Twenty Years After:
TWO DECADES OF GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED CULTURAL RELATIONS

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It is now 20 years since the Government of the United States undertook for the first time the systematic, long-term encouragement of our cultural relations with other peoples. A brief review of the activities of the Government since that time may be of interest as indicating the types of programs which have grown out of this effort and their role in the conduct of our foreign relations today.

On July 28, 1938, a Division of Cultural Relations was established in the Department of State by Departmental order. This event was of a piece with two others of the same year, the ratification of the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations and the establishment of what became best known as the Inter-Departmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation. These steps were the first to be taken by our Government involving substantial, continuing commitments in the field of international cultural relations. They were followed in 1941 by the assignment of cultural officers to our diplomatic missions, first in Latin America and later in other areas of the world as well. Their duties were defined as assisting the

Chiefs of Mission in matters of cultural significance and keeping the Department of State informed of cultural developments in the country of their assignment. Soon field administration became a principal additional duty. The many-sided programs which were started in those years foreshadowed several types of activities which have been conducted since that time by the Department of State and by other agencies of the Government as well.

Prior to 1938 the role of the Government in cultural relations had been occasional, incidental, and restricted in large part to the eminently "practical." One will recall, of course, a number of outstanding representatives of American culture who served this country abroad, starting with Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson (who was not above smuggling seeds out of Piedmont in the interest of our agricultural sciences) and including such figures as Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and James Russell Lowell. Missions of experts to foreign lands to learn or to teach had from time to time been encouraged in one way or another by the Government. In 1900, 1,400 Cuban teachers came to the United States, aboard Army transports, to be guests of Harvard University at a special summer session. In 1908 the remission of the Boxer indemnities to China stimulated an impressive interchange of scholars and students with China, which lasted many years. After the First World War the remainder of the Belgian relief funds, administered by Herbert Hoover, was invested in the establishment of the Belgian-American Foundation, which has played a significant role in our relations with Belgium since that time. During the twenties and thirties especially, our relations with Latin America were marked by a number of Pan American Congresses in public health, child welfare, science, and education. In general, however, the Government's efforts in this field had been motivated by no basic, underlying, long-range objective or policy, nor had they represented commitments to any continuing programs.

It was against this background that the United States initiated its first systematic program of international cultural relations. In the foreground were other factors, for, as Ben M. Cherrington, first Chief of the Division of Cultural Relations, has written, it was a "time when Hitler and Mussolini's exploitation of education as instruments of national policy was at its height, and our Government was determined to demonstrate to the world the basic difference between the methods of democracy and those of a 'Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda.' There was to be established in the Department of State an organization that would be a true representative of our American tradition of intellectual freedom and educational integrity." 2

The history of the programs of this organization and of its collaborators and successors falls naturally into three parts. The first covers the years 1938-1948; the second, 1948-1953; the third, the years since 1953.

Cultural Relations With Latin America

The dominant facts of the first period were the Second World War and the Good Neighbor Policy. Government-sponsored programs were first started with Latin America as an essential element of that policy. Moreover, compared with our traditional cultural relations with Europe, and even with China in a somewhat different context, those with the other American Republics had been slight. The shadow of war, however, hung over the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace at Buenos Aires in 1936 when the United States proposed, among other

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topics for discussion, the “Facilitation by Government Action of the Exchange of Students and Teachers.” This it did in the belief that the promotion of cultural relationships was one of the most practical means of developing in the American Republics a public opinion that would favor and support a rule of peace throughout the Western Hemisphere. The result was the adoption by the conference of the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations. In the years that followed, the threat of Nazi penetration in Latin America quickened the pace at which the Good Neighbor Policy was being carried out. In 1937 the Cultural Convention was ratified by Congress, and 1939 saw the passage of the act “to render closer and more effective the relationship between the American republics.” (Public Law 355, 76th Congress, 1939.) It was under this authority and that of P.L. 63 (76th Cong., 1939) that cultural relations were developed with Latin America. No other permanent legislation regarding cultural relations was enacted until 1948.

The basic policies which governed the initial conduct of the program proved to be sound and are as applicable today to all programs of this type. These were, first, maximum cooperation with nongovernmental organizations and institutions in the United States, and, second, the utilization of existing institutions and established centers of culture both in the United States and in the other participating countries. At the same time it was recognized that the Federal Government itself had many resources that could be effectively mobilized for this program—hence the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Committee for Scientific and Cultural Cooperation with its coordinated budget for the programs of participating agencies.

**Programs in Other Areas**

The war was also directly responsible for the initiation of officially sponsored cultural relations with China and the Near East, which were financed from an emergency fund of the President. The program with China was started in 1942 for the purpose of strengthening Chinese scientific and cultural activities during the period of national resistance. The program with the Near East, begun in 1943, focused upon the reinforcement of American-founded schools and hospitals in the area.

Some idea of the scope and scale of activities during this period may be gathered from the fact that in 1943–1944 the cultural programs in all other areas amounted to $2,871,000 and that of the Inter-Departmental Committee in Latin America, to $4,500,000. No integrated program was developed with Europe, but the need for post-war rehabilitation and multilateral organizations was anticipated. The United States was represented in such conferences as those of the Allied Ministers of Education in London in 1943. By 1946, cultural officers had been assigned to nine countries outside the Western Hemisphere.

While the specific types of activity varied from area to area and indeed from country to country, there emerged from these early programs certain patterns which have characterized our international cultural programs since that time. Dependent primarily upon the personnel and other resources of the Federal Government were cooperative scientific and technical projects and those for governmental in-service training. There were also industrial training projects, which were singularly successful at a time when war conditions increased the demand for labor. All traditional channels of cultural interchange were widely employed. They included “exchange of persons”
through scholarships and fellowships, visiting professorships, and grants for the visits of technical and other experts and leaders; the holding of conferences and seminars; grants to American institutions; the development of American studies and the teaching of English; facilitation of the interchange and use of publications, art objects, and other audiovisual materials; publication and circulation of translated books; and last, but certainly not least, the establishment and maintenance abroad of American libraries and cultural centers. All these were utilized for various specific purposes, including the creation of better understanding abroad of the American way of life; strengthening of American educational institutions abroad; increasing knowledge of other countries among Americans; and promoting educational, professional, and institutional relations and contacts among leaders of thought and opinion. Basic to all of these was the general objective of developing international cooperation and mutual interest.

International Information Services

The effectiveness of these activities was enhanced by the international information services, which, for the United States as for several other countries, emerged also out of wartime needs. These services publicized and supplemented cultural activities and disseminated much cultural material in their programs abroad. These agencies were the Office of War Information and, for the information program in Latin America, certain offices of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Together they formed the basis for what today is the United States Information Agency. Both left us important cultural legacies as well.

Originally charged with definite responsibility for the promotion of cultural projects, the Office of the Coordinator performed a valuable service in strengthening American-sponsored schools in Latin America. Especially notable was the International American Educational Foundation, which was combined later with the Institute of Inter-American Affairs; the IIAA now functions within the framework of the Office of Latin American Operations of the International Cooperation Administration.

The Office of War Information had a different orientation. Its principal legacy in the cultural field has been the libraries which it established and which are now a prominent feature of the program overseas of the United States Information Agency.

The years immediately following the war were marked by general reorganization, resulting in the liquidation of wartime agencies and the retention of certain functions of value for postwar purposes. Certain programs of the Office of War Information and of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, together with those of the Division of Cultural Cooperation (a later name of the original division) and of the staff of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, were gathered on a temporary basis into a single unit which was known as the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State.

Meanwhile, the United States participated in the founding of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1946, with the passage of legislation sponsored by Senator J. William Fulbright (P.L. 584, 79th Cong.), the ground was laid for the utilization of foreign currencies owed to or owned by the United States for a cooperative program of educational exchanges. All this reflected a typically postwar period, one of transition from a war-charged world to what all hoped would be a truly peaceful society of nations. Despite the confusion of these years, the cultural program had developed certain policies, gained certain experiences, and adopted certain techniques which were
to prove useful in the ensuing period when the permanent program of cultural relations, previously restricted to Latin America, became worldwide.

Postwar Period

The second period began in 1948, when the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act (P.L. 402, 80th Cong.) was passed by the Congress and the program authorized by the Fulbright Act became operative. The former, sponsored by Senator H. Alexander Smith and Representative (now Senator) Karl E. Mundt, authorized the extension of the program with Latin America to other areas of the world as determined by the Secretary of State. This meant in effect its expansion to all the nations of the free world. Early in 1948 an article vehemently attacking the Institute of International Education as a symbol of American cultural relations appeared in the Soviet Teachers' Gazette. It climaxed 3 years of Soviet coolness to our suggestions for such contacts. Together with other incidents, the article indicated conclusively that the Iron Curtain applied as much to cultural as to economic and political relations.

Another political development affecting the cultural programs of the period was the conquest of the Chinese mainland by the Communists, which closed the door to relations with that area. It also prompted the establishment of a Chinese Emergency Aid Program for students and scholars, which was financed from funds of the Economic Cooperation Administration and those made available under the foreign aid act of 1949 (P.L. 327, 81st Cong., 1949) and the China Area Aid Act of 1950 (title II of P.L. 535, 81st Cong., 1950). These funds enabled the Department to offer assistance to needy Chinese students and some scholars stranded here by the catastrophe in their homeland and to bring here for short periods of research a few students and scholars from various areas of the Far East.

The outbreak of hostilities in Korea in June 1950 resulted in the extension of aid to Koreans similarly stranded in the United States. This program was assisted by a special advisory committee under the chairmanship of the President of the American Council on Education; the close cooperation of more than 300 colleges and universities kept administrative costs to an absolute minimum. Designed to give short-term assistance to enable students to attain their immediate educational objectives, the program was terminated in 1955 after having assisted almost 3,700 beneficiaries at a cost, including administration, of about $8 million.

The Department, beginning in 1949, faced the task of terminating another type of emergency program, the Reorientation Programs with Occupied Areas, which had been started after the Second World War by the Military Government and which were turned over to the Department for consolidation on a reduced scale with the regular cultural programs. The story of these programs and especially of the cooperation of nongovernmental organizations in the United States, largely through the Commission on the Occupied Areas of the American Council on Education, although an engrossing one, lies outside the sphere of this article. Their most noteworthy contribution to the cultural relations program as a whole was the series of Amerika Hauser and information centers which, on a reduced scale, ultimately became part of USIA's program.

Educational Exchange Service

These emergency activities were entirely independent of the regular programs of long-term cultural relations. For the latter, the Smith-Mundt Act became the basic charter. It provided
for a separate "educational exchange service" in the Department of State. (The term "educational exchange" was, in this context, practically synonymous with "cultural relations.") The purpose of this service would be "to cooperate with other nations in the interchange of persons, knowledge and skills; the rendering of technical and other services; the interchange of developments in the field of education, the arts, and sciences" (sec. 2). It provided explicitly and in detail for the types of activities already developed and tested in the programs with Latin America, China, and the Near East. It amplified and wrote into law the basic policies which had governed cultural programs up to that time: cooperation, reciprocity, the maximum use of nongovernmental agencies and advisers while utilizing fully, on a noncompetitive basis, the resources of the Federal Government itself. It authorized the financing of the program in dollars, including the dollar expenses and dollar grants required by the program under the Fulbright Act.

Meanwhile, with the actual initiation of programs under the Fulbright Act began that strong support, both financial and administrative, of educational, academic, and research exchanges which has been a significant feature of the cultural program as a whole. By 1948, agreements under the act had been signed with four countries for the financing of exchanges in local currencies and the establishment of binational commissions or foundations for the administration of the country programs. This concrete demonstration of the cooperative and reciprocal nature of the program was repeated in the United States, where the Board of Foreign Scholarships had already been organized and, by the caliber of its membership, had enlisted the wholehearted cooperation of our academic and scholarly community. This board is one of several groups representing public and professional interest involved in the cultural program in its entirety. The others are the United States Advisory Commission on Educational Exchange, the Committee on Cultural Information of the United States Advisory Commission on Information (both of these Commissions were authorized by the Smith-Mundt Act), the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO (authorized by P.L. 565, 79th Cong., 1946), and the Advisory Commission on the Arts, recently authorized by the Humphrey-Thompson Act. These public bodies illustrate strikingly the extent to which as a matter of policy representatives of nongovernmental organizations and private citizens have been involved in the administration of the Government's cultural program.

Other acts of Congress during the postwar period testify to the faith of the American people in the value of cultural relations in the shaping of a peaceful world. These included the allocation of an Iranian Trust Fund (an indemnity paid some years before) to the student exchange program (P.L. 861, 81st Cong., 1950); the Finnish Educational Exchange Act sponsored by Senator Smith, which allocated funds thenceforth accruing from Finland's payments on its First World War debt to the interchange of students, teachers, and trainees and to the exchange of books and educational equipment with the Republic of Finland (P.L. 265, 81st Cong., 1949); the India Emergency Food Aid Act of 1951, sponsored by Senator Mundt, which provided for the financing of similar exchange projects with India from some of the interest accruing on the emergency food loan (P.L. 48, 82d Cong.); and the Informational Media Guaranty provisions of P.L. 402, 80th Cong., as amended, which authorized the financing of cultural activities from foreign currencies purchased by our Government in the course of

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*For the membership of the Board of Foreign Scholarships through 1956, see Swords Into Plowshares, Department of State publication 6344, 1956; for the membership of the other bodies, see their periodical reports.*
encouraging the sale of American publications in certain countries.

**Increased Activities**

Some idea of the increase in activity during this period may be gathered from appropriations for the exchange of persons and from the number of libraries, cultural institutes, and information centers. In 1948 the budget for the international exchange of persons amounted to $5,236,518, including foreign currencies under the Fulbright Act; in 1953 the comparable figure was $22,235,635. In 1948 the libraries, information centers, and cultural institutes (sometimes referred to as binational centers or societies) under the Educational Exchange Service of that time numbered 98; in 1953 they numbered 227.

It was during this period also that the program of technical cooperation was extended on a regular basis beyond Latin America, as announced in President Truman’s 1949 inaugural address. As already noted, the Institute of Inter-American Affairs, under what is now the International Cooperation Administration, continued its work in Latin America. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation was succeeded by other organizational elements under the expanded program.

These developments were paralleled by a growing interest in cultural activities among multilateral organizations of which the United States is a member. One of the four principal objectives of the United Nations, as stated in its charter, is the achievement of “cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character . . .” (art. 1). UNESCO, the specialized agency in the cultural field, had as its basic purpose the contribution “to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture. . . .” The United States had played a prominent part in the establishment of the Or-
The Period 1953 to Date

The current period may be dated from 1953, when, in accordance with Reorganization Plan No. 8, all the activities of the International Information Administration, except those of the International Educational Exchange Service, were transferred to a new, independent office, the United States Information Agency. The exchange programs, together with functional responsibility for the participation of our Government in multilateral cultural activities, remained in the Department of State under the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs.

Additional legislation in furtherance of cultural activities continued to be enacted. What were, in effect, amendments to the Fulbright and Smith-Mundt Acts broadened the foreign-currency base. Notable especially is the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act (P.L. 480, 83d Cong., 1954). Marking an expansion into new areas of activity was the International Cultural Exchange and Trade Fair Participation Act (P.L. 860, 84th Cong., 1956), which was sponsored by Senator Hubert Humphrey and Representative Frank Thompson. This act authorized on a permanent basis funds for the cultural presentations program which was established in 1954 following a special request by President Eisenhower to the Congress. Originally designed to step up the presentation of American performing arts abroad by underwriting the deficits incurred by American artists, the program has brought to other peoples a new awareness of the cultural maturity and creativity of the American people and of their widespread interest especially in music and the theater. Well featured in the press, it needs no further notice here.

Meanwhile the program as a whole has continued to grow. It is difficult to trace in a direct line the development of the programs which have been touched upon here, with all the factors that have made them what they are. Nonetheless, certain selected figures may be of interest. The budget of less than $6 million for exchange of persons in 1948 has grown in 1958 to $20.8 million. The number of foreign countries participating in the programs under the Fulbright Act has grown from 4 in 1948 to 33 this year. No funds at all were available for cultural presentations overseas in 1948; in 1958 they amounted to $2.3 million. As to libraries, cultural institutes, and information centers, the 98 of 1948 now number 234 in 75 countries.

The program now extends, on a limited, experimental basis at least, to the Soviet Union and some of the other countries of Eastern Europe. This expansion originated at the summit meeting at Geneva in July 1955, when the question of contact between the Soviet bloc and the free world was referred to the Foreign Ministers. The latter discussed it at their meeting the following October, which was followed by direct negotiations and the initiation of limited, specific projects. These culminated in the agreement for cultural exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union which was signed on January 27, 1958.

Meanwhile, other programs were under way. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has developed a series of cultural activities; the report of the “Three Wise Men” (The Committee of Three on Non-Military Co-operation in NATO, 1956) stressed the role of cultural cooperation in heightening that “sense of community” on which must be based the continuing cooperation of peoples and governments. “This will exist,” they said, “only to the extent that there is a realization of their common cultural heritage and of the values of their free way of life and thought.”

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7 Ibid., Jan. 7, 1957, p. 18.
Under somewhat different circumstances, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization has undertaken a modest program of the same general type.

The Organization of American States has continued its development of cultural cooperation. For example, in 1954 at the Inter-American Conference at Caracas it revised the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations to render it more realistic and effective. It has recently announced the initiation of a program of 500 scholarships to students of the Americas as recommended by the Inter-American Committee of Presidential Representatives in 1957.

The interest of member states in UNESCO has grown substantially and, as Walter H. C. Laves and Charles A. Thomson pointed out in their review of the Organization's first 10 years, it seems to have found a successful formula for program planning in its concentration on a few major projects of widespread interest.¹

**Cultural Planning and Coordination Staff**

The increase and expansion of so many of these activities is responsible at least in part for the revival of the feeling that, as in 1938, our international cultural relations should be effectively integrated, that they should retain their identity as such, and that they should be regarded, like those of other countries, as coordinate with information, technical, and other "action" programs. Over the years this view has been expressed in many ways. It was behind the establishment of the original Division of Cultural Relations as a separate administrative element in the Department. It is reflected in the Smith-Mundt Act, in the recommendations of the Select Committee of the Senate on Overseas Information Programs (the Hickenlooper-Fulbright Committee) in 1953, in the provisions for the International Edu-

sive to the political milieu in which they exist; in other words, that they support the foreign policy of the United States. Within that framework, however, they have, and should have, specific characteristic purposes, coordinate with those of other international activities. These purposes in turn indicate the role they play in the furtherance of our foreign policy as a whole. They both heighten a sense of solidarity through greater awareness of our common heritage, as with the countries of the NATO area, and increase understanding of the significant differences between others and ourselves by broadening the channels of cooperation on matters of mutual interest. They also balance technological progress with ideas and principles, which, as Vice President Nixon pointed out after his trip to Africa, is vital in the struggle for the minds of men.

Basic to all such programs is, of course, the presentation, direct or indirect, of a balanced picture of one another’s way of life. In his address to the Baylor University graduating class of 1956, President Eisenhower declared: “Security cannot be achieved by arms alone, no matter how destructive the weapons or how large their accumulation. So today it is vitally important that we and others detect and pursue the ways in which cultural and economic assistance will mean more to free world strength, stability, and solidarity than will purely military measures.” It is for this basic purpose that the programs described earlier have been conducted.

**Nongovernmental Cultural Activities**

Since this is a sketch of Governmental activities, it has given little space to those of nongovernmental institutions and organizations. The latter, however, both in cooperation with the Government and independently, have been widespread and impressive. Cultural relations are, in fact, essentially relations between peoples; hence the importance of cooperation between Governmental and nongovernmental agencies in this field.

From the very beginning of the Nation, cultural relations with other countries have developed as a function of our educational, scientific, and cultural institutions. They have been a byproduct of international trade and have loomed large in the work of missionary and other religious organizations. They have formed an essential part of the programs of our great philanthropic foundations and of such other organizations as binational societies, professional and scholarly groups, and educational and public welfare associations. The entry of the Government into this field did not signify the emergence of competition with these groups. It has been, rather, catalytic—facilitating financially and otherwise the efforts of those on whom the burden for this kind of relations ultimately rests. This fact accounts for the widespread support of the programs as reflected not only in the acts of Congress but in participation and cooperation on a national scale.

This underlying concept is just as vital today as it was in 1936 when it was stated by Secretary of State Cordell Hull at the Conference for the Maintenance of Peace at Buenos Aires. At that time he said: “Since the time when Thomas Jefferson insisted upon a ‘decent respect to the opinions of mankind,’ public opinion has controlled foreign policy in all democracies . . . . There should be brought home to them [the people] the knowledge that trade, commerce, finance, debts, communications, have a bearing on peace . . . . In all our countries we have scholars who can demonstrate these facts; let them not be silent. Our churches have direct contact with all groups; may they remember that the peacemakers are the children of God. We have artists and
poets who can distill their needed knowledge into trenchant phrase and line; they have work to do.

Our great journals on both continents cover the world. Our women are awake; our youth sentient; our clubs and organizations make opinion everywhere. There is a strength here available greater than that of armies. We have but to ask its aid; it will be swift to answer, not only here, but in continents beyond the seas."