

ENHANCING AMERICAN INFLUENCE ABROAD:
INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

A Statement of the
International Educational Exchange Liaison Group
May 1981

The following statement on the critical importance of international educational exchange to the security and competence of the United States in world affairs has been prepared by the chief executive officers of an ad hoc coalition of major U.S. exchange organizations who form the INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE LIAISON GROUP.

The International Educational Exchange Liaison Group finds that:

- * international educational exchange programs are of critical importance to the security and competence of the United States in world affairs,
- * support of such programs evidences a national willingness to invest in the future,
- * these programs encourage a clearer view of America and its ideals in the minds of men and women throughout the world,
- * the official U.S. Government effort to influence the perceptions of America in other nations is centered in the International Communication Agency,
- * the funding for these programs of international educational exchange has been in severe decline for the past decade,
- * the Soviets are now spending many times the U.S. investment in this area annually,
- * the U.S. Government enjoys the significant multiplier effect of the private sector of its society in support of these goals, unlike the Soviet Union,
- * in an age of complex global negotiations, change, instant communications and nuclear confrontation, America needs every means available to it to build a secure future.

In view of these findings, the International Educational Exchange Liaison Group believes that significantly increased appropriations must be urged for these two critical federal programs:

- * The International Communication Agency, especially the educational and cultural affairs sector, and,
- * The training program of the Agency for International Development which prepares foreign technicians, managers and educators.

Furthermore those other federally supported programs containing important exchange and citizen education elements should be encouraged and sustained with the objective of creating the conditions of international understanding on which peace ultimately depends.

A National Instrument for Peace and Security

Few Americans today are untouched by events beyond the official borders of the United States. While from its birth this nation has played increasingly important roles in international commerce and politics, the degree to which America's destiny is now being shaped by external forces has never been greater. Consequently, Americans want to improve U.S. political and economic effectiveness abroad and enhance their national security.

One of the most cost-effective, proven instruments of such influence--international educational exchanges--directly serves America's national interests, and serves them well. To realize the vision of an America respected in the world, the new Administration could take no more practical, substantive step than to reverse the serious decline in recent years in federal support for international educational exchanges. Support of these programs symbolizes a national willingness to reinvest in the future. In a world of threatening forces and issues, those in government service, business, the news media as well as the general citizenry urgently need direct and personal international contacts and competencies possessed by far too few Americans.

The capacity of Americans to understand events in the world, to work and negotiate with people from other cultures and to achieve the necessary professional and job skills relevant to foreign trade and commerce depends largely on appropriate education and experience. Today one in six Americans has a job thanks to international trade, and one of three acres produces for export. Given the twin challenges of reindustrialization and getting America back to work, knowledge about and access to international markets now constitute a major national opportunity, if not imperative. Where will business and industry recruit the cosmopolitan managers its international operations require if not from among those Americans and foreign nationals educated for their managerial tasks through study and experience abroad?

The members of the International Educational Exchange Liaison Group believe all the weapons in our arsenal will be insufficient if we continue to underinvest in the non-military aspects of our defense--political, economic, educational and cultural--which correct distorted images of America in the minds of men and women throughout much of the world. We will assure our place in a more manageable, more stable world through the exchange of information, knowledge and know-how and, ultimately, help develop common social, economic and cultural aspirations. With such a commitment, we can shape rather than merely respond to international events. Of the resources employed in the pursuit of U.S. foreign policy objectives, few have been as quietly effective as the educational and cultural affairs components of American diplomacy.

The International Communication Agency: A Second Line of Defense

The major official U.S. Government efforts to influence the perception of America in other nations are centered in the International Communication Agency (USICA), an agency created in 1978 by combining the U.S. Information Agency and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the State Department. USICA's programs vary widely, ranging from the short-term, quick response capability of Voice of America broadcasts to the longer-term investment in educating the successor generations of other nations. The Fulbright Program, a major vehicle for the exchange of students, professors and researchers between the United States

and the rest of the world, has, since 1946, sent 45,000 Americans to foreign countries and brought 85,000 foreign students, teachers and scholars to the United States.

A recent international crisis offers an example of the utility of federal support for exchanges. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Washington sought the guidance of those with first-hand knowledge of the area. Almost without exception the Americans with any direct experience in South Middle Asia were alumni of federally funded exchange programs. Yet the numbers of exchanges which build such expertise have been in decline for more than a decade so that, in real terms, the U.S. exchange program today is operating at only 60 percent of the 1965 level. Other federal programs containing substantial educational exchange components, have also declined in recent years in relation to growing needs. Among these are the international education research and exchanges activities of the Department of Education, the Peace Corps, the Agency for International Development, the National Science Foundation and the National Endowments.

Cultural and informational programs of USICA total less than 0.05 percent of the U.S. federal budget. Should we really be surprised, then, when other nations fail to get the essential message about the U.S. purpose and posture? As Americans, we seem persistently unwilling to foot the bill for international understanding. Procter and Gamble's annual advertising budget is larger than USICA's information activities and yet we somehow expect the Agency to achieve results on a worldwide scale in "telling America's story" and enlightening our citizens at home through scholarly and cultural visits.

If the erosion of U.S. influence and power internationally is serious enough to necessitate a \$33 billion increase in defense spending, is not an equally substantial increased investment called for to provide an American "arsenal of ideas"?

United States: Uncompetitive in Exchanges

A 1979 survey of international communication, cultural and educational programs of the United States and six other countries, by the General Accounting Office, concluded: "by comparison with allies and adversaries, the U.S. Government investment in this field is low. In absolute terms, the United States is outspent by France and the Soviet Union and is nearly equalled by West Germany... In proportion to GNP, the comparison becomes even more striking." Both our allies and our adversaries seem fully mindful of the political and economic advantages that accrue when Third World leaders are educated in their countries, are trained to utilize their technologies, and are participants in their social, political and cultural life. France and the Federal Republic of Germany commit 1 percent of their national budgets to educational, cultural and informational activities; the U.S. Government less than 0.1 percent. Helmut Schmidt has defined politics, commerce and cultural diplomacy as the "three pillars" of German policy. The Government of France asserts that "cultural relations are as important as politics and trade and perhaps more important" to key French interests. Japan and Britain officially sponsor more students to go abroad on grants than does the U.S., while Britain also brings in more foreign grantees than the U.S.

Soviet information/cultural expenditures are estimated to total some \$2 billion annually--at least four times U.S. investments in this area overall. Cuban teachers and advisers continue to inundate selected Third World nations, yet in 1977 one-third fewer opportunities were granted to young Africans to pursue

their studies in the United States than were available to them in 1968. We sent only seven doctoral candidates to Africa last year, three to Nigeria. In that year, only 1,800 Africans studied in the United States under U.S. sponsorship. The Soviet figure was 24,000. In Latin America, the U.S.S.R. offered 4,650 study and training exchanges in 1978 while the United States Government offered far fewer than one-tenth that number in a hemisphere so close, so troubled, and so important to our socio-economic goals and strategic thinking.

Clearly, we are not offering scholarships to poor and middle class students on a scale even marginally comparable to that of the Soviet Bloc. As a 1977 report of the House Committee on International Relations concluded: "Significantly, in Soviet-Third World cultural relations the Soviet leadership appears to have placed its greatest hopes for ultimate success in the academic exchange programs."

American ambassadors continue to oppose the nearly 50 percent decline over the past decade in invitations to emerging world leaders and affirm the importance of the international visitor program to U.S. foreign relations. These as well as other exchanges assure that we have a "second line of defense," that despite the freezes and thaws of official foreign policy, America can communicate with others and serve its own and international interests effectively.

Federal Funding as a Catalyst for the Private Sector

The monies needed to rebuild the educational and cultural exchange programs of the U.S. Government are not excessive, nor are advocates unmindful of the need to reduce costs, streamline programs and assure increased counterpart funds. In fact, federally sponsored exchanges stimulate and channel enormous private sector and foreign contributions in the overall service of America's foreign policy. There is a significant "multiplier effect" as revealed by the following examples chosen from a much larger sample:

- * The International Research and Exchanges Board which administers U.S.-U.S.S.R. and Eastern Bloc exchanges received 39 percent of its support from the private sector in 1979-80 in support of over 600 months of exchangee participation. Similarly, another regionally specific organization, AMIDEAST, generated 28 percent of its support from non-U.S. government sources. AMIDEAST Cairo activities are sponsored by Mrs. Jihan Sadat and in Jordan the organization administers King Hussein's Royal Palace Scholarships for U.S. study.
- * The Institute of International Education, which has managed over 225,000 exchanges since 1919, assisted close to 6,700 exchanges in 1980 through over 200 programs sponsored by 125 governments, foundations, corporations, universities, binational agencies and organizations. An additional 2,000 foreign leaders and specialists were also assisted by IIE regional offices in Denver and Houston in their capacity as international host agencies. Less than one-fourth of the Institute's funds come from USICA.
- * The Latin American Scholarship Program of American Universities (LASPAU) has trained over 2,500 Latin American and Caribbean professors in U.S. graduate programs since 1966. Roughly half the cost of these exchanges has been covered from non-U.S. government sources.

- * The exchange activities of the Experiment in International Living, which include international language and technical studies in addition to well known homestay programs, touched the lives of nearly a million people in 40 nations in 1980. It was able through modest ICA support to launch significant new cooperative ventures with the General Federation of Women's Clubs, United Nations Association, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, and Boy Scouts of America involving hundreds of thousands of dollars of contributed voluntary time and resources.
- * More than three decades ago, in the absence of any national procedure for admitting, advising and assisting foreign students coming to the United States, university faculty and administrators began to band together voluntarily to develop professional know how in this new field. Today 4,000 academic institutional and individual professionals serving foreign students are members of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs.
- * The Prime Minister of Japan announced in May of 1981 a commitment to Youth For Understanding for \$250,000 per year in scholarships for 100 U.S. high school students selected annually under the sponsorship of U.S. Senators for summer homestays in Japan. The Japanese government contribution to Youth For Understanding (which exchanges 7,000 students annually between the U.S. and 25 other countries) is about twice as large as the U.S. government contribution through USICA.
- * The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) and its member universities and organizations send more than 5,000 students to study abroad each year, with more than 90 percent of the funding from other than federal sources. Minimal federal assistance would enable the U.S. to increase these basic programs tenfold.
- * The African-American Institute has brought over 1,600 African students to the United States since 1963 for master's and doctoral programs under the African Graduate Fellowship Program (AFGRAD). This program exemplifies the partnership aspect of international educational exchange as approximately one-third of the cost of this program has been met by the African governments and American universities which provide round-trip transportation and tuition awards, respectively, to the AFGRAD fellows.

Despite this heavy private sector and foreign support (approaching \$100 million), more generous government funding is essential to assure:

- * that the most essential strategic and scholarly exchanges are supported;
- * that a national standard for the conduct of exchanges is set;
- * that national coordination and leadership is provided for program planning and development;
- * that the level of exchanges increases in line with the national interest.

Conclusion: Exporting American Ideas

The erosion of government support for exchange opportunities and our inability to build upon earlier long-standing and effective investments in exchanges is decidedly not in the national interest of the United States. The neglect of

exchanges reinforces the view abroad that America wants to obtain the natural resources of others and consume them with abandon, without sharing one of its own natural resources--its educational system--with other peoples eager to learn and to improve the lot of their often beleaguered countries. In an age of complex global negotiations, instant communication and nuclear confrontation, America needs every means available to it to build a secure future. USICA's programs and related international educational efforts have never been more vital to the national interest, in assuring "brainpower" as well as firepower. These programs represent vital instrumentalities with which to create a world more amenable to American values and national security.

Concretely, the International Educational Exchange Liaison Group urges significantly increased appropriation for these critical federal programs:

- * The International Communication Agency, especially the educational and cultural affairs sector.
- * The training program of the Agency for International Development which prepares foreign technicians, managers and educators.

In addition other federally supported programs contain important exchange and citizen education elements: Title VI of the Higher Education Act administered by the Department of Education and various international programs of the National Science Foundation and the Arts and Humanities Endowment. These programs should be sustained so that they assist and encourage private sector efforts. The ultimate objective of U.S. policies in the world--military, economic, cultural and political--are increased freedom, security and peace. Well conceived, funded and conducted educational and cultural exchanges will not assure these goals, but they can do much to create the conditions of understanding on which they depend. Exchanges reduce miscalculations by others as to our purposes and improve the accuracy of U.S. perceptions of reality abroad.

By increasing its modest investment in educational and cultural exchange, the U.S. can reverse the decline of American influence abroad and extend American competence in world affairs. We must invest our energies, talents and resources to assure a level of influence and measure of respect commensurate with our actual power. This is the path of responsibility as well as prudence. Americans have always met such a challenge.

The International Educational Exchange Liaison Group hopes this statement will be useful to those who set government policy and programs in international affairs, the media, the higher education community and to the increasing number of Americans concerned with strengthening the effectiveness of the United States internationally.

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