

CHAPTER V

A CRITICAL COMMITMENT

Cultural cooperation is so directly a national interest that it should furnish the fundamental motivating principle in governmental foreign service, replacing or reordering all lesser motives. It should become the controlling principle in ... the establishment of new standards of service and fresh criteria of effectiveness.

P. Braisted

Cultural Cooperation: Keynote of the Coming Age

The first four chapters of this book were largely descriptive, designed to describe the main features of Canada's evolving cultural relations as well as to identify the various aims, objectives, elements and instruments of the country's external cultural policy. In order to facilitate some international comparison, basic information was provided on developments in certain other countries, most notably, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Great Britain, Japan and United States. It remains to examine the place of cultural relations in Canada's overall foreign policy as well as to probe some foreseeable directions in these relations in the future.

Cultural Relations and Foreign Policy

In the past, cultural relations have not occupied a prominent place in foreign policy. They were usually the last relations to be attended to in times of prosperity and the first to be cut in times of recession. There have been many reasons for this, but three in particular tend to dominate. First, cultural relations have often been seen or treated merely as instruments for political propaganda. Second, those in control of foreign policy have usually tended to view foreign policy in rather exclusive economic, commercial or political terms, thereby disregarding the numerous benefits which can be derived from a well-directed program of cultural relations. Finally, since cultural development in most countries was sadly neglected until quite recently, it was often felt that the quality and quantity of creative achievements was insufficient to mount an effective program of international cultural relations.

Events of the last two decades have served to dramatically alter these traditional attitudes. No area of human activity operates effectively when it is manipulated or exploited for propagandistic purposes. While this is true of economic, social and political relations, it is particularly true of cultural relations. Unfortunately, cultural relations were so badly abused during World War II that international confidence in them was shaken and has only recently recovered. Nevertheless, the experience of thirty years ago is not without its relevance today. In the contemporary world, it is highly debatable whether a country's artistic and academic relations could be subverted so easily to political ends. The resistance from artists, academics, scholars, intellectuals, humanists and citizens would be too great. The challenge now is more to capitalize on the positive contribution that cultural relations can make to world peace and stability and an improved quality of life for all.