Ivan Kats, the Obor Foundation, and Indonesia: Reframing Cold War Cultural Diplomacy

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> President Nixon … During his visits to Indonesia, the President continued, it was apparent that the Dutch had left a mark of progress and contribution to Indonesian culture that was evident in many areas. He asked the Prime Minister about current Dutch relationships with Indonesia.
> The Prime Minister replied that relationships were extremely cordial at this point, having progressed from a point of near open warfare earlier. Now relationships were warm and cordial, and the visit of the Queen to Indonesia last year had been highly successful.
> President Nixon emphasized the importance of Indonesia and its great potential, both in terms of population and natural resources.
>
> Meeting between President Nixon and Prime Minister Barend Biesheuvel, 26 January 1972.[1]

Ivan Kats is a little-known figure in international history, yet his skills as editor, networker, fundraiser, and cultural troubadour have left their mark on modern Indonesian culture. A member of the Congress for Cultural Freedom's secretariat (CCF) in Paris during the 1960s, Kats oversaw the CCF's cultural projects in Southeast Asia to spread Western liberal ideals among restless intellectual elites looking to establish a post-colonial national culture. These cultural projects were funded by the Ford Foundation and, earlier, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Exiting from Paris when the CIA-CCF connection was about to enter a critical phase, Kats relocated to Yale and set about creating a successor operation, eventually managed through his own Obor Foundation.[2] A Belgian by birth, Kats was able to tap into the Dutch intellectual, policy, and corporate circles that maintained an interest in Indonesia, providing a link between US and Dutch Cold War and capitalist interests in Southeast Asia. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Kats, via Obor, had a profound influence in Indonesia as Suharto's New Order

[1] Memorandum of Conversation, 26 January 1972, Richard M. Nixon National Security Files 1969-1974: Western Europe, Reel 19, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (hereafter RIAS).
[2] Obor is 'torch' in Bahasa Indonesian.

regime sought to shape a new national identity through a carefully monitored culture industry.

Studies of both the CCF and the Indonesian culture industry have often referred to Kats' role, but never in detail. Of particular importance has been Kats' relations with key cultural producers who emerged as pivotal figures in the aftermath of the 1965-66 political turmoil and the end of the Sukarno regime. Of the main histories of the CCF, only Peter Coleman mentioned him in relation to the organization's efforts to build relations with Indonesian anti-communist intellectuals.[3] David Hill and Janet Steele recount that Kats was influential in nurturing relations with around 150 'democratic intellectuals' during the early 1960s by means of distributing books, arranging for study grants to attend European institutions, and generally providing moral support in an increasingly challenging political environment.[4] Others have been more critical, interpreting Kats as part of a wider coordinated campaign to undermine Indonesian cultural independence by promoting Western liberal ideals and, as a consequence, tacitly condoning violence against the Communist party and its supporters.[5]

This article explores Kats' role as a privateering 'cultural diplomat' in the service of Cold War anti-communism, Western corporate interests, and US philanthropy. It discusses the relevance of Kats from a 'New Diplomatic History' perspective, interpreting his role in relation to three research fields: the history of philanthropy; books as cultural products; and Kats as a cultural broker. Strictly speaking, Kats is a civilian who never had any official diplomatic status. He was not employed by the foreign services of either the United States or the Netherlands. From the view of most of the existing literature, Kats is no more than a walk-on player without any particular significance. In contrast, the aim here is to explore Kats' own 'diplomatic agency' as an intellectual, philanthropist, and cultural entrepreneur moving between the West and the East. New Diplomatic History expands the range of enquiry across the environment of diplomatic activity, so that figures such as Kats, strictly speaking not a diplomat, can be seen as taking on diplomat-type roles. This alters our perception of diplomacy from a closed-off world of officially designated professionals to a

[3] P. Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy* (New York 1989) 208.

[4] D. Hill, *Journalism and Politics in Indonesia: A Critical Biography of Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004)* (London 2010) 74; J. Steele, *Wars Within* (Jakarta 2014) 48.

[5] W. Herlambang, *Cultural Violence: Its Practice and Challenge in Indonesia* (Saarbrücken 2011).

fluid, mobile, diverse field of actors each contributing to the overall fabric of diplomatic interactions.

Cold War Culture

The key to understanding Kats' wider role is his relationship with the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF).[6] The CCF is one of the most notorious episodes in the 'cultural Cold War' due to it representing the merger of liberal ideals and covert action. On 26 June 1950 – the day the Korean war broke out – the CCF held its inaugural conference in West Berlin. It was part of the increasingly intense contest to organize Western societies around competing visions of the future: the democratic capitalist path under the tutelage of the United States, or the collectivist egalitarian path under the lodestar of the Soviet Union. Based on the prestige and cultural capital of its prominent members, the CCF that emerged from West Berlin sought to represent the baseline for cultural freedom worldwide. Its manifesto issued at the conference was a bold statement on the use and abuse of freedom of expression by political power. Claiming that 'no political philosophy or economic theory … no race, nation, class or religion can claim the sole right to represent the idea of freedom', the CCF set itself up as the guardian of the open, pragmatic 'market-place of ideas' ideal of post-war liberalism. The CCF was the cultural version of Arthur Schlesinger's *Vital Center*.[7]

The conference led to a permanent organization based in Paris. Moving away from militant anti-communism, the CCF adopted a high-modernist cultural agenda and anti-neutralist, reformist, secular, centrist politics that would be typecast later in the decade as the 'end of ideology'.[8] From the late 1950s onwards, the CCF looked to extend its reach into new territory: Africa, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific. Looking to support

[6] For a useful overview of some of the major CCF histories, see: E. Pullin, 'The Culture of Funding Culture: The CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom', in: C.R. Moran and C.J. Murphy eds., *Intelligence Studies in Britain and the US. Historiography since 1945* (Edinburgh 2013).

[7] A. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston 1949).

[8] See: G. Scott-Smith, 'The "Masterpieces of the 20th Century" Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom: Origins and Consolidation, 1947-1952', *Intelligence and National Security* 15 (2000) 121-143.

modernization and foment nascent liberal tendencies in the newly-independent nations of the Global South, these ventures rarely secured solid footholds in an increasingly unforgiving socio-political environment. Castroism and the Vietnam War politicized the cultural scene with an anti-Americanism that stretched the 'openness' of the CCF's Cold War consensus liberalism. In the early years these endeavours were largely funded by the CIA, as part of their campaign to bolster anti-communist (particularly 'non-communist left') political elements and foster a broad liberal consensus in line with US interests. By the 1960s, the Ford Foundation, initially wary of being associated with covert operations, decided to take on full responsibility for the CCF. When the CIA connection was revealed in 1967 and the CCF was effectively declared intellectually bankrupt, it was soon revived as the International Association of Cultural Freedom (IACF) with continuing Ford patronage. The IACF, although a chastened organization lacking real intellectual authority, nevertheless continued much the same line as before.

The historiography on the CCF was originally focused on the extent to which the CIA controlled the organization, not just in terms of financial support but also in terms of cultural direction, and to what extent this undermined its claims to be representing 'cultural freedom'. Thus, Peter Coleman's *The Liberal Conspiracy* defended the purpose of the organization despite the CIA link. Pierre Grèmion and Volker Berghahn both placed the CCF within a broader understanding of transatlantic cultural relations that rescued some of its significance. On the other side, Frances Stonor Saunders regarded the whole affair as a conspiratorial sham that exposed the hypocrisy of 'Western values'.[9] In contrast, more recent titles have sought to investigate the CCF as a cultural actor of global importance. They emphasize its network of publications that proselytized its anti-communism under multiple headings, or its lasting impact on nurturing new generations of post-colonial/post-modern cultural actors across Latin America, Asia, and Africa.[10] In these readings, it is not a question of CIA or no CIA, but of

[9] P. Gremion, *Intelligence de l'Anticommunisme* (Paris 1995); V. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe* (Princeton 2002); F. Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?* (London 1999).

[10] P. Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge MA 2015); R. Burke, "Real Problems to Discuss": The Congress for Cultural Freedom's Asian and African Expeditions, 1951-1959', *Journal of World*

how we might include the CCF within a broader understanding of emerging cultural identities, confrontations, and campaigns. In terms of the CCF hierarchy, Kats worked under the CCF executive secretary John Hunt as part of the Asia section, and the focus of most scholars on the prominent figures and decision-makers would explain why he has up till now largely been hidden from view. But Kats' importance comes from his role in perpetuating the CCF mission after 1967 under a different guise, allied to, but effectively outside of the IACF.

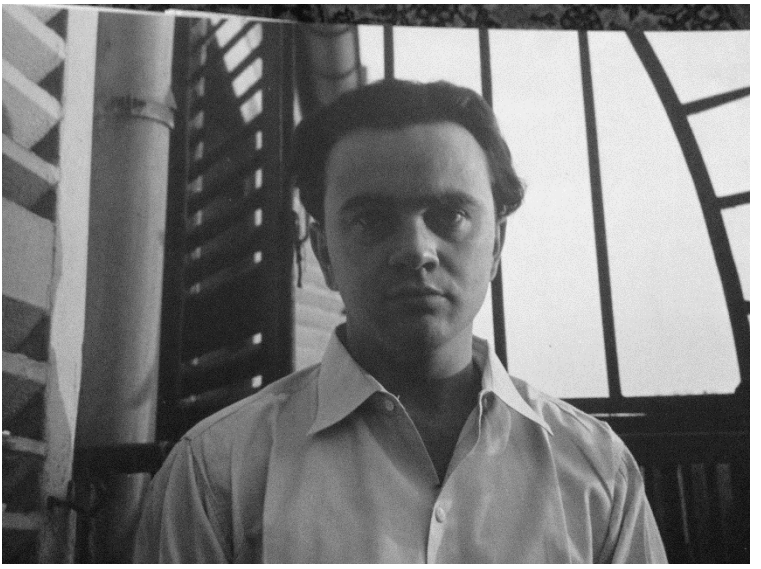


Image 1: Ivan Kats, Paris, n.d. [circa 1948]. Source: collection of Hanni Obozinski.

Kats came from a Flemish Jewish/Catholic family living in Brussels, and he left Europe with his sister for the United States just before war broke out in 1939. After studying philosophy at City College NY, he moved to the Sorbonne in 1946, but Parisian café society was too enticing. He drifted into a series of writing and translation jobs, including for NATO's public

History 27 (2016) 53-85; G. Scott-Smith and C. Lerg eds., *Campaigning Culture and the Global Cold War* (London 2017).

relations office, where he worked on the periodical *Occident-Western World* in the late 1950s. After meeting John Hunt at a cocktail party, Kats joined the CCF staff some time in 1959-1960. By the early 1960s, he was working closely with Hunt on the expansion of Congress activity in the Middle East and Asia, in particular through its journals. Kats had a background that fitted this role well. An émigré from Nazi Europe, Kats' mother came from a family of military and civil service administrators in the Dutch East Indies, and his father had built up a commercial trade in clothing with the same colony. Kats had been raised with a fascination for Southeast Asia, was committed to the anti-communist cause, and determined to spread Western intellectual ideals as part of the cultural modernization of Asian life.

Kats gradually focused more on the Asia-Pacific region. In 1962, he was sent by Hunt on a trip to South Asia to evaluate the intellectual-cultural environment for CCF activities. By focusing on the need to modernize education, he advocated tapping into the dissatisfaction of the post-colonial Pakistani intelligentsia.[11] A promotor of developing CCF contacts in South Korea, particularly the journal *Sasanggye* led by Chang Chun Ha,[12] he soon had a direct impact on two CCF publications: *Horison* in Indonesia and *Solidarity* in the Philippines, both created in 1966. *Horison* was created by Mochtar Lubis, one of the pioneers of independent journalism through the daily *Indonesia Raya*, which he co-founded in 1949 as a platform to generate a critical public sphere in newly-independent Indonesia. Lubis became a determined critic of both President Sukarno and the Communist party. This led to his connection with the CCF, which both supported him during his stints in jail and provided him with an international network to strengthen his cause. After being released following the events of September 1965 and the subsequent elimination of the Indonesian Communist party (PKI) by the military and its paramilitary allies, Lubis founded *Horison*. It was a deliberate move to signify a fresh cultural movement under what would become Suharto's New Order. The journal soon became 'a path-breaking monthly cultural and literary journal, forged by an alliance of young generation cultural activists and highly respected senior authors and literary

[11] Ivan Kats to John Hunt, 13 October 1962, Folder 3 Box 207, Ivan Kats Correspondence 1959-1966, IACF Archive, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago (hereafter IK CCF).

[12] Ivan Kats to John Hunt, 'Our Work in Korea', 6 September 1962, Folder 3 Box 207, IK CCF.

figures'.[13] Lubis shrugged off the CIA-CCF recriminations of the late 1960s and, in return for Congress support during the years of his imprisonment, even joined the IACF Executive Board in the early 1970s.[14] Mochtar Lubis died in 2004 but his journal continued to reach its fiftieth anniversary in 2016.[15]

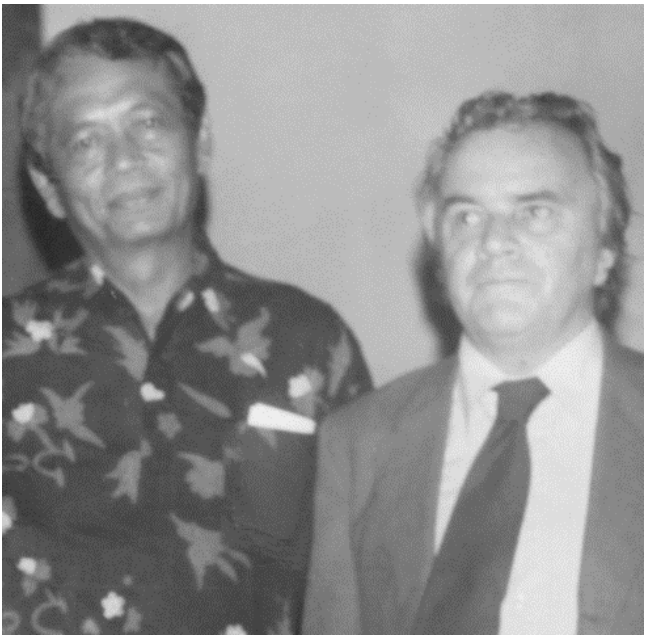


Image 2: Mochtar Lubis and Ivan Kats, n.d.. Source: Box 12, Series VI, Ivan Kats Papers, MS 2048, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

Lubis was part of a small-scale, liberal-minded, Western-orientated young intelligentsia who challenged both the Sukarno and Suharto regimes on their repression of civil liberties and basic intellectual freedoms from the 1950s

[13] D. Hill ed., *Beyond the Horizon: Short Stories from Contemporary Indonesia* (Clayton 1998) xix-xx.
[14] D. Hill, *Journalism and Politics in Indonesia: A Critical Biography of Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004) as Editor and Author* (London 2010) 112-120.
[15] See: http://www.horison-online.com.

through to the 1980s. Kats, who worked closely with other key figures such as Goenawan Mohamed and Arief Budiman, saw his role as assisting this formation of a pro-Western outlook through the cultural patronage of first the CCF and later Obor. This patronage was pursued in highly contested territory, both figuratively and literally. The effects of colonialism on all areas of Indonesian social and political life and cultural psyche ran deep, since Indonesia itself, as an entity, was a colonial creation. The CCF and Obor promoted Western liberal values to tie the post-colonial intelligentsia into the circuits of US-centred educational and cultural exchange. These campaigns therefore clashed with alternative visions of the future, be they leftist or traditionalist, that saw ongoing Western influence in any form as neo-colonialism. The years 1965-1966 marked a turning point in this struggle, since the outlawing of the PKI and the mass killings that were justified under the heading of anti-communism paved the way for the end of Sukarno and the arrival of the 'New Order' regime of General Suharto. Suharto's economic policies essentially 'relied on the exploitation of natural resources and cheap labour, using the same methods of domination and coercion like its colonial predecessor'.[16] Even though one was forged on nationalist anti-colonialism and its successor on military authoritarianism, the space for critique through the channels of civil society was equally narrow under both regimes. Lubis was imprisoned by both for demanding the right of freedom of expression in the press, an indication that the margins for manoeuvre in the fields of cultural expression were narrow, regardless of which regime was in power. It is in the context of this charged cultural environment that we need to understand the role and motivation of someone like Ivan Kats, who took it upon himself to try and widen those margins, albeit from a particular, Western-orientated perspective.

[16] H. Farid Setiadi, *Rewriting the Nation: Pramoedya Ananta Toer and the Politics of Decolonization*, PhD Dissertation, National University of Singapore 2014, 7.

Image 3: Ivan Kats, Goenawan Muhammed, and Evelina Kats, n.d.. Source: Box 12, Series VI, Ivan Kats Papers, MS 2048, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library

In 1969 Kats guest edited a special issue of *Quadrant*, the Australian journal established under CCF auspices. He collected together the vanguard of Indonesia's dissident writers and activists from the Sukarno period, including Goenawan Muhammed, Arief Budiman, Mochtar Lubis, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, and Taufiq Ismael. Kats opened the issue declaring that these were

> men at grips with basic problems, and approaching the same basic problems in ways that are conflicting. Indonesia's literature after some 40 years has come to constitute a modern cultural history which runs parallel to the social and political evolution, and which can be read as the sensitive record of a struggle for self-realization.[17]

Kats then charted the way forward:

> The problem that looms large in the background of this inquiry is of course the profound deterioration of Indonesia's schools and universities; of the world of book and newspaper publishing; of all

[17] I. Kats, 'Editor's Note', Indonesia Special Issue, *Quadrant* 61 (1969) 7.

> those social and cultural and educational institutions and facilities which, after having educated the citizen, normally provide him with employment, and weave a web of modernism and opportunity around him, so that he may use his learning for his own and society's benefit… Is Indonesia able to bear the burden of reconstruction in this area by herself?[18]

Big Phil

Philanthropy has generally been regarded as the provision of patronage for the purpose of improving social conditions in order to alleviate the effects of inequality and poverty. Philanthropists provide assets and skills for the general improvement of social life, be that through education, healthcare, or other forms of socio-economic welfare. In its purest form, it is not motivated by political or economic influence or gain. Whereas charity is based on the act of giving to solve an immediate need and relieve suffering, philanthropy is based on the channelling of assets to solve social problems over the longer term. This sets philanthropy apart, as a means to actually change society rather than simply attend to society's weaknesses.[19]

Large-scale philanthropy emerged in the United States as a result of the trade-off that occurred between political power and financial wealth in the early twentieth century. Faced with increasing criticism and powerful moves to break up their economic dominance through anti-cartel legislation and stringent tax laws, corporations such as Standard Oil were able to channel a major part of their assets into tax-free foundations geared to promoting the public good. Andrew Carnegie, made extremely wealthy with the sale of his steel firm to US Steel in 1901, transformed his wealth into a major vehicle of influence both domestically and internationally through the formation of the Carnegie Corporation in 1911.[20] Similar institutions such as the Century Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and later the Ford Foundation were based on shared principles of 'giving for good'. Yet despite their large-scale activities around the globe over the past century,

[18] Ibidem, 9.

[19] See for instance: K. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society 1700-1865* (Chicago 2011); J. Beer, *The Philanthropic Revolution: An Alternative History of American Charity* (Philadelphia 2015).

[20] P. Rosenfield, *A World of Giving: Carnegie Corporation of New York, a Century of International Philanthropy* (New York 2014).

relatively little research has been done on their relationship with US foreign policy.[21] As a rule, US philanthropy, in order to hold onto its tax-exempt status, has had to claim a benign position of 'scientific impartiality, ideological-political neutrality, and being above the market and independent of the state'.[22] In doing so, these institutions have largely fallen outside of international relations studies that continue to focus on the state as the prime entity. Research into the creation of global civil society has tended to maintain the view that foundations operate as neutral participants sustaining the humanizing role of NGOs without any further agenda. Within international history, while foundations have been picked up by the 'transnational turn', this has also largely been done with an uncritical acceptance of their motives and a lack of insight into the power relations involved. In response, historians such as Inderjeet Parmar, drawing on the older work of Edward Berman, have put together a critical model that views the large foundations as appendages to the US state. According to Parmar, through the twentieth century the major foundations broadly shared the same assumptions of the beneficent influence of US power around the globe, with the two linked via an elites-only revolving door for senior positions.[23]

This reading of philanthropy, and its close association with the pursuit of US interests around the globe (in contrast to the apolitical, egalitarian outlook put forward by its own publicity), presents a different context for the story of Kats and Obor. Kats had already encountered the Ford Foundation's support for modernization projects during his years at the CCF, and from 1966 he set out to develop a new venture that would be appealing to these same modernizers of the major foundations. Facing the demise of the CCF and the termination of his Indonesia projects, he moved to the Center for South-East Asian Studies at Yale. It was from that base that he began to reach out to first the Rockefeller and then the Ford offices with the blueprints for what would become the Obor Foundation. In

[21] See: M. Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad: A History* (New Brunswick NJ 1963); R. Daniel, *American Philanthropy in the Near East 1820-1960* (Athens OH 1970); J. Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and Arts and Letters in Canada* (Montreal 2005).

[22] I. Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York 2012).

[23] Ibidem; E. Berman, *The Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on US Foreign Policy* (Albany NY 1983).

February 1970 Kats issued a first proposal for the Rockefeller Foundation, pitching the new venture as a means for

> re-establishing contacts between the Indonesian educated elite and the West, and re-introducing into Indonesian intellectual life the critical approach common to the social sciences which was rejected during [Sukarno's] Guided Democracy under the joint impact of state ideology and PKI propaganda.[24]

Kats envisioned a combined, coordinated approach, channelling philanthropic support from the United States, the Netherlands, Australia, and Japan. Crucially, 'Responsibility for the direction of cultural aid programs should lie with the Indonesians themselves'. This was to be the key motif of Obor – it was not to function as an outside-in organization, simply bringing knowledge and expertise to the Global South regardless of the specific wants and needs of the receivers. Instead, it aimed to empower those groups who were looking to advance their societies by means of Western know-how, but wanted to do so on their own terms. Kats was thus not only distancing himself from the one-size-fits-all US-based modernizers of the 1960s, but also making a subtle move away from the CCF approach. Through its journals and conferences the Congress had provided outlets for cultural expression around the globe, but still based on the belief of a liberal universalist value system attuned to the needs of all.[25] In contrast, Obor was to be about listening to the voices of those who were deemed worthy of such support, and adapting the aid package accordingly. Yayasan Obor Indonesia was incorporated as an Indonesian legal entity with this purpose in 1975, and as of 2019 still exists in this form.

The path to success was long and hard. Initial contacts with the Rockefeller Foundation were met with some scepticism as to the longer-term business model. Kats, who was much more comfortable in the fields of philosophy, literature, and the art of translation, had to develop a coherent, potentially solvent apparatus for his new form of cultural diplomacy that would satisfy the results-focused philanthropists. Support from Lionel Landry, Vice-President of the Asia Society, led to some

[24] I. Kats, A Multilateral Aid Project to Indonesia's Cultural Reconstruction: A Pilot Project in the Field of Publishing, February 1970.
[25] See: A. Rubin, *Archives of Authority: Empire, Culture, and the Cold War* (Princeton 2012).

corporate sponsorship, but the major breakthrough came in 1973 when the Ford Foundation issued its first tranche of support: $42,000, for Obor's 'social science publishing project'.[26] From then on, up to 1999, the Ford was a regular patron of Obor projects, covering publishing and translation, and the preservation of cultural heritage. But Obor was always meant to function as a kind of 'cultural buffer' between big philanthropy's grand schemes and the local cultural entrepreneurs themselves, translating philanthropy's patronage both literally (into texts) and symbolically (into defining local needs).

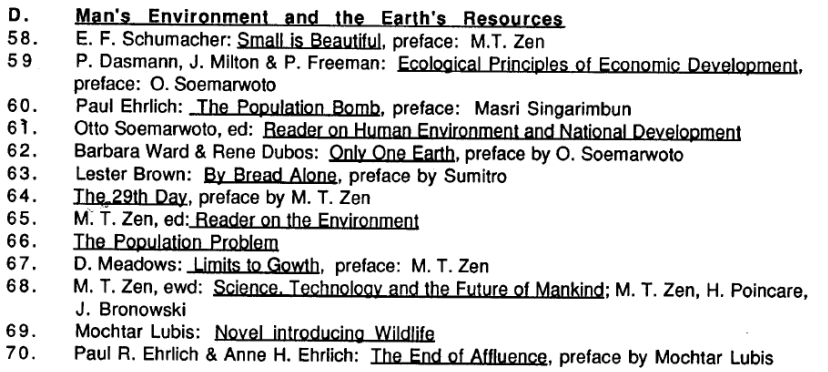
Book Channels

The publishing industry did very well from the Cold War. Print of all shapes and sizes was central for getting the message across to global audiences, and books were considered as one of the most effective ways to export ideas. While publishers saw major opportunities for profitably expanding their markets, propagandists saw numerous channels for spreading their forms of persuasion. In the United States, the linkage between commercial interests and political influence had already been made during WWII, when the Council on Books in Wartime was established. The Council coordinated publishers' efforts to provide a public service for the war effort while benefitting financially at the same time. With totalitarianism of the left and right demonstrating the power to shape social norms through control of the provision of selected information, books were seen by many as a crucial component in revitalizing democratic thought across Europe and beyond.[27]

This approach only escalated as the Cold War took hold, with libraries becoming vanguard outposts for ideological campaigns, central to the promotion of either a democratic-capitalist or collectivist-communist world-view. Cheap publications were the preferred medium for influencing literate publics across the decolonizing world regarding the future direction of their newly-founded nations. Both overt and covert programmes were active in this field. The Free Europe Committee (FEC), funded by the CIA, ran covert book programmes to circulate selected titles across Soviet-

[26] Draft grant announcement, n.d. [1973], Grant Reel 4586 Obor Inc. 1973-1978 II, Ford Foundation Archive, Rockefeller Archives Center.
[27] J. Hench, *Books as Weapons: Propaganda, Publishing, and the Battle for Global Markets in the Era of World War II* (Ithaca 2010).

controlled Eastern Europe, the apparatus of which – particularly the activities of the FEC's George Minden – is still not fully disclosed.[28] In the other direction, the smuggling out of forbidden dissident literature from the Soviet sphere was an equally important element of the cultural Cold War, as demonstrated by the story of Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*.[29] On the overt side, Franklin Book Programs, established in 1952, was the most extensive operation using books as 'tools of modernization' across Africa and Asia up until the 1970s.[30] Books were recognized by both East and West as being portable, discussable cultural objects that packed a subtle but potentially effective political punch.



D. Man's Environment and the Earth's Resources

58. E. F. Schumacher: Small is Beautiful, preface: M.T. Zen
59. P. Dasmann, J. Milton & P. Freeman: Ecological Principles of Economic Development, preface: O. Soemarwoto
60. Paul Ehrlich: The Population Bomb, preface: Masri Singarimbun
61. Otto Soemarwoto, ed: Reader on Human Environment and National Development
62. Barbara Ward & Rene Dubos: Only One Earth, preface by O. Soemarwoto
63. Lester Brown: By Bread Alone, preface by Sumitro
64. The 29th Day, preface by M. T. Zen
65. M. T. Zen, ed: Reader on the Environment
66. The Population Problem
67. D. Meadows: Limits to Gowth, preface: M. T. Zen
68. M. T. Zen, ewd: Science, Technology and the Future of Mankind; M. T. Zen, H. Poincare, J. Bronowski
69. Mochtar Lubis: Novel introducing Wildlife
70. Paul R. Ehrlich & Anne H. Ehrlich: The End of Affluence, preface by Mochtar Lubis

Image 4: Section of Obor's publication list. Source: 'OBOR: Purpose', February 1995.

The Obor story brings an extra dimension to this, one that breaks out beyond the Cold War framework and fits more within the twentieth century dimension of colonialism, post-colonialism, modernization, and development. Anti-communism was in this sense a means to achieve a greater end – that of securing and embedding a Western-orientated socio-

[28] A. Reisch, *Hot Books in the Cold War* (Budapest 2013).

[29] P. Finn and P. Couvée, *The Zhivago Affair: The Kremlin, the CIA, and the Battle Over a Forbidden Book* (New York 2014).

[30] A. Laugesen, 'Books for the World: American Book Programs in the Developing World, 1948-1968', in: G. Barnhisel and C. Turner eds., *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War* (Boston 2010) 127.

economic system and the normative values associated with it. In an overview of the Foundation's outlook from 1995, the challenge had always been

> (…) how to bring informal parallel Asian and African institutions to maturity: independent of government planning, managed by local people, drawing increasingly on their own resources and defining a new informal style and civic-minded approach.

'Big philanthropy' tended to drown out small-scale initiatives because their 'size and style of work reflect the conditions of their own societies' or their approach 'tends to be formal in style and over-ambitious in size.' In response, Obor aimed to position itself as a go-between,

> (…) helping local publishers bring out Indonesian-language books on key problems of the community, including civic integrity, family planning, and the ethics of civil service …. Books are published locally through reputable publishers and placed on the market at a low subsidized price within reach of students and the general reader.

In this sense Obor began as the cultural equivalent to Muhammad Yunus's Grameen Bank, established in 1976 to provide a credit stream to enable small-scale rural development.[31]

Cultural Broker

The designation 'cultural broker' comes out of anthropological studies that investigated specific competences that enabled individuals to act as mediators between cultural differences, providing appropriate services in terms of expertise to overcome interpretive misunderstandings and gaps in communication.[32] Cultural brokerage as a form of practice can be traced to the work of Hazel Weidman, who concentrated on those people "who

[31] M. Yunus, 'Halving Poverty by 2015', *The Round Table: Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 92 (2015) 363-375.
[32] See especially: E. Wolf, J. Steward, and R. Manners, *The People of Puerto Rico: A Study in Social Anthropology* (Urbana 1956).

served as links between two cultural systems" or "sociocultural units".[33] As a social actor, the broker or mediator is thus someone who effectively operates outside or on the edge of the connected communities, respected by all sides but not integrated into any of them.[34] 'Brokering' has also been developed as a term in tourism research, where the tour guide is seen more as cultural mediator than simple pathfinder, thus translating "the strangeness of a foreign culture into a cultural idiom familiar to the visitors".[35]

The role of cultural broker is a useful foil in the context of the practice of diplomacy. Acts of mediation, as an effective means to resolve disputes, have been central to diplomacy since the beginning of inter-polity interactions. Mediation can be defined as 'a process of conflict resolution, related to but distinct from the parties' own negotiations, where those in conflict seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an outsider'.[36] Diplomatic mediators and cultural brokers share similar traits: They are trusted by all parties for their impartiality, they seek to change the perceptions of the parties involved in order to assist with problem-solving, and they possess a diverse skill set. They often serve at any one time (or at the same time) as 'hosts, observers, facilitators, formulators, educators, manipulators, or advocates'.[37]

Was Kats a cultural broker/diplomatic mediator, using Obor to overcome the distance between the cultures of West and East, North and South? Up to a point the model fits on several levels. Obor was deliberately positioned to function between 'big philanthropy' and small-scale recipients, removing the cultural dissonance and dysfunction that large-scale development projects often generate. Kats was sensitive to cultural integrity and autonomy, striving to find a model that would allow for independent development on local terms. He was also a cultural polymath, speaking English, Dutch, French, and Spanish. He came from a Belgian Flemish Protestant-Jewish family background that he left behind to become an

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[33] H. Weidman, 'Implications of the Culture-Broker Concept for Health Care' (University of Miami: Applied Anthropology Documentation Project 1973) 130.
[34] See: J. van Willigen, *Applied Anthropology: An Introduction* (Westport CT 2002).
[35] E. *Cohen*, 'The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role', *Annals of Tourism Research* 12 (1985) 15.
[36] M. Ahtisaari with K. Rintakoski, 'Mediation', in: *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* (Oxford 2013) 338.
[37] Ibidem, 341.

American citizen and develop a way to re-engage with the images and stories of the Indies from his childhood. This confirms the 'outside' element of Kats' identity, since he was never wholly part of Belgian, Dutch, American, or Indonesian society, always passing between and linking them. In this sense he may perhaps fit the cultural broker label better than Mochtar Lubis, who was more embedded in the cause of crafting an Indonesian national identity.[38] Yet behind this transient exterior lies a more settled pattern. Obor was always about the one-way transfer of Western ideals and ideas to the Indonesian intellectual and educational environment. This was its originating purpose, and Kats, who never learned Bahasa Indonesian and always corresponded with the Obor offices in Jakarta in English, never wavered in his belief in Western-style modernization. The question was not whether it should occur, but how best it should occur. Whereas on the surface it may look as if Kats is trying to mediate between cultures, the details show that he was getting others to translate Western liberal norms into Indonesian social reality. There was no impartial position, and no attempt to mediate between cultures as if they possessed equal value. The cultural broker/diplomatic mediator model therefore only has limited interpretive usefulness. Obor represented a curious mix of respect for cultural difference and a humanist elitism, being both tolerant and intolerant at the same time.

Conclusion: Multilayered Diplomacies

Strictly speaking, there is no diplomacy present in the story of Ivan Kats. Yet this conclusion is only appropriate if a strict line is drawn around who can be a diplomat – only official representatives of the state, so the tradition goes, may conduct diplomacy. A broader approach, that stays with the notion of diplomacy as the management of international relations via negotiation but opens up the possibility for other actors to fulfil this role, instead opens up the possibility for exploring the role of others not designated under official title. Diplomacy is 'an inherently plural business which encourages an inherently plural outlook'.[39] The 'diplomatic field' can

[38] See: D. Hill, 'Mochtar Lubis: The Artist as Cultural Broker in New Order Indonesia', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 21 (1987) 54-88.
[39] C. Constantinou, P. Kerr, and P. Sharp, 'Introduction: Understanding Diplomatic Practice', *The Sage Handbook of Diplomacy* (London 2016) 5.

be widened, not only in the sense of acknowledging the contribution of non-state actors in the state-led system, but also in granting a certain diplomatic presence to non-state actors themselves, be they individuals or institutions. Ivan Kats occupied a space that would normally be claimed – if at all – by cultural, transnational, or Cold War historians. By situating this narrative within New Diplomatic History, the claim is made that he was fulfilling roles that connected to, contrasted with, and made more complex the traditional diplomatic relations between Indonesia, the United States, and the Netherlands, and that these roles fall outside of a state-based diplomatic history narrative. This broad-based approach to diplomatic history grants Kats an agency he would not otherwise have had – in fact, it rescues the rich complexities of his story from an otherwise marginal existence. His relationship with the CCF and thereafter with the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in particular position him as a player within the field of Western cultural diplomacy and its sustained efforts to influence and shape the future direction of Indonesia as a nation.[40] The ongoing legacies of Kats' work, through Obor, continue to this day. A state-based diplomacy narrative will not grasp the full depth of these connections, or the socio-economic interests that lay behind them.

[40] See for instance: B. Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and US-Indonesian Relations 1960-1968* (Stanford 2010).