

6/20/41

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Modern Languages

It was, on motion,
RESOLVED that the sum of Fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), or as
RF 41070 much thereof as may be necessary, be, and it hereby is,
appropriated in the discretion of the officers to the
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES, or to another
equally responsible institution to be named by the offi-
cers, for DEVELOPING PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES IN TEACHING
^{Oriental} MODERN LANGUAGES in institutions of the United States
during the three-year period ending approximately June 30,
1944.

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The following were the considerations presented:

Humanities

Previous Interest: For ten years the Foundation has assisted the American Council of Learned Societies, the Institute of Pacific Relations, and various American institutions in developing personnel for teaching and research in Russian, Chinese, and Japanese.

General Description: Prior to the present war most of the important European countries maintained national schools for the study of living Oriental languages and cultures. Principal among them stood the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, the Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris, and the Etnukidze Institute of Oriental Languages in Leningrad. Similar schools existed in Prague, Warsaw, Rome, Leiden, and other cities. These institutions combined the practical teaching of the languages and civilizations of the Orient to diplomats, business men, and scholars with the development of the highest type of specialized study of the cultures themselves.

Many have long wished that a similar institution might develop in America - presumably in Washington; but for the most part, the Orient has seemed to Americans remote, and the study of its languages and civilizations not of immediate concern. The present emergency, however, has made the situation acute. We must at once deal with problems in Japan, Singapore, and Dakar. The armed services and civil agencies of the Government, for instance, are now scouring the country for people trained in Japanese language - with only modest success. That they are having any success whatever is due almost entirely to the activities aided heretofore by the Foundation. Most American interest has been centered in China and Japan.

Eventually, a school of modern Oriental and African languages and civilizations will be needed to aid departments of the Government in their development of communications and intelligence services, as well as to advance knowledge through scholarship. Pending the development of such a school and assumption of national responsibility for it, the need is for some nuclear organization to use available facilities effectively to add to these wherever opportunity offers, and to lay a foundation of experience for later development on a more appropriate scale. Such an organization should:

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1. Provide instruction at institutions of learning in or near Washington, under such conditions as can be arranged, in the languages and civilizations of the Orient, particularly of Siam, Korea, Indo-China, Malaysia, Burma, and other areas not treated at all in American universities and colleges;
2. Survey and make immediately available the facilities for study and research in these fields in and about Washington, and improve these facilities so far as possible;
3. Carry out such projects in the field as may be selected for prompt execution; and
4. Supply agencies of Government with such help in translation, bibliographies, information, etc., as is practicable.

In ordinary times it would be impossible to staff even such a modest organization here. We are fortunate now, however, in having among the European emigre scholars a few who could be used. In addition, some help could be secured from the London School of Oriental Studies. A nucleus thus gathered could provide emergency services and train a few younger Americans to carry on the work when the emergency period has passed.

The organization should concern itself in the first instance with the study of the languages as they are currently spoken, heard, and read in the Far East, the Near East, and in Africa. However, possession of a language as a tool means little unless accompanied by a knowledge of the civilization which that language expresses. For example, control of an Oriental language without control of its context is virtually meaningless. The implementation of the study of Oriental languages and civilizations - not only in English but in all West European languages combined - is exceedingly incomplete. New instruments - primers, grammars, dictionaries, editions of texts, guides, and manuals are needed along with more investigation and experiment in the methods of intensive teaching of languages. Word-counts, vocabularies, glossaries of technical terms (military, naval, aeronautical, for example), are now essential. Also required are quantities of speech-recordings and all the helps that modern developments in the techniques of communication provide.

An organization to enter upon the kind of development suggested should have a small administrative center, three or four scholars of professional status, and a small board of persons whose interests and

posts have made them realize the problem. G. Howland Shaw, Assistant Secretary of State, Stanley K. Hornbeck, Political Advisor to the Secretary of State, Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress, and numerous officials in the FBI, the FCC, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, have been at one time or other parties to consultation with the Executive Officers of the American Council of Learned Societies with respect to developments of the character proposed.

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Finances: The major item of expense is now believed to be stipends for four professors in the salary range of \$4,500 per year, provision for a part-time administrative secretary, stenographic and clerical help, office expenses, travel, tentative and preliminary publication or printing, and fellowship help to younger Americans. Three years seems the shortest useful period of support.

Future Implications: Before the end of the period the officers would prepare recommendations for continuance of similar work wherever it appears necessary to sustain activities not then assumed by government or institutions.
