

At present, the Council's main activities include the teaching of English, educational aid in the form of grants, information, publicity and sale of educational services, and the arts. Basically, there are two components to this work. The "outward operation" involves arranging for leading British representatives in education, science, the professions and the arts to go overseas on short tours or advisory visits to meet their opposite numbers in other countries to discuss common problems, to advise on various courses and to lecture. The "inward operation" is conducted on a much larger scale. Visitors to Britain, whether coming for the purpose of study, research, observation or training are provided with a variety of services, including assistance with finance, accommodation, travel and arrangement of programs. The Council is convinced that such contacts on a common, professional basis can have great influence and can form one of the surest ways of promoting British interests and international understanding.

In committing itself to the British Council, the Government was committing itself to a certain separation of cultural relations from political relations and foreign policy. In so doing, it was acting to protect these relations from propagandistic exploitation and undue political influence. Other advantages have accrued from this commitment as well. The British Council has been free to build up an effective team of highly-qualified administrators and cultural affairs officers - drawn from many diverse areas - since it has not been subject to the regulations governing the employment of people in the diplomatic service. However, these advantages have not come without a price. While the Council enjoys a reasonable annual grant from Government - which reflects the importance the Government places on relations in this field with other countries - it is difficult for the Council to plan too far in advance, since its funding is uncertain from year to year. Moreover, the Council is subject to frequent reviews and investigations. Nevertheless, though gaps exist between what the Council would like to do and what the Government is willing to pay for, on the whole an effective working partnership has been achieved. As a result, Great Britain, like France, is able to reap the incredible advantages which are available from international cultural relations.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, cultural relations have had a long and checkered history. Many of the basic administrative techniques which are utilized at present were put in place in the early part of the twentieth century. In 1920, for example, the Weimar Republic created a "Directorate for Germanism abroad and Cultural Relations" in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1925, the prestigious Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst was set up with the mission of organizing the exchange of students and university lecturers with foreign countries. This interchange at university level was supplemented at the elementary and secondary school level by the creation of the Deutsche Pädagogische Austauschstelle in 1929. Finally, the Weimar Republic saw the foundation of the Goethe Institute - the German equivalent of the Alliance française - and imbued it with the task of promoting the German language and culture in other countries.

After these excellent initiatives, there ensued the long period of nazism, which was to give cultural diplomacy a bad name, not only in Germany, but generally throughout the world. During this period, cultural diplomacy was seen as nothing more than a device to serve the political and propagandistic interests of the Government, thereby confirming the deepest fears of authorities everywhere that culture can be a manipulative tool in the hands of dictatorial figures. The stain of this period has been so great that Germany is still labouring to overcome it in many parts of the world.