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THE FOUNDATION VERSUS JAPAN

Excerpt from

Confidential Report for Trustees

October, 1937

STAFF CONFERENCE

Friday, December 3, 1937

Present: RBF, TBA, AG, DHS, JM, WW, ARM, SHW, WWB, AJW, RJH, NST.

RBF Reports on Trustee executive session under the following headings:
(Dec. 1, 1937)

Lifting of ban on capitalization of maintenance grants. (Suggests
that before April meeting each division might bring in two or
three items for consideration)

Policy towards totalitarian states - in agreement with RBF's state-
ment in bulletin. (attached)

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The deliberate destruction of Nankai University in Tientsin by Japanese airplanes raises sharply the question of the Foundation's future relations with countries whose political and social policies seem to clash with those widely accepted in this country. The Foundation over fifteen years contributed roughly \$200,000 towards Nankai University. In 1925 we built and equipped the science building there. In the last two years Nankai has become one of the important centers in the Foundation's program for rural reconstruction in China. It is an ironical coincidence that on the very day the Japanese airplanes destroyed Nankai, the Treasurer's office of the Foundation wrote a check for \$74,000 toward our pledge of \$1,000,000 for the new Public Health Institute in Tokyo.

The Foundation has an unbroken and enviable record in relation to the complete fulfillment of its pledges, and there will doubtless be no question in the minds of the Trustees as to the \$475,000 still payable on the Tokyo public health project. The problem which faces us has to do with future relationships. Has Japan written herself out of the orbit of our interests? Should we take the position that our contacts with Japan, even in such matters as fellowships, for example, must definitely be ended?

The same question is presented by Germany. Here the destruction of values which the Foundation has carefully created and fostered has occurred from within rather than from without. The Foundation and the International Education Board have invested over \$4,000,000 in Germany. For example, through a gift of \$357,000 by the International Education Board, there was

built up at Göttingen what was probably the greatest world center for mathematics. This center has been practically destroyed by the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazi regime. Similarly in Munich, the Psychiatric Laboratory to which the Foundation contributed \$380,000 has been distorted, to some slight extent at least, in an effort by the Nazi government to use the facilities for Aryan propaganda. It is impossible to estimate what part of our \$4,000,000 investment in Germany is still objectively and productively employed. It is perhaps true that on the whole the gains have balanced the losses. Our question, however, has to do with the future. What relationships, if any, should the Foundation maintain with German scholarship?

The same question might be asked in relation to Italy and Russia. In neither country is there an opportunity for objective research in the social sciences. In both countries, as in Germany, the attempt by the governments to impose a uniform ideology has destroyed the possibility, in a number of related fields, of disinterested scholarship.

The record of the Foundation, in the last few years, in dealing with Germany, Italy and Russia, may throw some light on our immediate problem in regard to Japan. The main criterion appears to have been simply this: Where the Foundation has found too many obstacles in the way, it has curtailed its work. There has been relatively little support given in the totalitarian countries, for the excellent reason that under existing conditions projects could not qualify on scientific grounds for Foundation assistance. In other words, the Foundation has not ruled Germany, Italy or Russia out of the picture; by making objective scholarship impossible in many fields they have ruled themselves out.

That the Foundation has been consistent in this position is shown by the fact that we have not hesitated to cooperate in the support of scientific work where such work was free from political control or coloration. In 1921 the Foundation began supplying funds to Russian scientists for the purchase of outside scientific literature. This cooperation still continues. For a number of years, the Foundation awarded medical fellowships to Russians for study abroad. This program has now been interrupted by the reluctance of the Russians to recommend further fellows for foreign study.

In Italy the Foundation, particularly in public health, has had a long record of cooperation, much of it under the Fascist regime. In 1933 we appropriated \$939,500 for an Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Rome. The building was recently completed and is now functioning.

In Germany our grants have fallen off sharply in recent years. In 1936 only one German fellowship was given in the natural sciences, one in the social sciences, and four in the medical sciences. Grants-in-aid show a similar decline. In the three-year period from 1934 to 1937, except for two small appropriations in psychiatry, the Foundation made no contributions for work in Germany. On the other hand, during this same period fellowships were given to scholars in a large number of countries who desired to carry on their research in Germany. There has been a declining number, however, in this classification.

In other words, in the relation of the Foundation to the totalitarian states, scientific considerations alone have thus far provided the governing principle. We have declined to make appropriations not because of our disapproval of the totalitarian philosophy, but because that philosophy makes

impossible the kind of scientific research that we want to support. There is a sense, therefore, in which the question answers itself - or at least has answered itself up to the present moment. It is an opportunistic answer. We do not say that we will have no relations with countries whose governmental acts we condemn. Rather, we find ourselves faced with a situation where, for the moment at least, in a number of countries, objective research has limited possibilities.

There is perhaps another angle to which attention should be given. To what extent does a contribution by the Foundation imply an endorsement of an existing political regime? To use a concrete example, does our gift in 1933 of nearly a million dollars to build the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in Rome mean to the world that we are in sympathy with Mussolini's government? The answer to this question is not easy. Special circumstances at the moment might have to be considered. It is certainly true that we postponed the announcement of our gift of \$1,000,000 for the School of Hygiene at Tokyo because shortly after we had taken action the Japanese government embarked on its Manchurian adventure. By and large, however, the reputation of the Foundation for scientific objectivity and detachment is so well established that unless our contribution were made at a glaringly inopportune moment there would be little danger of our being charged, in responsible quarters at least, with political bias. There is always the chance, of course, that a regime like the present German government, for example, might exploit a contribution made by the Foundation to German scholarship as an endorsement of itself; or that a Mussolini might parade a School of Public Health as a product of Fascism. But in the world of scholarship,

and among those people whose judgment of our work really counts, such pretensions would carry no weight. If the present scientific criteria of the Foundation are maintained, and if we approach opportunities in the danger zones represented by the totalitarian states with caution and perhaps with a degree of scepticism, while our motives may occasionally be misunderstood, there would seem to be little danger of our going seriously astray.

It is perhaps well to emphasize again that throughout the world the Foundation has earned for itself a reputation for disinterestedness and impartiality that is unique. It is universally respected and trusted. Our work has had no relationship to flags or boundary lines or forms of government. The Foundation has worked in many countries whose governments have won wide condemnation. Following the Great War, one of our first acts was to initiate a program in aid of the distressed scholars of Germany. At a time when the hatreds of the war were still at white heat we were assisting medicine in Vienna. We have been deeply interested for many years in the problem of malaria in Italy. Whether Mussolini or somebody else was in power has had no relevance or relationship to our aim. Last June we provided funds for a museum to house the important finds of the Agora excavation in Athens. The fact that Greece was under a brutal dictatorship was immaterial. In spite of the deterioration of her institutes and universities, Germany still leads the world in organic chemistry, for example, and in other branches of the physical and medical sciences. Whether the Nazi regime or some other regime is in power would, it would seem, have no bearing on our desire to promote scientific work in these fields. In spite of her militaristic government, the art and literature of Japan still present a unique opportunity for humanistic study.

Around the world our aim has been to widen the area of human knowledge by the application of scientific standards, and we have tried to keep the level of our work above the noise and quarreling. Indeed, here in the United States, the Trustees have unquestioningly voted funds for the objective study of governmental projects concerning which many of them have doubtless had grave doubts.

It is this detachment, this reputation for impartiality, which has given the Foundation the standing it now enjoys. In Europe they frequently speak of our organization as a "cohesive, stabilizing influence". What they mean is that in an era of conflict and chaos our work is being maintained on a plane where there are no national or sectarian lines. The activities in which the Foundation is engaged represent a new principle of unity in the world: the single aim of science in the discovery of truth, and the common language of scholarship as truth is applied to the welfare of mankind.

These observations represent an attempt to interpret the past policy of the Foundation and to forecast that policy in relation to the future. The Trustees may wish to discuss this matter at the annual meeting in December.