sort of colonialism. We're not worried about the small countries. The big countries could do some damage. We hope they won't."

"You can't imagine, after all, unless you've seen it yourself, how much the Communists are trying to discredit the Peace Corps, both the idea and the organization. They keep pounding away, by every means they can, on accusations that the Peace Corp is nothing more than an instrument of American imperialism, a band of spies, a tool of the CIA, a device for creating markets for American capitalism."

"So far, they may have succeeded in alerting the people in underdeveloped countries but they've been a dismal failure in turning any hostility toward us. But the Communists are afraid of the Peace Corp. idea and they'll continue to do their best to destroy it."

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DESPITE THE INSISTENCE OF THE WASHINGTON wags that Goodwin's present job represents a fall from grace, Goodwin himself contends that being Secretary-General of the International Peace Corps Secretariat is the most satisfying assignment he has had in government.

A staff member when Kennedy was Senator, an adviser and speech writer during the campaign, Goodwin began the Administration as one of the President's top assistants in the White House. As a specialist in Latin America, he was one of the brains behind the establishment of the Alliance for Progress. As a troubleshooter, he traveled widely for the President, laying the groundwork for what Kennedy hoped—and still hopes—will be a great democratic revolution in Latin America.

Aggressive and ambitious, self-assured to the point of cockiness, Goodwin fit in well with the loose, free-wheeling band with which the new President surrounded himself. But as the Administration matured, the trouble-shooter had to give way to the organization man who could devote himself to the tedious details that make programs operate. Goodwin left the White House to take a place in the State Dept. hierarchy, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American affairs. But he and the hierarchy were not meant for each other. When the post came along with the International Peace Corps Secretariat, with the chance to work both independently and creatively, Goodwin snapped at it. He does not consider it a fall from grace at all.

Slight of build but with a growing waistline, Goodwin has been variously described by Washington writers as an elf and a gnome. He dresses in the prescribed Ivy League fashion but usually is in desperate need of a haircut. His heavy accent, reminiscent of the President's, inevitably betrays his Boston background. He went to Tufts and to Harvard Law School.

Goodwin insists he has, for the moment, no plans beyond turning his secretariat into a vital, creative mechanism for international social service. But, justifiably, he refers to himself as a "young man" and he admits he is looking toward his future. Despite his apparent distance from the White House, frequent contact with the President, including a recent weekend in Hyannis Port, attest to continued esteem at the highest level. Despite the controversy that has surrounded him, many in Washington predict that Dick Goodwin will be heard from more, not less, in the coming years of the Administration.

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