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Area Studies: An Outline of Humanities Concern

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Area studies  
Dec. 3, 1946

Intellectual and practical experience of the last few years makes clearer than ever before what sort of men are needed to deal with present national and international problems. First, of course, men with a sound training in the analytical techniques of one or more of the humanistic and social science disciplines. Second, men who have learned to apply these techniques to the concrete human problems in specific situations in space and time. To do so they must both have a factual knowledge that is both deep and broad of the society under consideration and be alive to the need for interrelated application of all pertinent disciplines. This is area study and is applicable most easily to the area we know best - the one in which we live. Third, however, men are needed who have learned the perspective which comes only from study of an area other than one's own. The minimum requirement is, therefore, that we have men thoroughly cognizant of the methods and values of an analytic technique and with a broad understanding of two cultures - his own and one other. On this foundation can be built either constructive citizenship or advanced training as an expert in either subject or area.

For this purpose isolated courses, either in American or foreign areas, are inadequate. The student who takes only one or two courses on a given area is too likely to receive training only in superficiality. This is the well-grounded cause of much of the current criticism of area studies. For area studies to make their necessary contribution to the general education of humanists and social scientists something more nearly approaching four years of attention to the areas selected is required.

At present this is seldom achieved on one area, let alone two. It can be achieved for two areas, and this without sacrifice of a subject major and of a reasonable opportunity for electives in natural science and the creative arts. But this achievement will be possible only by careful institutional planning and major curriculum revision.

It would be possible, for example, to require that the undergraduate spend one-fifth of his time throughout his four years on a discipline "major," one-fifth on studies of the American region in which his college is located, and one-fifth on studies of a specified foreign culture - say that of contemporary France. Two-fifths of his time would still be available for elective courses in the other humanistic and social disciplines, in natural sciences, and in the creative arts. Such a program need not lead to the neglect of the disciplines now practised but would require thorough revision of all course offerings and shifts either in staff interests or in staff itself.

Whether this particular formula is valid or not, it is reasonably clear that area studies, to be effective must be more intensive than heretofore, that major library collections must be developed, and that teams of scholars rather than individual appointments are required. While each institution should develop a program of studies on its own local region it



need not include more than one foreign region to achieve a logical teaching program either at the undergraduate or the graduate level. Since the purpose of area studies is to provide practical application, inter-disciplinary integration, and perspective, full representation of the humanistic and social science disciplines is desirable. But every extension of offerings beyond one domestic and one foreign area is likely to lead to loss of focus in both faculty and student attention. Each such extension will also increase institutional cost by a large factor. The success of an area program is therefore likely to be dependent on the firmness and clarity of the institution's program for specialization.

Specialization at each university or college is, of course, consistent with wide variation in the areas chosen by different institutions. In fact world coverage by strong centers of study is more likely to be achieved if specialization becomes respectable and the smaller institutions can hope to find in specialization on unusual areas opportunities for national standing which they could not achieve on one of the areas already preempted by several wealthier institutions.

The above ideas have been developed in an American context but are also generally applicable to other countries if certain adjustments are made for differences in size, academic organization and the present status of area studies.

The purposes of Rockefeller Foundation assistance should be the establishment of local and foreign regional or area studies as an integrated part of the general education of students in the social sciences and the humanities and the related development of strong centers of graduate research. This can best be done by support of a few pioneer programs in both colleges and universities. The programs supported should so far as possible be varied as to both location and area covered. Priority should be given a) to institutions which have arrived at clear definitions of area specialization which take into account their own resources and related offerings at other institutions and b) to those phases of programs which increase the degree of integration in facilities and curriculum.

The Rockefeller Foundation should, of course, give particularly careful attention to the further development of programs which it has previously assisted - eg. Russian studies at Columbia and Stanford, Far Eastern studies at the University of Washington, Near Eastern studies at Princeton, and American regional studies at Wisconsin. It need not, however, try to define now just what institutions it will assist. The program must be flexible both because we want to be free to encourage initiative in the direction desired wherever it appears in college and university administration and because we want each program to become self-supporting or find other sources of aid as rapidly as possible. Since the vision of the Rockefeller Foundation is world-wide, attention should be turned as rapidly as possible to the concurrent development of area programs abroad and to the international exchange which that will make possible. Humanities support already granted to the center for Latin American culture in Mexico City and to Far Eastern studies at Leyden and Stockholm are steps in this direction.



## Discussion by Area

### U. S. S. R.

Two programs have recently been given major support: Columbia and Stanford. The Russian Institute at Columbia is probably the best-planned area program in the country and deserves continued support. It would, perhaps, be in a stronger position for long-run self-support if it were related to a program for general education such as suggested above. Stanford badly needs integration between the Hoover Library and University programs and has as yet failed to define a program of specialization. Several more major centers of research and teaching (preferably more strongly based on an undergraduate program) are needed but the shortage of competent staff will delay their development several years. For the time being, aside from Columbia and Stanford, it seems important for the Rockefeller Foundation to emphasize training at the post-doctoral level to develop a few more men of the calibre of the Columbia staff. Assistance to Slavic studies in England and Western Europe, particularly through fellowships for study at American centers is in order. Several such fellowships have already been granted.

East Europe (Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey).

At present the strongest development of work on this complex is at Columbia but there is also reason to favor development of such studies outside the shadow of a major Russian center. The proposed humanities grant to Indiana for Finnish and Hungarian studies is conceived of as a step in this direction. It would be possible to staff one good center of East European studies in the near future. (Robert Wolf, humanities post-war fellow, would be a key man).

Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland)

An area program is needed but, in view of Carnegie Corporation expression of interest in development, perhaps at Minnesota or Wisconsin, Humanities at Rockefeller Foundation should not take active interest now. The possibility of integration of other humanities programs - eg. Northwest regional studies at Minnesota - should not be forgotten.

West Europe (Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Great Britain, Ireland).

We do not need more courses on these traditional areas but we do urgently need a more general and contemporaneous approach to them. We should be ready to encourage a pioneer effort at either the university or the college level for any one of them. Present action should be limited to general