

Marion Wrenn

**Workshop: American Philanthropic Support for Communication and Culture
August 2004**

**(Working Title) Inventing Warriors: Reorienting International Journalists to the
Values of a 'Free and Democratic Press'**

Introduction:

Post-war reconstruction. Occupation. Independence. What role for the media in ensuring democracy? Freedom? Enduring peace?

The stark relevance of these questions makes them seem as if they were ripped from today's headlines, issues the Bush administration must face. But they have practical roots earlier in the 20th century. For example, these were the concerns of US philanthropic foundations and universities at the end of World War II. Case in point: in the years immediately after World War II, Columbia University trained German and Japanese radio and newspaper personnel through a series of grant-funded projects. The Rockefeller Foundation, particularly through grant officer John Marshall, and under the advisement and approval of the US Army, supported a series of seminars and training programs for journalists, editors, and broadcasters from these war-torn countries, starting in 1947.

According to the grants, these projects were explicitly designed to 'reorient' participants to the values of a 'free and democratic press' (terms themselves worthy of unpacking). Foreign journalists and broadcasters were brought into the US, participated in discussions and seminars, visited broadcast stations and newspaper operations, and were then sent back to their home countries.

The historical context of these programs is crucial. World War II was a brutal war waged by totalitarian forces whose domination of their media made communications a

crucial site of reconstructive action. Germany and Japan were fascist states where the state had total control over the content, form, and technologies of communication. The political climate in these countries had a profound impact on journalism as a profession there. US anxieties (as well as those of the French and British, for that matter) hinged on how important a different system of media communication would be to denazification in Germany and demilitarization in Japan.

While it is important to frame these training seminars as a response to the war against fascism (likely the most important context for thinking about the obsession with communications and the need to help foster democratic culture in those states), it is nonetheless important to note that these projects form a crucial moment in the pre-history of “media imperialism” (Boyd-Barrett 1977), a term that has come to describe the way American cultural/media products dominate the world market in particular, and the structure and effects of such domination and subordination more generally. In the rhetoric of the grant proposals and memos, we can see an earnest impulse to deliver humanitarian aid to countries affected by the war, as well as emerging anxieties regarding propaganda and cultural imperialism. What is more, we can trace the nascent stages of the global media field.

At the heart of these training projects is the unsteady embrace of national security and liberal democracy. The grant proposals and memos, written by John Marshall, Charles B. Fahs, Edward F. D’Arms, and Floyd Taylor (as well as key players in the US Army and at Columbia University) reveal a nexus of concerns: denazification, propaganda worries, and an explicit humanitarian impulse on the one hand, and on the other, anxieties about the appearance of indoctrination and cultural imperialism. In

conceiving of the role of the journalist and the function of news coverage and the press, program coordinators and grants officers seem to have been engaged in conceptualizing national journalistic fields and, arguably, imagining, shaping, and conceiving of the global journalistic field.

Thus while the projects can be read simultaneously as a post war reconstruction effort and cold war containment, they might be more richly understood as existing in the pre-history of global media. These projects potentially offer a compelling lens through which to view the history of media imperialism, particularly because they concern professionalization, one of the master issues of the field of journalism history, in a uniquely (proto) global context..

The projects:

There exist only a scant few contemporary articles about these projects and there was no major coverage of them in the mainstream press. However, they did get the attention of trade publications like Printer's Ink and Editor and Publisher. For example, in March of 1949, Variety ran a very brief article on a special program to be run by Columbia University: a total of ten Asian radio broadcasters (4 Koreans and 6 Japanese) were to be brought into the United States, provided with intensive seminars, discussion and training in New York, and were then to travel to various local and network stations across the country.¹

¹ The Rockefeller Foundation awarded Columbia and the Bureau of Applied Social Research a \$21,000 grant "for a program of study for Korean broadcasters during the period ending December 31, 1949" (Minutes of the Rockefeller Foundation, 1949, 49013). They also awarded a grant of \$29, 000 for a similar simultaneous program for Japanese broadcasters (49013). According to their annual Report for 1949, the

The project announced in Variety was merely a small part of a much larger series of projects designed to train, ‘reorient,’ and familiarize foreign broadcasters, journalists, and editors with American news practices and principles, particularly a passionate commitment to the value of a ‘free and democratic press.’ In 1949 there was a radio broadcasters project for Korean and Japanese participants, dedicated to training radio personnel. There was also a Japanese journalism project in the same year. Similarly, two years earlier, there was a German radio personnel project, followed closely by a German journalism project (also made up of 15 participants).² Chronologically, the grants were made in this order:

1947-48:	German Radio Personnel	(\$25,000)
	German Journalists and News Personnel	(\$40,246)
1948-49:	Korean Radio Personnel ³	(\$21,000)
	Japanese Radio Personnel	(\$29,000)
	Japanese Journalists and News Personnel	(\$25,000)

The archival record shows that program reported in Variety was part of a series of training seminars at the end of the ‘40s, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and

Foundation provided grants “totaling \$50,000 to Columbia University... for study and observation of broadcasting in the United States and Canada by groups of Japanese and Korean broadcasters” (308).

² Any reference to the German Radio Project was found in the German Journalists grant file. However, the project was clearly distinct and independent from the journalism project as it is separately referenced in the annual report/minutes, which lists the \$25,000 grant. In the 1948 Annual Report, there are clearly 2 projects, one for radio and one for journalism (see the comptroller/accountant’s list of disbursements).

³ While it was proposed, there is some question as Korean journalism/radio personnel project ever came to fruition; one imagines that is due to the run up to the Korean conflict in ‘51.

administered by Columbia University (Columbia's Bureau of Applied Social Research ran the radio projects and the American Press Institute (API) organized the newspaper projects).⁴ Such projects continued into the early 60s, and eventually included participants from Thailand and South Asia.⁵

Context(s)

The Rockefeller/Columbia projects are part of – and precede-- a larger practice of training media personnel typically associated with the English and the French. “Courses and attachments in industrialized countries developed very often as part of the cold war contest for allegiances in the Third World, ‘assisting the foreign policy of the host nation in maintaining and extending its prestige, influence, and favourable image in the world, perhaps particularly in the uncommitted nations’ (qtd in Golding 320).⁶ The BBC began radio courses for overseas broadcasters in 1951 (over a 20 year period more than 500 broadcasters attended the course. BBC Television courses began in 1966. “The more centralized French broadcasting system laid even greater emphasis on training in the metropolitan capital. SORAFAM trained 300 African broadcasters in the first year of its training center, the Studio-Ecole de Maisons Lafitte near Paris” (296).

⁴ Though each of these projects was funded by a discrete grant from the RF, the archival records at the Rockefeller Archive Center for the individual projects have been blended; put another way, the radio personnel records can only be found within the journalism files. Perhaps this indicates the Foundations' concern less with technology or media forms and rather with professional news values.

⁵ Similar projects were being conducted at the University of Missouri for Austrians. The Rockefeller Foundation made a grant of \$24,000 to the School of Journalism in 1950. A later grant of \$31,880 for Journalists from Southeast Asia in 1953 for training in the US and Europe in 1954.

⁶ Benne, in Sanders, 1963, pp. 81-2.

Apparently America had similar projects, though less well known: the Columbia programs introduced broadcasters and journalists to the less centralized, more commercial organization of North American broadcasting. To be clear, the US training seminars were not under the auspices of networks or broadcasting corporations or newspapers chains. While key players in the journalistic field were involved and participated in the seminars, they participated as discussants at the invitation of Columbia University.⁷ So, as much as possible, the seminars were kept out of the control of the commercial sector of US broadcasting.

The Rockefeller/Columbia training projects offer an interesting historical corrective, showing America's involvement in such training practices during a particularly crucial moment in world history. And these projects were not an oddity. According to Ellen Latzin's recent dissertation (on the (Cultural) Exchange Programs by the American Allied Government in Bavaria from 1948-1956), more than 1000 German journalists went on training programs in the US between 1948 and 1956.

As Brett Gary explains in his book The Nervous Liberals, the Rockefeller Foundation's John Marshall, along with other "key players . . . from diverse fields and institutions, including journalism, philosophy, the social sciences, mass communications

⁷ Discussion leaders (for the German contingents) included Sevillon Brown (of Providence, RI), James Marlow (AP), Paul C. Smith (San Francisco Chronicle), Basil L. Walters (Chicago Daily News), Edward Barrett (Newsweek), Roscoe C. Drummond (Christian Science Monitor). Also, in a letter to Colonel Nugent, Floyd Taylor includes this postscript:

The conduct of the Japanese at The New York Times last night was an example of how well they handle themselves. They used good judgment in their drinking during cocktail hour before dinner, they talked well at the dinner table and during the discussion after dinner they asked penetrating questions . . . in such a friendly manner that they made a fine impression on Times executives. I was especially pleased by this *as Arthur Hays Sulzberger, publisher of the Times, has been a backer interested in the Japanese project ever since he first heard about it.* (January 26, 1950. My emphasis).

research, philanthropy, law, literature, and government service” helped build the ideological infrastructure that framed the conception of the training seminars under consideration here, an ideological/discursive field that became the “backbone of the United States’ propaganda defense” 6):

Long before it was clear that the United States would be a belligerent in WWII, John Marshall recognized that communications research was essential for national security purposes and that the Roosevelt administration was unequipped and politically indisposed to carry out that work. Marshall combined the Rockefeller Foundation’s concerns about science and public obligation to give direction to the incipient field of mass communications. (125)

By the war’s end, as the archives show, Marshall was involved in ‘reorienting’ and training journalists, editors, and broadcast personnel of vanquished countries to the need for a free press and democratic news values.

Gary charts the tensions of the ‘Age of Propaganda,’ the era spanning World War I to the Cold War. While Gary’s book focuses on the era before America’s worldwide (media) predominance, the projects I am writing about are on the cusp of that predominance, and little has been written about them.

A parallel history of the US journalistic field is useful here. In the 40s, terms like ‘a free and democratic press’ would be understood to allude to the free press crusades of the era. With its roots in the propaganda worries of World War I and the 1927 International Conference of Press Experts (where US journalists extolled the virtues American domestic news practices), the idea that a free and democratic press would lead

to world peace and should be a basic right of all human beings lived on between the wars through the League of Nations, and increased in fervor with World War II (Blanchard 1986). By the early 40s, the press associations had the support of powerful figures in the US government who, “from Franklin D. Roosevelt on down, adopted freedom of information as a war aim” (Blanchard 17). The distinction between “freedom of the press” to “freedom of information” is key; the president and the state department refused to speak solely of international freedom of the press.⁸

Among decision makers in the journalistic field – and among key players like John Foster Dulles, chief architect of America’s cold war policy (who once said, “If I were to be granted one point of foreign policy and no other, I would make it the free flow of information”)-- there emerged a missionary zeal for the global spread of the free flow of information (qtd. in Schiller 30)

For example, in 1944, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), the Associated Press, and United Press International, sent a ‘delegation’ of US press representatives on an expedition, as Herbert Schiller puts it, “to personally carry the message of international free press to every friendly capital of the world “ (32). Carl Ackerman, Dean of Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism, was a member of ASNE’s missionary team, and like many of his contemporaries believed in the

⁸ In 1946, William Benton, Assistant Secretary of State, said that “The State Department plans to do everything within its power along political or diplomatic lines to help break down the artificial barriers to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures, and other media of communications throughout the world... Freedom of the press—and freedom of exchange of information more generally—is an integral part of our foreign policy” (qtd in Schiller 29). The UN was not ready to consider any fundamental press freedoms until 1946, which saw the first General Conference of UNESCO.

direct relationship between freedom of the press and peace between nations. A few years later, Ackerman directed the German journalist training program.⁹

Thus, in this context, The Rockefeller/Columbia collaboration seems to fill the gap left by the UN and the US government. The foundation and the university were in a position to accomplish what the US Government and/or the UN, perhaps, could not (especially given the paradoxes of a free press and its relationship to government).

Such collaboration also offers a more complex account of the construction of the public, the public sphere, and the imagined community. How were the grant officers and Columbia faculty conceiving of the journalist's role, and, by extension, the role and competencies of the publics they served? The differing models for the historical importance of the press espoused by Benedict Anderson and Jurgen Habermas-- one which privileges the imagined community and the other the public sphere—can be seen as part of a descriptive continuum rather than discrete theoretical frames for these projects. What is particularly interesting about the Columbia/Rockefeller training projects is that they seem to be situated smack in the middle of these two models. It is as if the 'state' (made up of three institutions: philanthropy, the government, the university)—imagines an ideal journalist—who in turn (re)conceives of the public sphere in the home country and (re)imagines his or her audience, who, by reading the newspaper or listening to the radio becomes part of an imagined community newly influenced by American news values and practices.

9 "The program for [the Germans] will be under the direction of Carl W. Ackerman, Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia, and will be conducted by Mr. Taylor and J. Montgomery Curtis, associate director of API" (page 46, Editor and Publisher, August 28, 1948).

Perhaps. But as of this writing the above is merely a description of what the grant officers and program officials might have been thinking. It is in the language and rhetoric of the grants, memos and proposals where the hard evidence lies.

The training projects were designed by Merton and Lazarsfeld at Columbia University. The grant application and memos regarding the radio and press personnel projects cite specific (and telling) reasons in support of the projects. For instance, Robert Merton (who administered the Korean/Japanese broadcasting programs) wrote, “on the premise that mass communications can play a strategic role in furthering both intercultural relations and democratically organized society, the Rockefeller Foundation last year made a grant to Columbia University in support of a training program for six [German radio program directors]”. Throughout, ‘reorienting’ post-war cultures to the functions of a ‘free and democratic press,’ became the oft-cited motive for both the radio and the journalism projects.

Values: a tentative conclusion

The grant rhetoric’s mantra of a ‘free and democratic press’ appears to have had a palliative affect for the programmers and participants: the homogenization of skills and practices implied by this ideology promised not only a seemingly propaganda-free model, but it seemed to be connected with peace, prosperity, and unity. At the end of World War II, America was perceived as the world power capable of ensuring peace and security. The seminar and project planners sought to avoid appearing didactic; the programs were seductive to participants; a “free press” was linked to peace and prosperity. Perhaps this historical moment ultimately reveals how the implementation of

the code of universal/American journalism values is tied to global market imperatives. As B. Barber writes in “Jihad v. McWorld”: “The primary political values required by the global market are order and tranquillity, and freedom—as in the phrases “free trade,” “free press,” and ‘free love’” (Barber).

The history of objectivity as a news value is also pertinent here. As a code of conduct and writing strategy, objectivity was linked to fair and balanced reporting and ensured, supposedly, unbiased news reports. Though it has roots in the 19th century, objectivity becomes the dominant mode in the 20th century, marking the shift from partisan presses to more ‘fair and balanced’ news coverage. But while objectivity becomes part of the journalists’ creed, we cannot forget that “objectivity was partially a marketing tool”(Pedelty 1995: 7). Schudson points out that objectivity allowed for news production sufficiently “acceptable to all of its members and clients” (Schudson 1978: 4). Thus, despite the explicit humanitarian aims of the training projects, there is an implicit commercial aspect to American news values.

It is also interesting to note that the programs went forward at the strong suggestion of Brigadier General Robert McClure of the US Army. McClure’s involvement is a telling connection between all four grants. Simply put, it appears to have been McClure’s idea. In a letter to Provost Albert C. Jacobs of Columbia, Acting Director of the BASR, Robert Merton wrote: “The suggestion that this [the German broadcasters] program be undertaken originated with Brig. General Robert McClure of the Civil Affairs Division of the Department of the Army, and during the conduct of the program he kept in constant touch with the progress that was being made. On the basis of

that experience, General McClure has suggested that a comparable program be provided a small group of Korean and Japanese radio directors” (December 28, 1948).

A brief biography of General Robert McClure provides important context. At the beginning of WWII, McClure was a military attaché in London, and in 1942 became chief of intelligence for the American forces for Europe under Eisenhower (who was President of Columbia while these projects were designed and implemented). In 1944, McClure became the head of psychological warfare for the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force. From 1950 to ‘53, McClure was chief of the Psychological Warfare Division in the Pentagon.

McClure’s orientation toward the expansion of American ideologies and the force of his ideas are a powerful current in these files. For instance, in a correspondence where he thanks the Rockefeller Foundation for their contribution for “training German Radio Personnel,” General McClure writes, “Your foundation was undoubtedly impressed with the need for indoctrination of Germans who will be the key figures in molding German public opinion” (in a letter from 12/12/48, Brig. General Robert McClure to Edward F D’Arms). Col. Gordon Textor¹⁰ shared the same orientation; as he puts it in a letter to John Marshall of the Rockefeller Foundation, “I hope that the [German] radio project will work out despite the delay and will provide justification for extending a grant to the press field...” (April 16, 1948). Also, this time in a letter to Edward F. D’Arms, Textor writes that he is “sure the radio project will be of tremendous value to the future of the dissemination of information in Germany and I am certain that the journalist project will

¹⁰ Director, Information Control Division of OMGUS (Office of the Military Government, US, in Germany).

be just as effective in its field”(July 15, 1948).

The Occupying Authority (OMGUS) in Germany and Japan saw a definite need for trained personnel in the press and broadcast fields. What is more, OMGUS was involved in restructuring the presses in these countries so that they would be less centralized, encouraging objectivity and prevent or thwart propaganda. Between the presence of OMGUS in key cities abroad and the training of international journalists in the states, a system was designed that was favorable to the transfer of US (news) values and what might be called the ‘occupational ideologies’ of American news coverage.

Gollin writes that “implicit in the idea of foreign study is the view that through an exposure to the values, norms and practices of economically advanced societies the trainees may come in time to change their perspective on their society, their work roles, or themselves in ways which will strengthen their later effectiveness as change agents” (qtd in Golding 295). Pierre Bourdieu might term such ‘values, norms and practices’ *habitus* (1996, 1997), and it is through Bourdieu’s field theory that we can see how the Rockefeller Foundation manifested a deep-set belief in the humanitarian and utopian potentials of a free press, a belief Bourdieu would call ‘*illusio*’ (the conviction that allows one to remain engaged in the game). Through the *illusio* (their deeply held beliefs in the value of a free press and the free flow of information—values necessary to remain engaged in the ‘game’ of democracy) Marshall, Merton, and McLure sought to influence the *habitus* of the seminars’ participants, to increase their range of possible strategies to include objectivity, balance, and a similar conviction about the necessity and potential of a free press.

It is important to note the care with which the project coordinators crafted the

delivery of their message. Responding to Floyd Taylor's lengthy description of the Japanese Journalism project and its pedagogy, Fahs (of the Rockefeller Foundation) writes "My hunch would be that the better psychological approach is to consider the project as a means by which American newspaper men and Japanese newspaper men may discuss common problems, rather than a means by which the former may teach the latter."¹¹ The Foundation sought to foster a culture of exchange and empathy, particularly because Japan had an advanced commercial newspaper system. The "best psychological approach" for "reorientaton" would eschew indoctrination and, one imagines, would include commiseration about the inherent conflict of fair and balanced reporting within a commercial system.

The German journalism project depicts the same complex impulses. In a letter to John Marshall, Floyd Taylor (of API), describing the outline for a program that will focus on the "function of the press in a democratic society," writes an itemized list of goals, which includes, "#7. We should do our utmost to avoid the appearance of blatant indoctrination or of what is sometimes called 'cultural imperialism.'"¹²

The repetition of 'reorientation' and 'training' in the grants signals an obvious relationship of power, one worth unpacking. In "Media Professionalism in the Third World" Golding argues that "professionalization" should be understood "as the acquisition not merely of competence, but also of values and attitudes thought appropriate to the implementation of media skills," and considers this a transfer not only of technology and practice but of ideology as well (292).

¹¹ Full text of letter in appendix ##

¹² Rockefeller Archive Center, Group 1.2, Box 11, 717.

Professionalism should not, according to Golding, be understood outside of the “context of cultural dependence, of the ways in which professionalism ensures the reproduction of institutions and practices from the advanced industrial societies. Professionalism is a stabilizing philosophy, a prop for the status quo, for pragmatism against utopianism, proficiency against ideology” (305). For indeed, especially in the relationship between developed and developing countries, “media professionalism is an ideology imposed on countries in a situation of dependence, and concealing more than merely prescriptions for technical proficiency” (306).

But this ignores much of the historical context of the Rockefeller Foundation’s intervention in journalist training post-World War II.

The programmers sought to avoid the appearance of indoctrination and imperialism, but did not have a name for what it was they were in fact doing. In naming what it is not, however, they open up a gap in the discourse, and I would argue the proper name for their work might be proto-globalization: through the spread of skills and technology; through the spread of the ideology of a free and democratic press, a foundation/framework for the global spread of American news values (at least in name if not in practice) was being conceived. Here are the early/accidental architects of the global mediascape.

Thus, to frame the funding and implementation of these training programs merely as cold war containment or as US hegemony risks skewing the story of the Rockefeller Foundation’s motives toward cultural domination and soft imperialism.¹³ But if we can keep an eye to emerging cold war anxieties without utterly neglecting the post-war

moment of the Foundation's humanitarian impulses and their belief in the good society, we might recuperate multiple historical frames, and in so doing situate these training programs in the pre-history of global media more fully.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities. New York: Verso, 1983.
- Blanchard, Margaret. Exporting the First Amendment. The Press-Government Crusade of 1945-1952. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1986.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. Pascalian Meditations. Richard Nice, trans. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structures of the Literary Field. Susan Emanuel, trans. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992..
- Boyd-Barrett, J. Oliver. "Media Imperialism: Towards an International Framework for an Analysis of Media Systems." Mass Communication and Society. James Curran, M. Gurevitch, and J. Woolacott eds. London: Edward Arnold, 1977. 116-135.
- Gary, Brett. The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties form World War I to the Cold War. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

13 See Joan Roelofs' Foundations and Public Policy: The Mask of Pluralism (2203) and the forthcoming special issue of Critical Sociology on the relationship between Philanthropies , the humanities and cultural domination, edited by Roelofs and Robert Arnove.

- Gienow-Hecht, Jessica. Transmission Impossible. American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany 1945-1955. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1999.
- Golding, Peter. "Media Professionalism in the Third World: the Transfer of an Ideology." Mass Communication and Society. James Curran, M. Gurevitch, and J. Woolacott eds. London: Edward Arnold, 1977. 291-308.
- Habermas, Jurgen. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.
- Pedelty, Mark War Stories. The Culture of Foreign Correspondents. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Roelofs, Joan. Foundations and Public Policy. The Mask of Pluralism. Albany: SUNY Press, 2003.
- Schiller, Herbert. Schiller, Herbert I. Communication and Cultural Domination. White Plains, NY: International Arts & Sciences Press, 1976.
- Schudson. Michael. Discovering the News. A Social History of American Newspapers. New York: Basic Books, 1978.