

U.S. Cultural Diplomacy toward Japan during the Cold War

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While the old scholarship on the Cold War tended to focus upon military, political, and economic factors, the recent scholarship pays more attention to its cultural aspect. Since another world war was unthinkable in the atomic age, both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to weaken their enemies, strengthen ties with their allies, and allure the uncommitted countries to join their camps, by exploiting all the means short of war. In this context, both the United States and the Soviet Union, which were advocating different ideologies and world views, resorted to utilizing cultural activities and exchange programs, viewing them as powerful weapons.

The Cold War came to the fore in the late 1940s, but Japan was under the tight control of the U.S. occupation. It was only when the end of the occupation approached that the United States became deeply concerned about the possibility that Japan might weaken its ties with the United States. While the U.S. government sought to keep Japan aligned with the United States by concluding the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty together with the peace treaty, Americans knew it was not enough: they had to win Japanese minds and hearts. Thus the U.S. cultural policy toward Japan was in full swing in the 1950s.

This essay discusses how intensively and extensively the U.S. government conducted its cultural diplomacy in Japan, showing that U.S. cultural diplomacy was indeed an integral part of U.S. Cold War policy toward Japan. It also hopes to demonstrate that although Americans involved in the making and implementing of U.S. cultural policy had views predominantly shaped by the Cold-War paradigm, there were still differences of opinions and approaches among them. Finally, the effectiveness of U.S. cultural programs in Japan will be considered.¹⁾

An Overview of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy

As a background to understand U.S. cultural diplomacy toward Japan, it may be useful to have an overview of U.S. cultural diplomacy in general after World War II. When the war was over, the U.S. government set up a section to deal with overseas programs in the Department of State in view of its vastly increased world-wide interests and responsibilities as a super power, whose operation was, as Ronald I. Rubin points out, “small-scale” and aimed for “international understanding rather than American propaganda.”²⁾

¹⁾ This essay is a revised version of my article “1950 nendai Amerika no tainichi bunka seisaku: Gaikan” [U.S. Cultural Diplomacy toward Japan in the 1950s: A Survey] in *Tsuda Kōyo*, no. 35 (March 2003): 1–18.

²⁾ Ronald I. Rubin, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency: Controversies and Analysis* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1966), 107.

By the fall of 1947, however, the Cold War intensified, and some Americans were alarmed at the psychological warfare offensive conducted by the Soviet Union and other Communist countries in Europe. It was in this context that Congress passed the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act (known as the Smith-Mundt Act) giving legal authorization to the world-wide information and cultural activities of the U.S. government in peace time, which was the first such legislative move in U.S. history. Under the act, the Department of State created an Office of International Information and an Office of Educational Exchange.³⁾ The appropriation was initially modest. But the programs expanded in the spring of 1950, when President Truman launched the “Campaign of Truth,” declaring: “Unless we get the real story across to people in other countries, we will lose the battle for men’s minds by default.” Then the Korean War erupted. The appropriation sharply increased to such an extent that the information and exchange programs occupied about a half of the State Department’s funds and personnel in 1951. This expansion of the programs, along with a shift to psychological operations from more straight information and educational activities, aggravated frictions between career diplomats and those engaged in information activities. In January 1952 the U.S. International Information Administration (IIA) was created as a semi-autonomous agency within the Department to plan and execute information and educational activities. Congress then cut IIA’s appropriation for the following fiscal years.⁴⁾

Furthermore, after the outbreak of the Korean War, the Truman administration recognized the need to coordinate information, cultural activities, and psychological operations carried out by the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the military, and the CIA, and established the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) on April 4, 1951. The PSB, which was to report to the National Security Council (NSC) on national psychological coordination, had a full-time director, and its main members consisted of the representatives from the departments of State and Defense, CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵⁾

Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had been an enthusiastic supporter of psychological warfare since his World War II command, declared in his State of the Union message on February 2, 1953, that he would “make more effective all activities of the Government related to international information.”⁶⁾ In September 1953 he abolished the ineffective PSB and set up the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB). The role of the OCB, whose main members were

³⁾ For tracing the history of the information program, the following sources, in addition to Rubin’s book, are especially useful: Robert E. Elder, *The Information Machine: The United States Information Agency and American Foreign Policy* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1967); and John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969).

⁴⁾ Henderson, 43–48.

⁵⁾ Directive from Truman to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, 4 April 1951, RG59, Lot 62D333, Records Relating to the Psychological Strategy Board, 1951–53, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as RPSB), Box 6. For the establishment of PSB and its activities, see Scott Lucas, *Freedom’s War: The American Crusade against the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), chap. 9.

⁶⁾ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*, 18.

the Under Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Director of CIA, was to coordinate information plans based upon the policy which had been decided at NSC and submit them to NSC. Unlike PSB whose function was severely undermined by frictions with other organizations, especially the Department of State which was on guard against any infringement of its prerogatives in the making of foreign policy, OCB, placed directly under the NSC, was relatively free from interference by other organizations.⁷⁾

Furthermore, the Eisenhower administration decided to establish an independent agency which would supervise information and cultural activities. Initially, Eisenhower wanted to keep such an agency in the Department of State, but Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and most career diplomats wanted to see the controversial information program removed from the Department. On August 1, 1953, the U. S. Information Agency (USIA) came into being. USIA was to report to the President through the NSC, but its authority was manifestly restricted. While the Director of USIA could attend OCB meetings, it was not until 1955 that he became a voting member. It was also in 1955 that the Director was allowed to attend NSC meetings. In 1956 the Director was finally invited to attend Cabinet meetings.⁸⁾

While USIA was independent from the Department of State in personnel and organization, the Department in fact continued to keep tight rein on USIA. The exchange program was left in the Department of State; this was a result of the pressures from Senator William Fulbright and others who sought to keep the program from becoming part of the U.S. propaganda activities.⁹⁾ In addition, the Department of State continued to play a large role in U.S. cultural diplomacy by financing and arranging for performances by American artists, sports groups and other celebrities overseas. While in any particular country the local branch of USIA, called USIS (United States Information Service), took charge of making and implementing specific programs under the supervision of the Public Affairs Officer, it was the responsibility of the U.S. Ambassador to “provide effective coordination of, and foreign policy direction with respect to, all United States Government activities in the country.”¹⁰⁾

Although allocation of USIA personnel is not an exact indicator of U.S. interest in an area, it shows to some extent how much importance the United States attached to the area as the target of its information and cultural operations. As Figure 1 shows, in December 1953 the total number of employees of the USIA outside the United States was 6,512: 926 Americans and 5,586 locals. Among them 55 % were in Europe, 29 % in Asia, 8 % in Latin America, 6 % in the Middle East, and 2 % in Africa. By June 1956 the total number of employees had

⁷⁾ “Executive Order: Establishing the Operations Coordinating Board, 2 September 1953” (press release), RPSB, Box 6. For the establishment of OCB, see Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (1997; New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1998), 25–26; and Lucas, 177, 210.

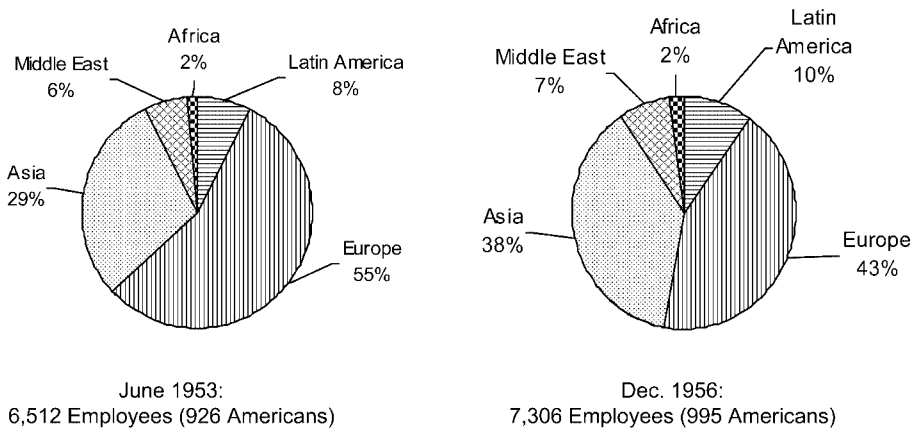
⁸⁾ Henderson, 53, 55.

⁹⁾ Henderson, 52.

¹⁰⁾ Memorandum on the Organization of the Executive Branch for the Conduct of Foreign Affairs, June 1, 1953, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*, 352.

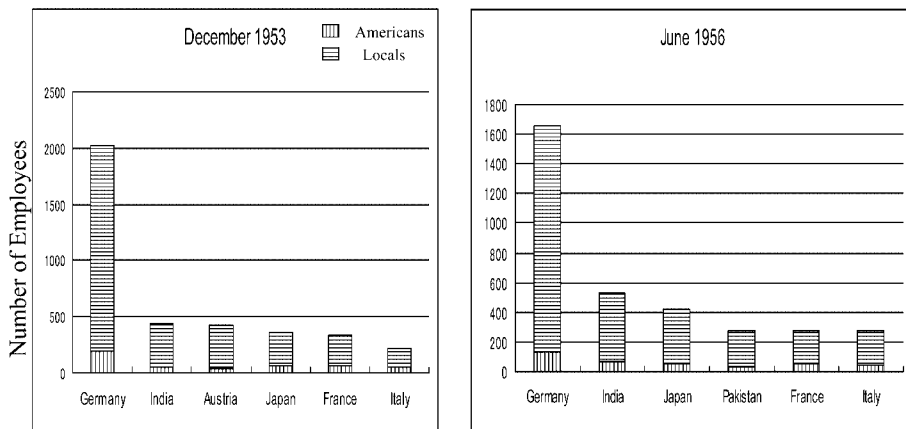
increased to 7,306: 995 Americans and 6,311 locals. Reflecting an increased concern of the United States with Asia as a cold-war battlefield, the proportion of the personnel in Asia increased: 43% of employees were in Europe, 38 % in Asia, 10 % in Latin America, 7 % in the Middle East, and 2 % in Africa. As Figure 2 shows, allocation of the USIA personnel also shows that Japan was one of the major targets of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the 1950s. In 1953 Japan ranked third in the number of American employees, following Germany and France, and the fourth in the number of American and local employees combined, following Germany, India, and the fourth in the number of American and local employees combined, following Germany, India,

Figure 1: U.S. Foreign Post Personnel by Area



Source: U.S. Information Agency: First Review of Operations; U.S. Information Agency: 6th Report to Congress.

Figure 2: Top 6 Countries in the World



Source: U.S. Information Agency, First Review of Operations; U.S. Information Agency, 6th Report to Congress.

and Austria. In 1956 Japan ranked fourth in the number of Americans and third in the total number.¹¹⁾

The Basic Guidelines for U.S. Cultural Diplomacy toward Japan

In early 1952 the PSB set up a panel to make a psychological plan for Japan. The panel, coded D-27, consisted of the representatives from the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the CIA; its chair was John M. Allison, Assistant Secretary for the Far East in the Department of State. The 28-page document titled “Psychological Strategy Program for Japan” was submitted to the President and the NSC on January 30, 1953. Three months later, Allison arrived in Japan to become the U.S. Ambassador and to occupy the highest position in Japan to supervise U.S. diplomacy, including its cultural diplomacy. Thus, although the OCB replaced the PSB in the fall of 1953, the PSB document provided the basic guidelines for U.S. psychological operations in Japan, which were to be implemented by the Department of State, USIA, the Department of Defense, and the CIA.¹²⁾

At the outset, the document announced that its purpose was “to develop psychological strategy plans to maximize Japan’s contribution to the attainment of U.S. objectives in Asia.” It then set forth nine objectives as drawn from NSC 125/2:

1. Preservation of the security and independence of Japan
2. Japan remaining allied to the United States
3. A prosperous Japanese economy
4. A politically stable Japan with representative government
5. A Japan capable of defense against internal subversion and external aggression
6. A Japan capable of contributing to the security of the Pacific area
7. Development of Japan’s industry as a source of supply for the free world
8. Inclusion of Japan in the Pacific area for mutual security and economic benefit
9. Obtaining Japanese membership in the United Nations

To achieve these objectives, the report enumerated many possible actions. They included not only overt actions, such as exchange of persons programs or international good-will activities, but also covert measures to discredit those Japanese who were opposed to Japan’s rearmament, or to support anti-Communist student and faculty groups, or to influence labor unions. Ultimately, all the departments and agencies involved were expected to “use every appropriate means” to achieve the objectives.¹³⁾

At the same time, the document reveals that Americans were sharply aware of the enormous difficulties they would face in Japan. Among them were “a widespread belief that U.S. has failed adequately to consider indigenous attitudes and sensibilities in the formulation and execution of U.S. policies”; the view that “the U.S. is under-developed in cultural interests

¹¹⁾ *U.S. Information Agency: First Review of Operations, August-December 1953*, 24–26; and *U.S. Information Agency: 6th Report to Congress, January 1-June 31, 1956*, 35–37.

¹²⁾ “Psychological Strategy Program for Japan,” Doc. D-27, 30 January 1953, RPSB, Box 4.

¹³⁾ *Ibid.*, 13–27.

and intellectual attainments”; the failure of Japanese intellectuals to understand “the inaccuracies and contradictions within Marxist theory” as well as “the reality of the threat of Soviet attack or subversion”; the Soviet propaganda offensive; “a natural reaction against former conquerors and occupying forces”; concern over the continued presence of U.S. troops in Japan; the strong post-war appeal of neutralism, reinforced by the “fear that alignment with the U.S. means involvement in the U.S.-Soviet antagonisms”; and “the traditional Japanese affinity for China,” which made them all the more dissatisfied with inability to trade with China.¹⁴⁾

The document, which contained lengthy discussions on Japanese attitudes, was further accompanied by another 22-page document titled “Analysis of Japanese Attitudes.”¹⁵⁾ This indicates a strong awareness on the part of the American policy makers that psychological strategies in Japan would not work without considering Japanese feelings and ideas. They especially emphasized that Americans would need to change their attitudes from those they had during the occupation. The document warned:

In attempting to persuade the Japanese individually and as a nation ... it will be necessary to resist the temptation to plead directly or exert direct and overt pressure upon them. Operators and other concerned persons now in Japan who were there in an official capacity during the Occupation period may find it especially difficult to adjust themselves to the realities of the peace-treaty situation. In their present mood the Japanese public will almost certainly frustrate attempts on our part to exert direct and obvious pressure upon them, and may, on the contrary, react so as to jeopardize our objectives.¹⁶⁾

U.S. Cultural Activities in Japan

The operations of USIS in Japan were extensive. Among them were activities at American Cultural Centers, exchange of persons programs, publications, radio programs, movies, exhibitions, and performances by American artists and athletes.¹⁷⁾

¹⁴⁾ Ibid., 6–9.

¹⁵⁾ “Analysis of Japanese Attitudes,” Appendix, PSB D-27, 30 January 1953, RPSB, Box 4.

¹⁶⁾ Ibid., 10–11.

¹⁷⁾ For the USIS activities in Japan, the following OCB documents are most useful: “Detailed Development of Major Actions Relating to Japan (NSC 5516/1): U.S. Policy Toward Japan,” 23 September 1955, RG59, Lot 62D430, Records Related to State Department Participation in the Operations Coordinating Board and National Security Council, 1953–1960, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as DS/OCB), Box 8; “Progress Report on U.S. Policy toward Japan (NSC 5516/1),” 19 October 1955, DS/OCB, Box 8; “Japanese Intellectuals,” 23 May 1956, DC/OCB, Box 8; and “Operation Plans for Japan,” 15 April 1959, DS/OCB, Box 8. The following USIS sources are also useful: “Report on USIS-Japan,” by Mark A. May, Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, June–July, 1959, USIA Historical Collection, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as “USIS-Japan 1959”); and “Inspection Report: USIA-Japan, May 20, 1961,” RG306, Inspection Reports and Related Records, 1954–62, India and Nepal through Japan, Box 5, National Archives at College Park, MD (hereafter cited as “Inspection Report 1961”). Useful Japanese materials are “Panel-D-Japan: Hajimete bēru wo nugu Amerika tainichisen

American Cultural Centers (ACC) were formerly public libraries the U.S. Occupation had operated in twenty-three cities. After the Occupation, fourteen of them became American Cultural Centers and the rest were transferred to city or prefectural governments which maintained them as Japan-American Cultural Centers, receiving only media support but no financial assistance (except in the case of Takamatsu) from the United States. While each ACC primarily served as a library, it also offered various kinds of cultural activities, such as English classes, lectures, seminars, record concerts, and screenings of movies. Americans living in the area, the military people and their families in many cases, often participated as volunteers and mingled with Japanese locals. Each Center was operated by an American director and staffed with ten to twenty Japanese employees. The director was the key person in planning and directing the activities of the Center, but Japanese employees were valuable in offering their advice as to what would be most appreciated by their fellow Japanese.¹⁸⁾

The exchange of persons program, which was begun in 1946 by the Department of the Army, was transferred in 1952 to the Department of State. From 1952 through 1960, grants were made to 2,519 Japanese to come to the United States for study, research, teaching, lecturing, observation and consultation. Grants were also made to 424 Americans to go to Japan for similar pursuits and to 109 American specialists to visit Japan and other countries in the area.¹⁹⁾ Although the Department of State formally retained the exchange program even after USIA was established so as not to let it become a mere propaganda tool, its management was left to USIS; in addition, not only USIS people but also many other Americans expected that the Japanese who observed the United States with their own eyes would obtain a true appreciation of the country and share their experiences with other Japanese on their return, thus ultimately serving the purpose of U.S. cultural diplomacy.²⁰⁾

The number of Americans coming to Japan was much smaller than the Japanese visiting the United States, but their impact was tremendous in the 1950s, when the opportunities for going abroad were very limited for the Japanese. Outstanding among the Americans whose travel was sponsored by the U.S. government was Nobel Prize laureate William Faulkner, who stayed in Japan for twenty-three days in August 1955. He attended the five-day seminar on American literature in Nagano, which fifty Japanese scholars attended. In addition, he gave a lecture, attended meetings, and responded to interviews. His activities and utterances were carried by newspapers and radio, and journals carried special feature articles. Since Faulkner had a serious drinking problem, the Embassy people made every effort to keep him sober for social occasions. When Faulkner was too drunk to show up at a luncheon meeting with the

no kōsaku no zenbō” [Panel-D-Japan: The Whole Feature of American Operations for Brainwashing Japan, Now Revealed], *Views*, November 1994: 38-54; and Shigeno Takashi, “Beikoku seifu no Nippon ni okeru kōhō katsudou ni tsuite” [On U.S. Government’s Information and Cultural Activities in Japan], *COSMICA* 14 (March 1985): 10-38.

¹⁸⁾ For the activities of the American Cultural Centers, see “USIS-Japan 1959,” 50-56, 94-98.

¹⁹⁾ “Inspection Report 1961,” 108.

²⁰⁾ “Progress Report,” 19 October 1955, 6.

press, the Cultural Affairs Officer explained that he had succumbed to the hot weather of Tokyo. But Faulkner in general was so cooperative with USIS in fulfilling his mission and the Japanese reaction was so enthusiastic that USIS conveyed its full satisfaction to Washington.²¹⁾

The USIS-Japan Press Branch undertook various sorts of publications. USIS pamphlets and booklets carrying U.S. foreign policy announcements or addresses of the U.S. government officials or background information for current events were widely distributed among Japanese Congressmen, governmental institutions, intellectuals, and the media people. USIS also delivered 1,500 copies of a “Daily Wireless Bulletin” both in English and Japanese to the media and governmental institutions.²²⁾

The USIS started two monthly publications, which were attributed to the USIS, in the fall of 1955. One was *Amerikana*, which carried translations of a variety of articles on American life and culture selected from American journals, and the other was *Beisho Dayori* [Report on American Books], a book review journal which was devoted to reviews of new American books.²³⁾ In addition, there were three periodicals unattributed to USIS. One was the translation of bi-monthly journal prepared by USIA in Washington, titled *Problems of Communism*. The USIS offered full financial support to a Japanese conservative research institute (Research Institute of Foreign Affairs for New Japan) for the publication and distribution of a bi-weekly newsletter *Sekai Shincho* [New Currents], which discussed current issues and problems of significance for United States and Japanese foreign policies. Finally, USIS provided partial financial support for a large student newspaper carrying a message of anti-Communism, published by a Japanese organization three times a month.²⁴⁾

With regard to the publication of books, most USIS projects were covert operations. USIS offered financial support to the translation of English books and also original writings by Japanese which were considered to promote the cause of the United States and reveal the fallacy of Communism.²⁵⁾

The USIS offered programs to Japanese broadcasting stations—both to the semi-governmental station called Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK) and new commercial radio stations. Japanese broadcasting stations did not have enough money to pay for their own programming in those days. Especially, commercial stations were new in Japan and business firms were not yet familiar with the system of sponsorship. It was, therefore, an excellent opportunity for

²¹⁾ Leon Picon, oral history interview, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection (CD-ROM, 2000); and Embassy/USIS-Tokyo to Department of State/USIA, report, 22 September 1955, RG59, Department of State Decimal File, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as DSD, 1955-59), Box 2240. Also, see Frederick R. Karl, *William Faulkner: American Writer, a Biography* (New York; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980), 906-20.

²²⁾ “Detailed Development of Major Actions,” 13; and “Japanese Intellectuals,” 7.

²³⁾ “Japanese Intellectuals,” 7

²⁴⁾ “Detailed Development of Major Actions,” 6, 8-10, 13; “Japanese Intellectuals,” 7, 10; “Panel D-Japan,” 49; and “USIS-Japan 1959,” 57, 105-6.

²⁵⁾ “Detailed Development of Major Actions,” 7; “Japanese Intellectuals,” 9-10.

USIS radio programs to be aired in prime time. In 1955, news programs, commentaries, special programs, drama, music, and entertainment provided by USIS and used by Japanese stations amounted to 18,300 hours. Most of them were not attributed to USIS. Japanese stations also used some of the VOA programs, which had been being broadcast to Japan since 1950 by short wave every day. Special programs covering topics such as the visits of Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru or the Crown Prince to the United States, the U.S. Congressional elections, and the World Series in particular were enthusiastically listened to by the Japanese. But as commercial sponsorship caught on, USIS programs began to be pushed out of prime-time and moved to times such as 1:00 at night or 4:00 in the morning.²⁶⁾

Television appeared in Japan in 1953. The Motion Picture Branch of USIS-Japan produced two regular programs on national TV networks: an English language program called "Living English," and "International Press Conference." The latter program consisted of interviews by well-known Japanese with well-known Americans. Actually, the Japanese part was filmed in Tokyo, the American part in the United States, and the two were smoothly put together in a finished program. However, television caught on very fast in Japan and commercial sponsorship made rapid headway; as a result, there was not much need by the Japanese to depend on USIS for furnishing materials as they had done in the radio days.²⁷⁾

The Motion Picture Branch of USIS was engaged not only in making Japanese language versions of the films shipped from Washington but also in producing their own documentary films. Some were produced cooperatively with bureaus of the Japanese Government or with local organizations; for example, *Treasures of Japan* was produced by USIS and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some USIS-made films utilized the programs sponsored by the Department of State, such as *William Faulkner's Impressions of Japan*.²⁸⁾

These films were viewed by many Japanese all over the country. The prints were distributed to all American Cultural and Japanese-American Cultural Centers. The biggest consumers of USIS films were the forty-six prefectural Audio-Visual Libraries (AVL) located in the prefectural capital cities. These libraries served a large number of social and educational groups, including schools, youth organizations, PTA's, and adult education forums. In addition to the AVLs, approximately 500 municipalities, townships, and villages had a film library. According to the estimation of the Motion Picture Branch in 1958, about fifty million Japanese (half of the total population) were reached by films from the Prefectural Libraries alone, and about sixty million through all channels.²⁹⁾

USIS also produced feature films for commercial distribution by contract with Japanese production companies. They were all unattributed to USIS. The scripts were approved by USIS and the contractor guaranteed a certain volume of distribution both in theaters and on TV.

²⁶⁾ "Detailed Development of Major Actions," 6, 13; "Japanese Intellectuals," 10; "USIS-Japan, 1959," 57, 105; and Henry Goshō, oral history interview, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection (CD-ROM, 2000).

²⁷⁾ "USIS-Japan 1959," 61; and Goshō, oral history interview.

²⁸⁾ "USIS-Japan 1959," 60, 100.

²⁹⁾ "USIS-Japan 1959," 60.

These films ranged from anti-Communist to self-defense promotion themes. Throughout the 1950s, USIS produced the following five films:

1. *Iron Bouquet* (Communist takeover of labor unions), 1953.
Production cost \$34,583; USIS subsidy \$16,667.
2. *Stormy Youth* (Communist infiltration of student groups), 1954. Production cost \$42,500; USIS subsidy \$17,500.
3. *Brothers at Odds* (Communist espionage), 1955. USIS subsidy \$16,667.
4. *Jet Wings Over the Dawn* (theme: every free nation should help defend itself), 1958.
Production cost \$222,222. USIS subsidy \$55,555.
5. *I Won't Be Liquidated* (Communist smuggling of narcotics), 1960.
USIS total subsidy \$30,000.³⁰⁾

The most successful was the film with a self-defense promotion theme titled *Jet Wings Over the Dawn*. It was shown in some 2,200 theaters and, in the estimation of USIS, was seen by fifteen million Japanese theater-goers.³¹⁾ The hero, played by the young actor Takakura Ken, realized his childhood dream of becoming a pilot by enlisting in the Self-Defense Army, but he faced steadfast opposition from his father who had lost his eldest son, a pilot, during World War II. Takakura said on the screen: "What was wrong with the Self-Defense Army? I am proud of being in the Self-Defense Army." His girlfriend encouraged him, "Become a good pilot. Your father will understand some day."³²⁾

USIS held or helped in the holding of both small and large exhibits. One of the largest was the exhibit on the peaceful uses of atomic energy sponsored by Yomiuri Newspaper Company, and co-sponsored by USIA. It opened in Tokyo in November 1955 and toured many places in Japan for a year. The exhibit of eighty USIA pictures on atomic energy drew 8,000,000 visitors in Tokyo alone. In addition, major newspapers and many periodicals featured USIA stories on the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and five books on atomic energy were published in Japanese with USIS information and photographs.³³⁾ The "Family of Man" exhibition sponsored by the Nihon Keizai Newspaper Company in the following year also traveled throughout the country and attracted about one million people.³⁴⁾

The cultural presentation program, supervised by the Department of State, started in 1955 with the average annual budget of \$2,500,000. The program, which would send artists, orchestras, jazz groups, dancers, theater companies, and athletes all over the world, had two major goals: to counter the similar cultural offensive conducted by the Soviet Union and other Communist countries and to correct the prejudice that the United States was behind European countries in artistic achievements. These cultural events were in most cases sponsored by a

³⁰⁾ "Inspection Report 1961," 84-85.

³¹⁾ "USIS-Japan 1959," 101.

³²⁾ Quoted in "Panel-D-Japan," 42 (my translation).

³³⁾ OCB, "Progress Report on U.S. Policy Toward Japan," 22 November 1955, 13, SD/OCB, Box 22.

³⁴⁾ Penelope Niven, *Steichen: A Biography* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1997), 654; and Jack Shellenberger, oral history interview, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection (CD-ROM, 2000).

local organization—often newspaper companies in Japan—but the costs were partially supported by the U.S. Department of State and arranged through the Department and USIS.³⁵⁾

The scale of the project was grandiose. During the period from 1955, when the project started, to 1960, the following events took place in Japan alone: Symphony of the Air and Martha Graham Modern Dance Group in 1955; Sylvia Marlowe (harpsichordist), Eugene Istomin (pianist), the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Gregor Piatigorsky (cellist), the Olympic Soccer Team, Tom Tow Arrows (Indian dancer, singer and lecturer), the Westminster Choir, and John Sebastian (harmonica virtuoso) in 1956; Benny Goodman Jazz Band, Eleanor Steber (singer), Richard Tucker (singer), and Vito and Lora (harpist and flutist) in 1957; the New York City Ballet, and the AAU Track Team in 1958; Jack Teagarden Sextet, the Golden Gate Quartet, and Balanche Thebom (singer) in 1959; and the Boston Symphony, the Dance Jubilee, Rudolph Serkin (pianist), and the University of Kansas production of “Brigadoon” in 1960.³⁶⁾

The most successful among these programs was probably the visit of Symphony of the Air, formerly the NBC Symphony, to Japan in May 1955, sponsored by the Mainichi Newspaper Company and NHK. The Japanese reaction was enthusiastic since it offered the first opportunity for many Japanese to listen to a live concert instead of records. The orchestra held nineteen concerts all over Japan during three weeks. All the tickets were sold out immediately. The orchestra offered the concert especially for students, and when the 2,600 tickets were about to go on sale, a long line was made on the morning of the day before ticket sales opened, with more than 5,000 people waiting in line by the time the sale began.³⁷⁾ After attending the concert at Hibiya Hall in Tokyo, Yamada Kosaku, a well-known composer and conductor, wrote: “Filled with the joy of music, I let the tears of joy flow on my cheeks.... Oh, how long every enthusiastic lover of music has waited and waited to hear the music of this evening!”³⁸⁾

Contested Views and Approaches

While the goal of U.S. cultural diplomacy in Japan was to keep Japan aligned with the United States, there were different views among Americans regarding its implementation as well as its effectiveness.

First of all, Americans working for cultural diplomacy often faced skepticism from their fellow Americans, especially career diplomats. Fitzhugh Green, who served USIA for sixteen years, recalled that in 1954 Joseph Alsop, the famous columnist, warned him against joining the

³⁵⁾ “President’s Special International Program: First Semi-Annual Report, July 1, 1956-December 31, 1956,” SD/OCB, Box 42.

³⁶⁾ “Report on the Cultural Presentation Program: July 1, 1958-June 30, 1959,” 23 September 1959, SD/OCB, Box 37; and “Inspection 1961,” 120-21.

³⁷⁾ Allison to Secretary of State, telegram, 8 April 1955, DSDF, 1955-59, Box 2239; Allison to Secretary of State, telegrams, 6 May, 13 May, 18 May, 24 May 1955, DSDF, 1955-59, Box 2240.

³⁸⁾ *Mainichi Shimbun*, 4 May 1955, evening edition (my translation).

agency, saying, “What are you thinking about? Why would you want to work with all those dreary people?”³⁹⁾ John W. Henderson, who worked for USIA from its creation to his retirement in 1967, deplored the fact that “old-line agencies of government, including the Department of State ... remain, unfortunately, skeptical of USIA *expertise*.”⁴⁰⁾

Recent scholarship on cold war culture has revealed the close cooperation between the U.S. government and the private individuals and organizations in promoting U.S. diplomacy, and this was especially the case with U.S. cultural diplomacy.⁴¹⁾ But sometimes Americans in the USIS-Japan felt that their efforts were undermined by Americans at home, especially by Hollywood. In the 1950s, when the Japanese movie industry was beginning to thrive, American movies were also popular; in 1955, for example, 441 movies were produced by Japanese movie companies, and 121 movies were imported from the United States.⁴²⁾ Americans at the Embassy were concerned with the image of America portrayed by Hollywood films. They were especially alarmed at the showing of American war movies, such as *Thirty Minutes over Tokyo*, which depicted the life and friendship of the men who bombed Tokyo.⁴³⁾ The U.S. Embassy could only ask American movie companies to exercise self-restraint, which rarely worked. When Mark A. May, the chair of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, visited Japan in 1959, he observed that American commercial films had “perhaps a more than slight balance on the minus side.”⁴⁴⁾

Sometimes different views were caused by differences in understanding Japan. For example, Max Bishop, a member of the OCB, proposed to the Director of USIA in the fall of 1955 that a magazine and a newspaper which would carry anti-Communist messages should be published in Japan to influence Japanese intellectuals. Richard Finn, Japan Desk Officer in the State Department, who had spent seven years in Japan during and after the occupation, was more sympathetic toward Americans at USIS in Japan, because he knew of their difficulties in promoting anti-Communist periodicals, such as *Problems of Communism*. He thought the vast publication world in Japan was far more complicated than that imagined by “propaganda warriors.”⁴⁵⁾

Similarly, the directors of ACC were dismayed when Pat van Delden, who had just been transferred to Japan from Germany where she was known for having started many propaganda programs, delivered to them some thousand copies of a hard core anti-Communist tract. While some center directors ignored the package, others could not. The center director in Nagasaki

³⁹⁾ Fitzhugh Green, *American Propaganda Abroad: From Benjamin Franklin to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1988), xvi, 22.

⁴⁰⁾ Henderson, ix.

⁴¹⁾ For example, see Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006), ch.7.

⁴²⁾ “Nihon eiga deta besu” [The Japanese Movie Database], <http://www.jmdb.ne.jp>; and “Japanese Intellectuals,” 23 May 1956, 10.

⁴³⁾ Robert Murphy to Secretary of State, telegram, 25 August 1952, DSDF, 1950–54, Box 2537.

⁴⁴⁾ “USIS-Japan 1959,” 102.

⁴⁵⁾ Richard Finn to Robert McClurkin, 11 October 1955, DSDF, 1955–59, Box 2239.

put the package in the back of his little station wagon at night and drove around the town, dropping ten or fifteen copies off at each street corner in the town. Walter Nichols, a supervisor of cultural centers in the Kansai area, said: "This gives you some idea of some of the difficulties of executing an ordered action of that kind when you're basically a cultural enterprise on the front end and trying to find other ways of doing hard propaganda things without jeopardizing your reputation and status."⁴⁶⁾

The making of the documentary film on the Japanese physicist Yukawa Hideki, the first Japanese Nobel Prize laureate, also revealed different views between Washington and the USIS in Tokyo. When Yukawa read the script written by Joseph Krumboltz, he did not like it for two reasons. First, the script overemphasized the power of science, for example, describing the IBM machines as if they were equal to the human brain. But a more serious problem with the script was that it described the West and the East as representing antithetical values. In the script Yukawa represented the progress of the West while his wife represented the tradition of the East, and as a result, their son was at a loss between the two conflicting values, although he ultimately found his solution in combining the two. Yukawa pointed out that no thoughtful person would ever characterize these two cultures in such a simplistic manner: there were factors of progress and tradition both in Japan and in the United States. In addition, he found his wife much more modern and progressive than he was himself in many ways. Americans of the USIS in Tokyo entirely agreed with him. Saxon Bradford, Public Affairs Officer in USIS, protested strongly to the Department of State, insisting that the film, unless undergoing a radical modification, should not be shown either in Japan or abroad.⁴⁷⁾

The film was somewhat modified. Basically Mr. Yukawa still represented progress, being active in the research of atomic physics, and Mrs. Yukawa, performing Japanese dance and the tea ceremony, was presented as the symbol of the old tradition of Japan. At the same time, the film showed Mr. Yukawa wearing a Japanese kimono and writing poems in the Japanese style, while Mrs. Yukawa not only wore Western clothes daily but also appreciated the use of modern domestic appliances. According to the USIA record, *The Story of Yukawa* was one of the most popular films shown in Japan. It was also one of the three Agency films selected for showing at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1955.⁴⁸⁾

Effectiveness of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy

The OCB report of 1956 evaluated the effectiveness of U.S. cultural programs in Japan as follows:

U.S. programs and contacts, official and private, reach a vast number of Japanese in some form. It is probable that virtually all intellectuals are reached at least to a limited degree. Nevertheless the effect upon a large majority of the intellectuals, if their attitudes are the

⁴⁶⁾ Walter Nichols, oral history interview, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection (CD-ROM, 2000).

⁴⁷⁾ Michael Lombardi to Geroge J. Gercke, memorandum, 3 August 1953, copy; Saxton Bradford to USIA, 20 August 1953, DSD, 1950-54, Box 2537.

⁴⁸⁾ *U.S. Information Agency: 5th Report to Congress, July 1-December 31, 1956*, 11.

criteria, has not been to convert them to an attitude of sympathy with U.S. actions, even though they may acquire enhanced appreciation of American culture and purposes.⁴⁹⁾

Generally, this observation seems to be valid. In the 1950s many of the Japanese intellectuals, university professors and students, and leaders and members of labor unions were sympathetic to the Marxist view of the world. Not only they but also many ordinary Japanese considered the presence of U.S. bases and the U.S. pressure on Japanese rearmament contradictory to their Constitution, which they welcomed even though it had actually been forced upon them during the occupation. At the same time, it cannot be denied that U.S. cultural diplomacy brought the United States and U.S. culture closer to many Japanese.

One major cause for the large impact the U.S. cultural programs had on Japanese was that Japan was very poor in the 1950s. For the year 1958, for example, the per capita income in Japan was still \$226. Comparable figures for other countries were: Brazil \$338; West Germany \$695; France \$763; England \$1,147; and the United States \$2,034.⁵⁰⁾ Although American culture reached the Japanese through commercial channels as well, the scale of the cultural activities conducted by the U.S. government was enormous. If the Los Angeles Philharmonic concerts had been sponsored by a private Japanese organization alone, it would have been impossible to hold so many concerts in so many places: the orchestra gave a concert in Tokyo, Yokohama, Shizuoka, Osaka, Hiroshima, Kokura, Fukuoka, Kyoto, and Nagoya, with a final appearance again in Tokyo. Eugene Istomin too performed in Tokyo, Shizuoka, Osaka, Hiroshima, Ube, Takarazuka, Nagoya, Niigata, Sendai, and Sapporo. When the program sent John Sebastian, a famous harmonica player, to the city of Takamatsu, the schools in the area brought out all their pupils to hear him.⁵¹⁾ The policy of the cultural presentation program was to send the artists not only to big cities but also to smaller cities as well where commercial sponsors would not think of staging concerts.

Moreover, the Japanese, who had been isolated from the outside world during a decade of war and occupation, were eager to know the world. The books and other materials made available in the ACC, the many USIA documentary films shown all over Japan, and the exchange programs, among other activities, responded to the Japanese thirst for knowledge and information. USIA people assigned to various places in Japan also made every effort to get out and meet and talk to many local Japanese leaders as well as ordinary Japanese. Harry Haven Kendall, Provincial Public Affairs Officer in the Shikoku area, traveled all over the area, sometimes with his wife and always with his interpreter, meeting with a group of people in a town hall, sipping Japanese tea, warming hands over burning charcoal in *hibachi*, and talking about things American and things Japanese. He found Japanese everywhere eager to know a great deal about the United States. Kendall believed that his small-scale Japan-American

⁴⁹⁾ "Japanese Intellectuals," 11.

⁵⁰⁾ "USIS-Japan 1959," 4.

⁵¹⁾ "7th Quarterly Report: President's Emergency Fund for Participation in International Affairs, January 1-March 31, 1956," SD/OCB, Box 42; Harry Haven Kendall, oral history interview, Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection (CD-ROM, 2000).

forums were “one of our most valuable experiences while we were in Shikoku.” Such grassroots encounters between Americans and Japanese were not so grandiose or newsworthy as the performance of the orchestra but they were often more substantial and sometimes their impact more lasting. Kendall continued to receive a Christmas card for more than thirty years from a Japanese whom he had helped obtain beet seeds from American seed houses.⁵²⁾

We cannot ascertain exactly to what degree U.S. cultural diplomacy in the 1950s contributed to drawing Japanese closer to the United States and away from the Soviet Union in the 1960s. But we can say that American cultural diplomacy, conducted on an unprecedentedly large scale in the 1950s, brought Americans and their culture closer to Japanese of all walks of life in a much less authoritarian manner than the Occupation had done, and thus contributed to increasing the Japanese people’s sense of affinity for Americans and American culture. It also needs to be said, however, that cultural diplomacy cannot take the place of hard diplomacy. To appreciate American culture and to criticize U.S. foreign policy could and still can coexist.

⁵²⁾ Kendall, oral history interview.