American Books in the Far East

RICHARD TAPLINGER

One of the purposes of this report, it should be stated frankly, is to encourage all the organizations which believe in books as symbols—as mirrors of the cultures that produce them—and as weapons, to develop cooperatively a plan for making American books more readily available to more of the world's people. The book industry, the federal government and a few private organizations and foundations, each working independently, have made a tremendous start in this direction. To capitalize on this experience and to meet the challenge that is apparent to all who have traveled—particularly in Asia—will take the brains and energy and resources of all these groups working together.

This paper is concerned with the overseas Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and with Japan and Korea. In nearly every respect conditions are widely different in each of these territories and each will be discussed separately. In some basic and general respects they are similar: all of them want more American books; all of them, not always intentionally, have barriers erected against book imports and translations—unfavorable exchange rates, poor distribution facilities, import quotas, monetary restrictions of one kind and another, distance, and language difficulties. In each country there are other differences, but they are slight by comparison with these major items.

This entire area can be described as strongly non-Communist politically. Hong Kong, a British crown colony, is perhaps the world's greatest stronghold of anti-communist Chinese intellectuals. Japan, although not so militantly anti-Communist as the other territories with which this report is concerned, is in greater danger through a lack of knowledge of America than through any emotional or economic sympathy with Communism. Korea—South Korea—is militantly anti-Communist, as is Taiwan, the legal repository of the Nationalist Chinese government.

In all these areas there is great admiration for American manu-

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factured goods—including our books—and an intense desire to know more about America. In all these areas there are varying abilities to satisfy these desires. Taking each country separately, this article will attempt to define the factors that have helped as well as hindered the people of these countries in getting a fair picture of Americans as people and of this form of government as a practical mechanism through the writers (who are the most articulate members of this society) and their books.

Hong Kong

Since Hong Kong has been a British crown colony for 114 years, language is hardly a barrier to the reading of American books. English is taught in the schools and every educated Chinese speaks, reads and writes English. There are an estimated 2½ million people in Hong Kong (including Kowloon) and an estimated school population of over 200,000, or about 10%. (U.S. comparison: 33½ million, or about 20%) English is known by all literate groups to the point where it can be said to present no obstacle to the reading of American books.

Literacy in Hong Kong is high. A 1931 report listed 49% over the age of eleven as literate; the 1955 percentage must be considerably higher since a large percentage of refugees now living in Hong Kong come from the educated or intellectual classes.

Obstacles to the importation of American books are fewer, perhaps, than in the other areas of the Far East. There are no tariffs, dollars are available, there are no import quotas or licensing restrictions. Two obstacles combine to keep American book imports at a low level. Since the Hong Kong dollar is worth about 18 cents U.S., a $3.50 book, which sells for $4 with shipping charges, is equivalent to $20 or more in terms of Hong Kong income. In selling rights to British publishers to publish American books in Britain, American publishers sell what are known as “Empire rights.” This means that American publishers cannot sell copies of the American edition of such books in countries covered by the term “Empire.” Hong Kong is therefore “off limits” for most of the books which Hong Kong readers want, unless they happen to be available in British editions. A brief survey of Hong Kong bookshops which the writer made during the spring of 1955 showed a generally poor selection of U.S. books—even paper-bound ones—in any bookshop except one. The Swindon Book Company in Kowloon is well-stocked with all kinds of American books—scientific, technical, medical, general, juvenile, and paper-back. They do a tremendous business, largely in titles which American publishers cannot
sell in Hong Kong. Since neither the American publishers nor any of their agents sell to Swindon directly, they are innocent of any breach of contract, and the British authorities have no power to prevent Swindon from doing business as he does. His chief business is in American books and his large turnover indicates what the potential market might be if sales could be made here as easily, say, as British publishers sell their books in the U.S.

British and Chinese Communist books dominate the market. There is some local non-Communist Chinese publishing. Distribution is no problem in so small and compact an area. Manufacturing methods are satisfactory, even judged by American standards of quality, and results are good as well as inexpensive. A book which costs $1.10 to manufacture in the U.S. can be produced in Hong Kong for 35 cents and with comparable quality. Poorer quality printing and paper can bring the price down to half of this. Because of the meager finances of most publishers, translations of American books are usually underwritten by the United States Information Service or by American foundations.

There are four libraries—a British government library, two USIS libraries, and one at Hong Kong University. The USIS libraries have a total of 27,500 books and an annual circulation of 132,000. There is also a library for refugee colleges to which the Asia Foundation has given some 1,750 volumes.

Universities, schools, and colleges seem to be getting a fair number of American books through private gifts and purchases. More are needed to counteract the increasing flood of books from Communist China, but the need is not what might be termed acute. The influence of these U.S. books has an immediate effect on faculty and students, and through them to the masses, because of the concentration of population.

In 1954 only about $25,000 worth of American books were imported, probably excluding paper-bound books.

It is this writer's guess that Swindon Book Company alone received more than the number of books indicated by the Department of Commerce figure, but because of his supply channels, no record is shown on official tallies. Largely because he is prevented from selling in Hong Kong books licensed to British publishers, the American publisher makes only a modest effort to sell his books here. However, bookstores were well-stocked with many American books in British editions, both hard- and soft-covered.

Britain and China are the two major suppliers of books to Hong
Kong. Several large bookstores and countless small ones specialize in Communist literature and all but a very few stores stock Communist books with their others. In addition to books, 57 Chinese mainland periodicals are available in one store, ranging from the China Medical Journal to popular "Peoples" picture magazines. Among books in this store are, mainly, classical Communist publications (the works of Stalin, Lenin, Mao Tse-tung), technical books, how-to books, and children's books. Recently Peiping has begun reissuing many volumes of classical Chinese culture, at least for the export trade, and even the anti-Communist scholars in Hong Kong watch for them avidly in the Communist bookstores. Beautifully-bound volumes of prints and paintings are being sent to Hong Kong from the mainland in limited quantities. Propaganda books are sold at ridiculously low prices (a beautifully made hard-bound book which in the U. S. would cost $6 or $7.50 sells in Hong Kong for $2, the same price as an American paper book). Art and cultural books are slightly higher, but still in the "bargain" category.

The U. S. government has experimented widely in its Hong Kong book programs. Of the United States Information Agency book translation program, on which $139,000 was spent in fiscal 1955 in the Far East, and $177,000 this year, roughly 40% has been allocated to Hong Kong. In the 5 years—June 1950 to June 1955—of this program, 180 American books were translated into Chinese and printed in Hong Kong, for distribution both here and in other Chinese-speaking areas. Some translations have been done in tabloid newspaper form called "Story Newspapers" and sold for the equivalent of five cents. Some have been distributed with newspapers as supplements. USIA is also active in displaying American books at book fairs and trade fairs, in encouraging distribution of American publications which give news of books (such as Publisher's Weekly, Retail Bookseller, etc.), in presenting books to schools and libraries. Roughly 2,000 books a year are included in such presentation programs.

The Asia Foundation has contributed 1,750 books to the Mencius Educational Foundation, a library widely used by students. The Books for Asian Students program, recently inaugurated, is supplying thousands of college textbooks, either used or in out-dated editions, into the area for use by Chinese students who cannot afford American textbooks and who therefore have been using the cheaper text and reference books coming from the mainland.

Perhaps the greatest need in Hong Kong is for more American textbooks and technical books, since the battle for students' minds is being waged ruthlessly by the Communists. The Communist-sponsored
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educational plan, whereby Chinese can return to the mainland and receive a university education at government expense, is a tempting one to many ambitious young Chinese who cannot afford an education otherwise. Making books available cheaply will no doubt help some of them stay in Hong Kong. Since Hong Kong plays so influential a part among Chinese throughout Southeast Asia, because of the large number of intellectuals who have gathered there, it is vital that a wide variety of American books be made available, both in English and in Chinese.

Japan

Although there are strong currents of anti- as well as pro-Americanism in Japan, there is a strong desire to know more about America. As in other parts of Asia, ideas of America are nebulous and distorted.

Since the war, English has been an elective in high school and college and is the first choice of most students; many university students read English well, as do most professional men and government officials. Few writers and editors read English but most engineers and technical experts do. In the technical and medical fields it has replaced German. Of Japan’s 83,000,000 population there is a school population of 18.5 million, including students at 220 colleges and universities.

Aside from price, there are few obstacles to the use of American books. There is no customs duty, dollar credits are available, and there is no government censorship. Until recently, importers had to post a bond for 25% of the total allocation requested, but this has been reduced to 3%. There is no sales tax on books. Price is perhaps the greatest barrier. The average Japanese-language book sells for the equivalent of 30 to 60 cents. American books which sell for $4 in the U. S. are priced at the equivalent of $5 in Japan. This is beyond the income level of most Japanese. Importers suggest that more liberal credit terms by American publishers would enable Japanese stores to keep bigger stocks on hand.

Distribution in Japan is extremely efficient. The publisher plays a smaller part in promotion than he does in the U. S. Most of the promotion and distribution is done by large wholesalers who take 90% of the publisher’s edition. Wholesalers get a 27-30% discount and stores get 18-20% (as compared with 33½ to 40% in the U. S.). For imported American books the distribution system is somewhat different. There are some 20 importers, half of whom operate shops of their own. They sell to special clients such as universities, libraries, professors, and industrial concerns.

Students cannot afford American books and the textbooks are rarely
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used except as reference material. Charles Tuttle, an American who, since the war, has built up a large-scale book business in Japan, believes that “this available market could be made the basis of a successful reprint program here in Japan.”

Translation of American books have been a problem until recently. Smaller Japanese publishers often published (and some still do) without permission translations of American best sellers, and offset reproductions of technical books. Communications between Japanese and American publishers have not been good, and correspondence has often broken down before a licensing agreement was reached. In the past few years the translation programs of USIA and the Asia Foundation have been responsible for clearing the way for publishing important American books in Japanese.

Japan has a rapidly growing library system consisting of 850 libraries with over 3,000 volumes each. Kyoto and Tokyo Universities have over 1½ million volumes each. While in the past Japan’s finest libraries were private ones, today the government supports a large percentage of the best libraries. Readers still complain that there are seldom open stocks to which they have access, students are rarely allowed to withdraw books, and professors keep books out for unbelievably long periods.

In Japan there are fourteen USIS libraries and they are listed below with holdings, attendance, and circulation in 1954:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Holdings</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fukuoka</td>
<td>16,144</td>
<td>358,675</td>
<td>31,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiroshima</td>
<td>17,175</td>
<td>512,115</td>
<td>29,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanazawa</td>
<td>13,849</td>
<td>179,185</td>
<td>27,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobe</td>
<td>14,626</td>
<td>452,580</td>
<td>41,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyoto</td>
<td>17,015</td>
<td>718,435</td>
<td>65,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsuyama</td>
<td>14,400</td>
<td>163,550</td>
<td>26,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagasaki</td>
<td>15,449</td>
<td>292,585</td>
<td>21,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagoya</td>
<td>18,792</td>
<td>1,302,215</td>
<td>43,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niigata</td>
<td>15,641</td>
<td>192,360</td>
<td>14,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osaka</td>
<td>16,595</td>
<td>470,445</td>
<td>64,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapporo</td>
<td>17,999</td>
<td>101,525</td>
<td>39,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sendai</td>
<td>14,598</td>
<td>142,520</td>
<td>27,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>23,363</td>
<td>655,510</td>
<td>101,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yokohama</td>
<td>15,741</td>
<td>311,560</td>
<td>46,730</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

231,387 5,853,260 582,365

Japanese students want, but can’t afford, American textbooks. The
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average Japanese student has about $11 a month to cover all expenses—room, board, incidentals, travel, personal, and books. Even an old, thread-bare American text costs him $3. For this reason many students use Communist textbooks imported from Russia, in Japanese and even Russian, which are available at prices as low as 50 cents to $1.25. Students help mould public opinion in Japan to a greater extent than most Americans realize.

In 1954 approximately $800,000 worth of American books were imported by Japan, about 2$\%$ lower than the previous year. American representation in Japan was good. Japanese importers maintain close ties with the American book industry. Four distributors keep abreast of new American books and stores are remarkably well stocked with all kinds of books on all price levels. A good percentage of these, however, are bought by Americans and Europeans, rather than by Japanese.

Although American books are better represented in Japan than in most other Asian countries, British competition is keen. Stores in large cities carry large stocks of British books, in many cases larger than their stocks of U. S. books. Their lower price—about $\%$ of ours—gives them a broader market. A casual survey of the general stores revealed large numbers of Chinese and Russian books at the usual low prices. Both have also invaded the textbook field with cheap books, an area where, as has been pointed out, American books have little distribution.

The USIA translation program assists Japanese publishers in obtaining translation and publishing rights to certain American books at reasonable cost. Since 1950, 215 books have been published in Japan with USIA assistance. This represents over one-half the USIA translation fund appropriation for the Far East, or approximately $90,000 for the current fiscal year. USIA has also been influential in having a library course initiated at Keio University in Tokyo, where leading U. S. librarians are teaching modern library methods to Japanese librarians.

The United States Book Exchange and the International Cooperation Administration are now including Japan in their exchange program for libraries. Twenty member libraries now receive large numbers of professional publications; so far, the bulk of these are periodicals, but since Japan's inclusion in the plan is recent, it is thought that books will be sent in larger quantities. The USBE has sent 1,143 books as gifts to Japanese libraries during 1954, and 872 during the first half of 1955.
Among private foundations, the Asia Foundation program is perhaps the most active. For the past three years the Foundation (formerly named Committee for Free Asia) has assisted Japanese publishers in procuring rights to translate and publish American books in Japan. Most of these were for important books, of limited market appeal, which could not have been obtained in the normal course of business. Emphasis has been on books that give a fair picture of the people of the U.S., of their thinking and living. Recently the Asia Foundation started its Books for Asian Students program for Japan. Books in the humanities and social sciences particularly, but not exclusively, are collected from college students and college libraries and sent for distribution to Japanese students at low cost or in exchange for Japanese books no longer needed. Another phase of this program is the collection from U.S. textbook publishers of stocks, bound and unbound, of recently out-dated editions of selected titles. In the past six months, approximately 50,000 copies of such books have been shipped.

The Asia Foundation has arranged to obtain books from the Committee for Free Europe for the Japanese Institute of Foreign Affairs Library. It is also supplying a total of 1,000 books in the social sciences to ten research libraries. Currently it is preparing lists of books for the American Literature Project at Tokyo University, with plans calling for 10,000 volumes.

CARE in cooperation with Unesco supplies scientific and technical books to educational institutions.

Japan's greatest need is in the educational field—English language college textbooks and technical and scientific books. The primary requirement, assuming a high level of quality, is low price, regardless of format or binding. Also, an accelerated flow of general books is needed to acquaint readers and opinion-makers with the facts of life—and of politics and thinking—in the United States, and to counteract the frequently distorted pictures which the Communists encourage and which natural prejudice and political expediency assist in nourishing. Since bookstores are browsing places in Japan, due in part to the inaccessibility of books in many libraries, it seems important that Japanese bookstores be encouraged to keep representative collections of staple as well as newly published U.S. books.

Korea

Korea, as the name is used throughout this report, means South Korea. For obvious reasons the entire situation here regarding American books is somewhat discouraging. The country is in economic,
political, and intellectual turmoil. American books can be of great help here, but the difficulties in importing and distributing them are great.

With an estimated population of 19½ million in 1952, Korea had a school population (including those in adult education courses) in 1948 of nearly 4 million. No reliable figures were obtained for the post-war period. Figures for 1930, admittedly out-of-date, showed 69% of those over the age of 10 to be illiterate.

In the words of one Korean college professor, “Even in Korean colleges and universities the professors who meet to grade the entrance examinations invariably laugh, lament and are greatly annoyed to discover how low is the degree of English mastered by the graduates of the high school English curriculum.” Comparatively few Koreans read English with any degree of fluency.

There is no tariff on American books. Import licenses are required but are not hard to get. Stores must purchase dollars on the open (or black) market at twice the official rate. Reportedly, the Korean government supplies funds at the official rate for the import of *Time, Life, Newsweek*, and *Readers Digest*.

There was no publishing industry in Korea during the years of Japanese rule, and conditions now are poor. Paper is expensive and scarce. Markets are small. Although the number of bookstores is increasing, this being a business one can enter with as little as $300 cash, income is used to cover living expenses and both publishers and distributors find it hard to collect. The entire industry seems to be in a state of disorganization and demoralization. Many professors use Japanese texts because they are used to them, but students would prefer their own books. These either are not being supplied or are considered of poor quality. Few general readers visit bookstores because of the pressure of earning a living, and students have severely limited means for books. Eighty per cent of bookstore customers are students: the adult 20% confine their purchases mainly to cheap magazines.

No local periodicals are devoted to book reviews, but interviews with students and booksellers have established a need for one.

A recent survey of a group consisting of government officials, educators, journalists, cultural organization workers, college students, and business men revealed book purchases in this order: academic essays, specialized studies, social science, national literature, criticism, entertainment. Of this group, ⅔ bought books in Japanese, ⅓ imports from other countries.
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There are in Korea only twelve libraries, of which four are USIS libraries.

In 1954 these centers had holdings, circulation and attendance as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Holdings</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kwangju</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>11,180</td>
<td>7,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pusan</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>21,190</td>
<td>26,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>2,719</td>
<td>51,720</td>
<td>15,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taegu</td>
<td>3,232</td>
<td>907,230</td>
<td>23,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8,314</td>
<td>991,320</td>
<td>73,860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The need for books on all levels is great, but especially among high school and university students, since they are virtually the country’s only readers. Further, there is a hunger for information of all kinds among the students and a difficulty in obtaining it. Books most wanted in order of preference, are: world literature and classics, natural sciences, law, politics. All should be simply written and easy to understand, taking into account the Koreans’ difficulty with English.

Although Korea imported about $85,000 of U.S. books in 1954 (a ⅓ drop from 1953) none of these were general books. Paper-bound book publishers reportedly do a big business in Korea, but import figures both here and in Japan are more likely to reflect the purchasing power of American service men than of Korean civilians.

No Communists books are found openly displayed. Japan is the chief supplier of books and periodicals. The older generations know Chinese and Japanese as well as Korean; the present school age children are learning only the new Korean alphabet and also some English.

In five years USIA has had fifty-four U.S. books translated into Korean and has opened four USIS libraries with 8,300 books and an annual circulation of 74,000 copies. The International Cooperation Administration has presented, through American universities, 200 books to Korean colleges. Approximately 1,500 books are scheduled to be distributed this year through the USIA presentation program.

The USBE reports that library facilities in Korea are inadequate for the handling of books, and therefore even where funds or books are available, libraries have not provided means for their use.

The American-Korean Foundation collected 150,000 classroom sets of text and reference books in 1954 from American publishers for its “Help Korea Train” drive. It is sending through the USBE 10,000 individual titles to libraries; and is operating a program with U.S. Army medical services, whereby individual physicians and hospitals
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and local and state medical authorities have contributed 123,000 pounds of books and periodicals valued at $50,000 for distribution to Korean medical schools. It has also purchased approximately $40,000 worth of classroom sets and reference books for teacher-training institutions, medical schools, and programs, such as the National Institute for Prevention of Infectious Diseases.

The Asia Foundation has sent 1,000 books and is sending 1,500 more to the Research Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences. It has also made a grant to the American Geographical Society to send maps, books, and periodicals to the Korean Geographical Association.

CARE in cooperation with Unesco sends scientific and technical books to educational institutions with funds solicited for that purpose.

Korea needs assistance in publishing and distributing more Korean books to help develop readership among its adults. It needs translations of American books and of world classics and textbooks (high school and college), technical and scientific books, and science for lay readers. It needs American books of all kinds at low prices, but especially college textbooks and supplementary texts. These must be simply written and inexpensive, regardless of format or binding.

Taiwan

Taiwan, or Formosa, is the seat of Chiang Kai-shek’s “National Republic of China.” Its 1950 population of 7½ million exclusive of troops had a school population of slightly over one million. Present day population is estimated at 9½ million; about 2,000 students a year graduate from one or another of the universities or technical colleges. There are the native Taiwanese who speak and read Japanese as well as Chinese. And there are the mainland Chinese, mostly refugees, who speak and read Chinese.

English literacy is not extensive. Most university graduates speak English and read it with some degree of fluency. Opinion-makers such as engineers, professors, professional men, and government officials are familiar with English. The average working reporter or writer on a newspaper does not know English, but the owners and executives of newspapers do.

There are a number of obstacles to the importation of American books. Although the local exchange rate is 21.55 Taiwan dollars to one U. S. dollar, most money for imports has to be bought on the black market where the exchange is 28 or 30 to one. In addition to this, there is an exchange tax which adds an additional six dollars to this, which means that an importer buying his dollars on the black market
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is trading at the rate of roughly 35 Taiwan dollars to one U.S. dollar. Licenses are required for import but are not difficult to obtain; there are import quotas, but they are reasonably flexible. All books coming into Taiwan are subject to very strict political censorship.

There is a well-developed commercial book business in Taiwan. There are a number of local publishers publishing books in Chinese. The bookstores, of which there are a reasonably large number, do a thriving business. Some of the largest stores, such as Cave's, Book World Company and the English Press, carry quite a large stock of American books. Distribution throughout this small country is reported orderly and efficient.

The library situation provides a great deal of room for improvement. In addition to the USIS libraries, of which there are three, there are libraries only at the universities and technical schools. Taiwan University has a large and good library, but devotes most of its space to technical books. National Teachers College and the six or so technical schools have small libraries and are limited in scope. Taiwan Christian University is establishing a small library, also limited to informational and technical books. There are no public libraries in the country and therefore no place where the average non-school person might obtain books easily and at no cost.

Since most of the publishing being done in Taiwan is in the textbook field, schools are well supplied with locally-made books, which are not considered of too high a degree of excellence. A few Japanese textbooks are imported, but these can be used only by the native Taiwanese because the mainlanders living in Taiwan do not know Japanese. There is a tremendous need for college textbooks and technical books; this is not being adequately met in current programs.

During 1954 approximately $100,000 worth of American books were imported. The vast bulk of these, about 75%, were textbooks, Bibles and testaments. Only about three to five per cent were general books. It is not known what number of paper-bound books were sent into Taiwan, but presumably a large amount of this three to five per cent by dollar volume consisted of paper-bound books. Because of the uneven exchange situation and the low prevailing salaries, American books are too high-priced for any but the American colony of approximately 2,000 people. There is a brisk business in American paperback books, which seems to be overbalanced in favor of mysteries and Westerns, and these have a large circulation among the local people. Information about American books is available, although the book
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circulation situation is such that very seldom can a local publisher afford the American price for translation rights.

Unlike many other parts of the Far East, no books from Communist China and no books from Russia get into Taiwan. There are very few British books available because Britain does not recognize Nationalist China and so local businessmen are discouraged from doing any business with Great Britain. Aside from a very few British books, a few more U. S. books, and the Hong Kong and Taiwan-published Chinese books, no others are available.

The USIA translation program has arranged for the translation into Chinese and publication of forty-three books and twelve pamphlets during the five years of its activity. During fiscal 1955 approximately $15,000 was used for this purpose, and for the current fiscal year it is planned to spend approximately $18,000.

The USIS operation in Taiwan is similar in many respects to that in Hong Kong. Its presentation program during the current fiscal year will provide funds for approximately 1,000 books. Three USIS libraries carry a total of 19,000 books and have an annual circulation of 62,000. There is also a USIS bookmobile which circulates both in Taipei and throughout many parts of northern Taiwan.

The United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare is making up a list of representative American textbooks used in elementary and secondary schools, professional books for teachers, educational periodicals and other materials, to form the nucleus of a materials center.

Taiwan has an Informational Media Guarantee program agreement and during the fiscal year 1955 guarantees for books estimated at $186,000 U. S. dollars were issued.

The Asia Foundation has sent about two hundred books in the social sciences and humanities to Central Political University Library in Taiwan. It has sent some five hundred books and research materials to the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica. The Asia Foundation has also sent a quantity of books to the International Student Center Library and Reading Rooms. The Foundation's Books for Asian Students program has been expanded to include Taiwan, and many thousands of used and outdated college textbooks have been sent here within the past several months.

Although Taiwan is not the target for Communist propaganda via books that many other countries in the Far East are, there is a crying need for American books generally. All kinds of technical books are
in demand, including scientific and medical books. And college textbooks are particularly needed. The market for general books, whether American or Chinese, is considered to be very small. A recent contest for the best writing in Taiwan resulted in the publication in Chinese of some sixty titles. Only three of these sold out their first edition of 2,000 copies. On the other hand, aside from the American community there is a rapidly growing book audience of college graduates who, having formed the reading habit in school, would be a logical market for American books. It would seem that this is a secondary market at the moment, being less important than the college and technical market. However, this is a market which is rapidly growing and which should be considered in any plan for distributing American books in Taiwan.

Throughout the entire Far East there are certain facts which make themselves evident. What one does about these facts is largely a matter of opinion and is subject to a certain amount of experiment. But the facts themselves, appear to be obvious enough to lend themselves to only a rather narrow interpretation. In the past the educated classes in Asia have been, and are, now avid and hungry readers. As such, they have always consumed a modest number of American books, particularly cheap reprints which they can afford, and a larger number of British books. The reasons for this are obvious. The British are much more aggressive in selling to Asia and they make it possible for Asians to do business with them. America in the past has done neither of these things. Sales efforts have been mild, distribution vague, shipping time-consuming, monetary and credit restrictions almost strangling.

There might be no particular need to change any of this now if two new facts hadn’t entered the picture since the end of World War II. The first fact is that most of Asia is neither Communist nor anti-Communist, neither pro-West nor anti-West. The American tendency to divide politics into black and white doesn’t work in Asia. Therefore, barring a major war, there will be a long and bitter struggle for the minds of the people in the Far East. Since one must impress the educated classes and the intellectuals in order to reach the masses, books are the first line of attack. Without for a moment pretending to claim that everything America does is pure and perfect, the amount of misinformation about this country and the degree of misunderstanding of America one finds in the Far East is shocking. Misconceptions among the intellectuals, even extremely friendly persons, are almost unbelievable. (A group of college professors in East Pakistan, all of
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them warm and friendly toward America, asked the author to explain why Americans felt insecure and why there were war fears here because “only America could start an atomic war.” They were not accusing. They were assuming. Obviously, ideas which did not originate in America have been thoroughly absorbed, and efforts to counteract and inform have been sadly lacking.

This is not criticism of American efforts, because the author has seen at close range the efforts that are being made, both through government agencies and private ones, and there can be very little criticism of what is being done. But there are a number of things, as there must be, which aren’t being done. And it is the opinion of this writer that not enough is being done in enough places in enough intensity and in the right way with American books. This is largely because many of the people in the United States concerned with books have not yet become concerned with Asia. Many of them still regard it as a strange place halfway around the world. The ideological urgency of communicating our ideas to the people of Asia has not sufficiently impressed enough people connected with the writing and publishing of books in this country.

As for the second point mentioned above, more and more Asians each year are learning English. It is rapidly becoming the universal language, the second language in every country in the Far East. With school attendance in the countries covered by this report ranging from 10% to 20%, and going up each year, the number of literate Asians is increasing by leaps and bounds. It would seem that ten years from now, a tremendous potential market of English-reading Asians will exist, and they will read either British books or American books or both. Much depends on what Americans do about trying to supply this demand.

What follows is simply a suggestion as to how the Far Eastern market for American books might be broadened. This, in fact, might be enlarged to include all of Southeast Asia as well, for any plan which would work out for one area could be, with only slight variations, applicable to the others.

Since the American distribution system throughout Asia is sadly out of date and is not equipped to cope with the increasing new market, a modern and efficient distribution system should be set up. The basis of this should be a warehouse and shipping center located, perhaps, in Hong Kong, with easy access to the rest of Asia. From this center salesmen could travel three or four or more times a year, checking stock on staple books and selling new ones. Such a warehouse would
have other advantages besides accessibility. Overhead would be low, and instead of the three-to-four-month shipping lag which now exists, books sent out of Hong Kong would arrive in most areas certainly within a month. A local distribution office would be desirable in New York, but this alone would not adequately handle so remote an area.

Since the prices of American books are a problem, and since production costs are the reason for the high prices, something has to give in this area before this distribution can be vastly increased. There are several possibilities for this. Special Asian editions might be printed in America at the time of the initial printing. This might be in the form of overruns on cheaper paper and with cheaper binding and less expensive jackets. Books which have a potentially large market in Asia should be printed there from mats made in the United States, or by offset. Although the general quality of printing in most of Asia is not comparable to America’s, both Tokyo and Hong Kong are equipped to do first-rate work. They do it at 25% to 35% of U.S. prices. Manufacturing books in Asia would not only keep costs down, but would save the time and the cost of transportation across the Pacific. From an economic point of view, vastly increased circulations at low prices would probably yield American publishers higher totals from royalty payments than they now get from book sales.

Since American textbooks are so vitally needed in every country, they might be printed cheaply in a place such as Hong Kong, or they might be overrun on cheap paper in cheap bindings in America. Most textbook publishers do a negligible amount of textbook business throughout the Far East, and yet the clamor among students for American textbooks is intense. It seems illogical to believe that there is no way in which the American textbook publisher and the Asian student can get together for their mutual advantage.

One essential is a plan to permit payment in local currency. The current IMG plan is a tremendous step forward in this respect. Perhaps an extension of this plan on a broader scale would be necessary for the volume of business under discussion. With payments permitted in local currency, a great number of import restrictions would vanish. A credit system is essential which includes the realities of the countries where sales are desired. No industry has yet ever succeeded in selling anyone anything except on what the buyer considered his terms. One might simply ask himself how many automobiles would be in use today if the average purchaser were required to pay cash before he could drive his car away.

A modification of American publishers’ contracts with British pub-
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lishers is called for if they are to compete in many markets in Asia generally. (Hong Kong is the only "Empire" market included in the area with which this report is specifically concerned.) The British publishers maintain that this Empire market is essential if they are to show a profit. With the proper distribution system in Asia, an American publisher might find that this market is at least as important to him as it is to the British publisher.

There is no question at all that this is a very difficult order. No matter how enthusiastic it might be, the American book publishing industry couldn't begin to put it into effect. The cost in time and personnel and money would be far beyond anything that the book industry might envision. On the other hand, it seems to the writer that this is at least as important to the government as it is to the book industry. And since there are a number of wealthy private organizations in America which have demonstrated their interest in spreading American culture, a team might be composed of the book industry, the government, and one or more private organizations. The investment would be tremendous. There is no hiding from the fact that the problems would be enormous. But if anyone suspects that this might be impossible, he has simply to look at the efficiency with which England handles its book business in the Far East.

There is one basic requirement. The need should be regarded as vital and the eventual plan is practical. With America's ingenuity and combined resources, there is no reason why any thinking person should be ignorant of American beliefs, thoughts, and ways of life. In this, the age of communications, it is sometimes astounding to discover how little communication is used. A modern and practical system for distributing American books throughout the Far East could go far toward eliminating so much current misunderstanding.