

The Atoms for Peace USIS Films: Spreading the Gospel of the "Blessing" of Atomic Energy in the Early Cold War Era

*Tsuchiya Yuka**

Introduction

In 1955 *Blessing of Atomic Agency* (原子力の恵み) was released. It was a 30-minute documentary made by the US Information Service in Tokyo to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The film featured Japanese progress in “peaceful uses” of atomic energy, especially the use of radio-isotopes from the US Argonne National Laboratory. They were widely used in Japanese scientific laboratories, national institutions and private companies in various fields including agriculture, medicine, industry, and disaster prevention. The film also introduced the nuclear power generation method, mentioning the commercial use of this technology in the US and Europe. It depicted Japan as a nation that overcame the defeat of war and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, enjoying the “blessing” of atomic energy, and striving to become a powerful country with science and technology. Not only was this film screened at American Centers, schools, or village halls all across Japan, but it was also translated into various different lan-

* Professor, International/American Studies, Ehime University.

guages and screened in over 18 countries including the UK, Finland, Indonesia, Sudan, and Venezuela.

Blessing of Atomic Agency was one of some 50 USIS films (government-sponsored information/education films) produced as part of the “Atoms for Peace” campaign launched by the US Eisenhower administration (1953-1960). Against the atomic energy development and the “peace offensive” of the USSR, the Eisenhower administration made use of exhibitions, books, pamphlets, and USIS films to demonstrate that the US was developing not only nuclear weapons but also “peaceful uses” of atomic energy, and was indeed a global leader in that field.

This paper will examine the role of USIS films in peaceful uses of atomic energy (hereafter referred to as Atoms for Peace USIS films) as a part of the US’s public and cultural diplomacy of the early Cold War era. It will especially draw attention to the global context where such films were shown. USIS films were part of the US government’s global information dissemination programs promoted through the US Information Service (USIS) located in some 80 countries. The USIS offices around the world were subordinate to the US Information Agency (USIA) in Washington which was established in August 1953 as a special organization for overseas propaganda and public/cultural diplomacy.¹ The USIS films were screened by the USIS in each country, under the overall supervision of the USIA. As of June 1958, USIS films were screened in 41 different languages for about 500 million viewers a year in 80 countries.² There

1 Until the USIS was established in August 1953, the USIS was under the jurisdiction of the US Department of State, and therefore USIS films were also part of the Departmental responsibilities. The USIS offices were established in about 80 countries, although the number changed over time. A USIA report in January 1952 indicated that USIS films were screened in 85 countries, attracting passionate audiences who came walking many miles to the film showings. “IMP’s Part in the Campaign of Truth,” January 1952, RG306, Entry A1 1066, box 153, National Archives at College Park (Hereafter, NACP).

2 USIA, *The Overseas Film Program*, June 1959, RG306, Entry A1 1066, box 153, NACP.

were about 1,700 film titles by the mid-1960s, and among them more than 50 films concerning atomic energy were produced between 1955 and 1960, the heyday of the Eisenhower administration's "Atoms for Peace" campaign.

This paper will analyze the USIS films, scripts, and film catalogues to examine the role of USIS films within the global atomic energy policies of the US. By sampling seven Atoms for Peace USIS films, including "*Blessing of Atomic Agency*," it will examine the ways in which these films were introduced and screened in various different countries. By doing so, it will discuss why certain films were screened more widely than others, and why certain countries were more important targets of film-screening. It will present one example of how government-sponsored films can be a window through which to analyze the history of international relations in the Cold War era.

This study lies at the intersection of roughly three different academic fields, and attempts to make a contribution to each: Cold War studies (especially public/cultural diplomacy during the Cold War), film history, and the history of atomic energy. Cold War studies has experienced a "cultural turn" in the past decade, resulting in many important academic works dealing with cultural/public diplomacy, such as Penny Von Eschen's *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (2004), Kenneth Osgood's *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (2006), Matsuda Takeshi's *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency* (2007), and Nicholas J. Cull's *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency* (2008), to name just a few. This author has also co-published *De-Centering the Cultural Cold War: U.S. and Asia* (2009).³ This paper is a new contribution to the same field, with global

3 Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2004); Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (University Press of Kansas, 2006); Matsuda Takeshi, *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in*

perspectives on US public diplomacy.

Second, this paper offers a new approach to film history. US-government sponsored films have emerged as an object of scholarly analysis fairly recently. In Japan, in the early 1980s, educational historians began to pay attention to the educational films (CIE films) screened by the US Occupation Forces in the immediate postwar period.⁴ From the early 2000s, film historians such as Nakamura Hideyuki and Tanikawa Takeshi analyzed the CIE films.⁵ This author learned much from these preceding works, and further explored the historical and political aspects of the CIE films in two books.⁶ The CIE films were renamed the USIS films when the occupation ended in April 1952, and came under the jurisdiction of the State Department, and later, the USIA. In 2009, I organized a Japanese government-funded project team on the CIE and USIS films, and the three-year collaborative study ended in the publication of *The*

Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency (Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Stanford University Press, 2007); Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency* (Cambridge Studies in the History of Mass Communication, 2008); Kishi Toshihiko & Tsuchiya Yuka eds., *De-Centering the Cultural Cold War: U.S. and Asia* 文化冷戦の時代—アメリカとアジア (Kokusai Shoin, 2009).

- 4 Abe Akira, *Studies of the Establishment of Postwar Local Educational System* 戦後地方教育制度成立過程の研究 (kazama-shobo, 1983).
- 5 Nakamura Hideyuki, "A Note on the US Educational Films in Occupied Japan: Reception of Natco Projector and the CIE Films in the *Film Classroom Magazine*," 占領下米国教育映画についての覚書—'映画教室' 誌にみるナトコ(映写機)とCIE映画の受容について, *CineMagaziNet* no. 6, (<http://www.cmn.hs.h.kyoto-u.ac.jp/CMN6/nakamura.htm>), 2002; Tanikawa Takeshi, *The American Films and the Occupation Policies* アメリカ映画と占領政策 (Kyoto University Press, 2002).
- 6 Tsuchiya Yuka, *Constructing a Pro-US Japan: the US Information and Education Policy and the Occupation of Japan* 親米日本の構築 アメリカの対日情報・教育政策と日本占領 (Akashi-shoten, 2009); Tsuchiya Yuka, "The CIE Films in Occupied Japan" 占領期のCIE映画(ナトコ映画) in *Japanese Films Are Alive*, 7日本映画は生きている (Iwanami-shoten, 2010).

Occupying Eyes, Occupying Voices: the CIE/USIS Films and the VOA Radio (2012).⁷ Heo Eun of Korea University contributed a chapter on USIS films in Korea, offering precious information otherwise unavailable to Japanese readers.⁸ Also in Korea, new scholarship on the USIS films are emerging, including a doctoral dissertation by Kim Han Sang (2013).⁹

Third, this paper will shed new light on the history of atomic energy. Many books and articles have been published on this issue, especially after the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in March, 2011. However, very little has been researched on the USIS films used in the US Atoms for Peace campaign. The USIS films have been mentioned by authors such as Yoshimi Shunya and Tetsuo Arima, but only comprise a small portion of their larger arguments on the history of Japanese atomic energy.¹⁰ This paper attempts to make a significant contribution to the study of US atomic energy policy during the early Cold War era by showing the roles that the USIS films played. Especially, analysis of the soft power aspect will present a new perspective on the history of atomic energy.

7 Yuka Tsuchiya & Yoshimi Shunya, *The Occupying Eyes, Occupying Voices: The CIE/USIS Films and the VOA Radio* 占領する眼・占領する声—CIE/USIS 映画とVOAラジオ (University of Tokyo Press, 2012).

8 Heo Eun, “The US Interference in the Nation-building in the Cold War Era and the Frontline of Hegemony Construction: Films of the USIS Korea” 冷戦期アメリカの民族国家形成への介入とヘゲモニー構築の最前線：在韓米国広報文化交流局の映画 in Tsuchiya and Yoshimi, 2012, 129-156.

9 Kim Han Sang, “Uneven Screens, Contested Identities: USIS, Cultural Films, and the National Imaginary in South Korea, 1945-1972,” doctoral dissertation, Seoul National University, 2013.

10 Yoshimi Shunya, *Atoms for Dream* 夢の原子力 (Chikuma Shinsho, 2012), 173-177; Tetsuo Arima, *Nuclear Power, Shoriki, and CIA: the Hidden History of Showa through Secret Archival Documents* 原発・正力・CIA 機密文書で読む昭和裏面史 (Shincho-sha, 2008), 119-120.

The Atoms for Peace USIS Films in the USIS Film Catalogues in 24 Countries

Chart 1 shows the USIS film catalogues in 24 countries this author has collected from the US National Archives, and the number of the Atoms for Peace USIS films included in each catalogue.¹¹

Since the production of the Atoms for Peace USIS films mainly occurred between 1955 and 1960, I did not include the catalogues compiled before 1955. The film catalogues compiled in the early 1960s—right after the most productive years—are most likely to contain the complete list of the Atoms for Peace USIS films shown in each country. However, I included the film catalogues compiled as late as in the early 1970s (Kuwait, Philippine, Singapore) because the Singaporean 1970 catalogue still included as many as 32 titles. The compilation years of USIS film catalogues varied from country to country, making it difficult to compare those countries using the exact same conditions. However, the catalogues shown in Chart 1, ranging from 1956 to 1972, will reveal some general characteristics of the Atoms for Peace USIS films in the global context.

The film catalogues in nine countries (shaded parts on Chart 1) included 25 or more Atoms for Peace USIS films: 39 films titles in India (1964) (a sum of the ordinary catalogue and the single-print catalogue); 35 in Sudan (1967-1968); 32 in Japan (1966) and Singapore (1970); 31 in Malaysia (1964) and Venezuela (1969); and 25 in the UK (1956), Iraq (1964), and South Korea (1964).

It is understandable that a large number of Atoms for Peace USIS films were screened in countries such as India, Japan, and the UK—countries that pursued nuclear power generation. The US, attempting to export

11 The Chart was compiled by the author from the USIS film catalogues in 25 countries, mostly stored at the US National Archives. Japan (1959) was acquired through a used bookstore, and Taiwan (1967) was stored at the University of Taiwan library.

<Chart 1> USIS Film Catalogues (vertical) and Sample Atoms for Peace USIS Films (Horizontal)

	Country	Title	Year	Publisher	A is for Atom	Atom in the Service of Humanity	Atoms for Peace Part 2 Medicine	Blessing of Atomic Energy	Borax	Living with the Atom	Yukawa Story	Total Atoms for Peace Films
1	Australia	Catalog of 16mm Sound Films	1956	USIS Sydney	○	○	○	○	○	—	○	6
2	Ceylon	USIS Film Catalog	1966	USIS Colombo	○	○	○	○	—	○	—	24
3	England	Catalogue of 16mm Sound Films	1956	USIS London	—	○	○	○	○	—	○	25
4	Finland	Elokuva luettelo Film Katalog	1957	USIS helsinki	○	○	○	○	○	—	○	19
5	Ghana	USIS Film Catalog	1961-1962	USIS Accra	○	—	—	—	—	○	—	16
6	Iceland	Kuikmyndaskra	1960	USIS Reykjavik	○	○	○	○	—	○	○	17
7	India	Film Catalog	1964	USIS New Delhi	○	—	○	—	○	—	—	20
		Single Print Film Catalogue	1964	USIS India	—	—	—	○	—	○	—	19

	Country	Title	Year	Publisher	A is for Atom	Atom in the Service of Humanity	Atoms for Peace Part 2 Medicine	Blessing of Atomic Energy	Borax	Living with the Atom	Yukawa Story	Total Atoms for Peace Films
8	Indonesia	USIS Film Catalog	1958	USIS Djakarta	—	○	○	○	○	—	○	13
		Film Catalog Supplements No.1	1958	USIS Djakarta	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
9	Iraq	Catalog of Nation Pictures from the United States	1964	USIS Baghdad	○	○	○	○	○	—	—	25
10	Japan	USIS映画目録	1959	USIS Tokyo	○	—	○	○	○	—	○	22
		USIS映画目録	1966	USIS Tokyo	—	—	○	○	○	○	○	32
11	Korea	美国広報院映画目録	1964	USIS Seoul	○	—	○	—	○	○	—	25
12	Kuwait	Film Catalog	1972	USIS Kuwait	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
13	Liberia	Film Catalog	1967-1968	USIS Monrovia	—	○	—	○	○	○	—	17

Country	Title	Year	Publisher	A is for Atom	Atom in the Service of Humanity	Atoms for Peace Part 2 Medicine	Blessing of Atomic Energy	Borax	Living with the Atom	Yukawa Story	Total Atoms for Peace Films
14 Malaysia	Film Catalog	1964	USIS KuaraLumpur	○	—	○	○	○	○	—	31
15 Norway	Tillegg till filmkatalogen for 1958 over Amerikenske Dokumentar-OG Undervisnings Filmer	1958	USIS Oslo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
16 Pakistan	Film Catalogue	1957	USIS Karachi	○	○	○	○	○	—	—	17
17 Peru	Catalogo De Peliculas	1961	USIS Lima	○	○	—	○	○	○	—	19
18 Philippine	USIS Film Catalog Supplement	1958	USIS Manila	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
	USIS Film Catalog Supplement	1959	USIS Manila	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
	Film Catalog	1971	USIS Manila	—	—	—	○	—	—	—	13

Country	Title	Year	Publisher	A is for Atom	Atom in the Service of Humanity	Atoms for Peace Part 2 Medicine	Blessing of Atomic Energy	Borax	Living with the Atom	Yukawa Story	Total Atoms for Peace Films
19	Singapore Film Catalogue	1970	USIS Singapore	—	—	○	○	○	○	—	32
20	Taiwan 美國新聞處影片目錄 USIS Films	1967	USIS Taipei	○	—	○	○	○	○	○	15
21	Sudan Film Catalogue	1967-1968	USIS Khartoum	○	—	○	○	—	○	—	35
22	Venezuela Catalogo De Peliculas	1969	USIS Caracas	—	○	○	○	○	○	○	31
23	Vietnam MUC THU PHIM Film Catalog	1965	USIS Saigon	○	—	○	○	○	○	—	23
24	Zambia Film Catalogue	1966-1967	USIS Lusaka	—	○	—	—	—	—	—	10
Total Number of Countries Each Film Was Screened				15	12	17	19	16	14	8	

nuclear reactors, technologies, and fuels to these countries, would have attempted to prove its credibility by showcasing their own peaceful uses of atomic energy and technological aid to other countries. But how are we to understand the fact that a number of these films were screened in countries such as Sudan, Malaysia, Venezuela, and Iraq, where nuclear power generation was not expected to be introduced in the near future?

There is a common factor that ties Sudan, Malaysia, Venezuela, and Iraq, together. All four countries were oil producers and suffered from acute internal conflicts surrounding Communism. In various parts of the world, the US and the USSR competed to secure their influences in post-colonial countries, especially those with abundant natural resources. It was of vital interest to the US government to establish stable, non-Communist regimes in oil-rich countries and nurture friendly feelings toward the US. In the late 1950s and 1960s, however, such schemes were not so promising.

After gaining independence from the UK and Egypt in 1956, Sudan found itself in an unstable political and economic atmosphere due to rebellions and civil wars. Then in 1969, Ja'far Muhammad al-Numeyri, a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), seized power through a military coup. Numeyri officially visited the USSR in November 1969, strengthening economic and military ties with that country.¹² The 35 Atoms for Peace USIS films included in the 1967-68 catalogue indicates that the US government was strategically instilling an image of the US as a country that would bring peace and prosperity through better scientific technologies than the USSR, and hoping for the establishment of a pro-American government. In fact, the US government concentrated other public/cultural diplomatic efforts in Sudan in addition to screening USIS films. For instance, Louis Armstrong, a prominent African-American jazz trumpeter visited Sudan in 1961 as part of his State Department-sponsored tour. Such a tour was part of the U.S. govern-

12 *Encyclopedia on Africa: Revised Version* アフリカを知る事典 (Heibon-sha, 2010), 538-539.

ment's efforts to shed its bad reputation that the US was a country of racial discrimination – a reputation especially devastating in post-colonial African countries.¹³

In Venezuela, a democratic regime was launched by Rómulo Betancourt of Accion Democratica (AD), a Social Democratic party in 1958. The AD regime survived through 1991 - a record of longevity in South America. Only with the influx of oil revenues in the early 1970s, however, did the Venezuelan democratic regime finally stabilize. The emergence of a variety of armed opposition groups from among former supporters of the AD, joined by a faction of the Communist Party, kept tormenting the government.¹⁴ For the US, Venezuela had special importance as an oil supplier, a market for US products, and an ally to contain Communism in South America. The screening of the Atoms for Peace USIS films was one way for the US government to win the hearts and minds of the Venezuelan people by publicizing its highly sophisticated technology and to stop Communist influence from spreading in that country.

Malaysia, which gained independence from the British Empire as the Federation of Malaya in 1957, was established as Malaysia in 1963, and in 1965, Singapore separated from Malaysia. The Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), which had played a major role in the anti-colonial and anti-Japanese struggles and maintained formidable power in the post-independence years, opposed the formation of Malaysia and Singapore. Their campaign would increasingly be discredited, however, as both Malaysia and Singapore were approved by the United Nations. By the end of the 1960s the CPM would abandon its political campaign and call for militant struggle and revolution in line with the Vietnamese nationalist war and China's Cultural Revolution.¹⁵ Amidst these situations, the US

13 Penny M. Von Eschen, *op. cit.*, 71.

14 Kevin Neuhouser, "Democratic Stability in Venezuela: Elite Consensus or Class Compromise?" *American Sociological Review* 57, no. 1 (Feb. 1992), 122-125.

15 Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia, 1948-90: Contest-

introduced 31 Atoms for Peace USIS films in this country. This also shows the US intention to include Malaysia, just like Sudan and Venezuela, into its ideological camp by displaying its highly sophisticated technology.

In Iraq, another oil producing country, Abdel Karim Qassim, who overthrew the monarchy in the 1958 revolution, approached the Iraqi Communist Party to receive aid from the USSR. The political shift in Iraq, which had been allied with the UK and the US up until then through the Baghdad Pact, was a huge shock to the US government. By way of suggesting diverse assistance, the US attempted to keep Iraq in the Western bloc.¹⁶ The 25 Atoms for Peace USIS films included in the USIS films catalogue 1964 were part of such efforts.

The cases of Sudan, Venezuela, Malaysia, and Iraq illustrate that atomic energy not only had diplomatic values as a “hard power,” such as nuclear weapons or nuclear reactors, but also as a soft power. Screening films about peaceful uses of atomic energy was not directly related to procuring oil resources. However, the US publicized “images” of modernity and wealth that atomic energy brings, as well as of its highly sophisticated technology even to countries that were not technologically or financially equipped to develop atomic energy. Through such efforts, the US attempted to make allies of developing countries that were rich in natural resources, and to prevent these countries from siding with the Communist bloc. This was an attempt to sell an “image” instead of “hard” goods such as nuclear reactors or parts. The US propagandized its leadership in highly sophisticated technology, such as developing atomic energy, to convince these countries that if they sided with the US, they would be able to enjoy such modernity and abundance also. At a time when atomic energy was the center of everyone’s dreams and attention, Atoms for

ing theNation-State and Social Change," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 11, (June 2009):145-146.

16 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 126-127.

Peace USIS films functioned as a soft power strategy to expand the American bloc and procure resources.

What makes this issue more complicated is that the UK and the US were allied against Communism, but in terms of atomic energy policies, they were rivals. The UK succeeded in commercializing atomic energy before the US, and the first nuclear reactor that Japan purchased was also a Calder-Hall type power reactor made in the UK. Although the UK's national power had declined after the Second World War, it still maintained a considerable influence over Commonwealth countries and its former colonies in the Middle East and Africa. The fact that the Atoms for Peace USIS films were actively screened in countries such as Ceylon, Malaysia, Iraq, Singapore and Ghana signifies that the US was also holding UK influence in check.

Screenings of Seven Sample Films

It might be possible to deduce the purposes and characteristics of the Atoms for Peace USIS films by researching the contents of the films as well as the countries and the regions where the films were screened. However, it is beyond this author's capacity to deal with over 50 films and 25 countries. Therefore, in this paper, I will use seven selected films as "samples" and examine where these films were screened. Chart 1 shows the countries where each of the seven sample films were shown. By analyzing what types of films were shown in which countries, some aspects concerning the goals of the Atoms for Peace USIS films will emerge. Moreover, such analysis will open a way to an international comparison of the target countries of the US Atoms for Peace campaign.

1) *A is for Atom* (1954, Japanese title: 原子力とは) is a 14-minute-long animated film produced by a famous animation company and sponsored by General Electric (GE). The USIA procured it from GE to be included in the USIS films. An interesting animation character "Dr. Atom" appears

in the film and explains nuclear fission theory, nuclear reactors and the method of nuclear power generation, and application of radioisotopes in agriculture, industry, and medicine. This animated film was repeatedly screened in the Atoms for Peace exhibitions in different countries around the world. In that aspect, it can be considered a typical “universal” or “border-free” film which could be used in any country for any audience, including children and less educated people.¹⁷ Among 24 countries examined, the film was screened in 15 countries, not including the UK, Indonesia, Kuwait, Liberia, Norway, the Philippines, Singapore, Venezuela, and Zambia. Given the fact that three of these countries (Kuwait, Singapore, Zambia) were former British colonies, a film sponsored by an American private company and produced by an American animation company was perhaps not effective as a public/cultural diplomacy tool in the British sphere of influence.

2) *Atom in the Service of Humanity* (1955, no Japanese title) is a 40-minute-long documentary of the Atoms for Peace exhibition held in Vienna, Austria in 1955. As this film captures the cases in which atomic energy was used for peaceful purposes in Europe, it was selected as a sample under the hypothesis that it would have been screened mostly in Western and Westernized countries. As expected, the film was screened in 12 countries mostly in the West and British Commonwealth, i.e. Australia, Ceylon, UK, Finland, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia, Pakistan, Peru, Venezuela, and Zambia. The film was not screened in many of the Asian and African countries such as Ghana, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Sudan, and Vietnam.

3) *Atoms for Peace Part 2: Medicine* (1955, Japanese title: 原子力平和利用シリーズ 第2部・医学) is a drama film about the experience of an

17 John Sutherland Production, *A is for Atom* (1954), The Big Cartoon Database (http://www.bcdb.com/cartoons/Other_Studios/S/S-_Miscellany/John_Sutherland_Productions/); “A is for Atom” (script), April 23, 1954, RG306, Entry 1098, NACP.

American man who was able to save his life through nuclear medicine. It is one of the typical types of USIS films that introduces a person—an ordinary citizen—who explains the benefits of atomic energy from his or her real-life experiences.¹⁸ This film was screened in 17 countries other than Ghana, Kuwait, Liberia, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, and Zambia. It can be assumed that this film was introduced to countries where USIS films were actively screened since it was released in all the countries where a relatively large number of Atoms for Peace USIS films were screened.

4) *Blessing of Atomic Energy* (1956, Japanese title: 原子力の恵み), as mentioned in the introduction, was produced in Japan by USIS Tokyo to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This film portrays a wide use of radioisotopes that the US provided in Japanese research centers, hospitals, and companies, and mentions that nuclear power generation is already put into practical use in Europe and the US. This is an important film in that it provides an understanding of how Japan, a victim of atomic bombings, was used as a tool to publicize the benefit of peaceful uses of atomic energy to the world.¹⁹ Among the seven sample films, this film was shown in the most number of countries (19), excluding Ghana, Korea, Kuwait, Norway, and Zambia. This film supports the fact that the US found significance in publicizing the film to the rest of the world to show that Japan had overcome the sufferings from atomic bombings and was currently pursuing and enjoying the benefits of peaceful uses of atomic energy. However, the film was not screened in Korea, where a large number of other films were introduced. It is possible that the US believed it would not be advantageous for them to show the achievements of Japan, especially with US assistance, since a

18 *Medicine: Atoms for Peace Series Part II* (film), RG306, NACP ; "Medicine: Atoms for Peace Series Part II" (script), April 4, 1955, RG306, Entry 1098, NACP.

19 *Blessings of Atomic Energy* (film), RG306, NACP ; "Blessings of Atomic Energy" (script), January 17, 1956, RG306, Entry 1098, NACP.

positive portrayal of the former colonizer in a USIS film might rouse animosity toward the US. This is also in line with what was mentioned in Heo Eun's paper about how USIS films shown in Korea contained material that encouraged Korean nationalism.²⁰

5) *Borax* (Boiling Reactor Experiment, 1956, Japanese title: 原子力発電の实用実験) refers to the testing of boiling water reactors, which began in 1955 in the US. The film shows the development process of boiling water reactors at Argonne National Laboratory, and the moment when light bulbs are turned on through nuclear power generation in the small town of Arco, Idaho. It ends by saying that nuclear power will one day "power factories, heat houses, cook food, and enrich people's lives in a peaceful world." It is a science film about the research and development of nuclear power, and it is also a promotional film that propagandizes a utopian future that nuclear power would bring about.²¹ This film was screened in 16 countries, excluding Ceylon, Ghana, Iceland, Kuwait, Norway, the Philippines, Sudan, and Zambia. The film was not shown in the three African countries, including Sudan, where a large number of Atoms for Peace USIS films were screened. Given the scientific emphasis of the film, it can be assumed that this film was mostly screened in countries where the US attempted to export "hard power" (nuclear reactor, power generation technology). It was not released in many of the newly independent countries that, the US government assumed, lacked the necessary infrastructure to pursue nuclear power generation.

6) *Living with the Atom* (1960, Japanese title: 原子とともに) is another example of a drama film that introduces an ordinary citizen who explains his or her own experiences— in this case to emphasize the safety of nuclear power plants. Ralph, the protagonist who lives in a small rural village,

20 Heo Eun, op. cit.

21 *Borax: Construction and Operation of a Boiling Water Reactor* (film), RG306, NACP ; "Borax" (script), January 30, 1956, RG306, Entry 1098, NACP.

and his friend, Charlie, grow up and become a ranch farmer and the safety officer of a nuclear reactor, respectively. As the village representative, Ralph goes to find out about the safety of the nuclear reactor built in their village. Charlie, the safety officer of the nuclear reactor, takes Ralph around the facilities and explains multi-layered safety measures to assure Ralph. The film is structured so that the viewers who feel uneasy about nuclear power generation, just like Ralph, take a look around the inside of a nuclear reactor through Ralph's eyes, and are persuaded of the safety of the facilities.²² This film was screened in 14 countries, including Ceylon, Ghana, Iceland, India, Japan, Korea, Liberia, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Taiwan, Sudan, Venezuela, and Vietnam; it was not screened in 10 countries, including Australia, UK, Finland, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Zambia. The film was screened mostly in Asian and African countries, and not in Western countries such as Australia, UK, Finland, and Norway. The reason behind such disparity is not completely clear, but it is speculated that the US government tried to convince Asian and African people that American nuclear technology was safe, and that ordinary American people were living with nuclear technology safely and happily.

7) *Yukawa Story* (1955, Japanese title: 父湯川博士) was a 41-minute-long film about the research life of Yukawa Hideki (湯川秀樹), who received the 1949 Nobel Prize in Physics, from the viewpoint of his second son, Yukawa Takaaki (湯川高秋). Whereas Yukawa Hideki is depicted against the backdrop of the US's cutting-edge research facilities or cities, as a person who represents modern Western science, his wife Sumi (スミ) is portrayed as a person in charge of Japanese traditional culture, such as tea ceremony and Japanese dance. Takaaki, the narrator, is about to graduate from high school, and he wonders whose lifestyle he should follow: whether he should go to a college in the US and study physics like his father, or return to Japan and study Buddhist philosophy. In the end, he

22 "Living with the Atom" (script), November 25, 1959, RG306, Entry 1098, NACP.

realizes that the cutting-edge world of science that his father studied and the world of traditional culture his mother loves can co-exist in harmony.²³ Yukawa Hideki, the national pride of the Japanese people, was also an important symbolic figure in the US Atoms for Peace campaign, because he personified Japan's participation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy under US assistance. However, this film was only screened in 8 countries out of 24—Australia, UK, Finland, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Taiwan, and Venezuela—mostly Western countries, instead of developing countries of Asia and Africa. This might have resulted from the USIA's expectation that viewers in Western countries may be interested in an Asian Nobel laureate, while the story of a Nobel laureate from Japan, a country that was defeated in the war, might cause Asian countries to protest.

Upon examining the above seven films, it shows a general trend that many of the Atoms for Peace USIS films were screened in around 15 countries out of 24, but there were films that were screened in a significantly large or small number of countries as well. *Blessing of Atomic Energy* was screened in the most number of countries (19), while *Yukawa Story* was screened in merely eight countries. Also, it became clear that certain films—such as *Atoms in the Service of Humanity*—were screened mostly in Western countries, while others—such as *Living with the Atom*—were shown mostly in Asian and African countries. Furthermore, even widely distributed films, such as *A is for Atom* or *Blessing of Atomic Energy*, were avoided in some countries, probably for specific reasons. *A is for Atom* was not shown in the UK and some countries under its influence, and *Blessing of Atomic Energy* was not shown in Korea, even though both the UK and Korea were among the countries where a large number of films were shown.

Since this is a small sample of 24 countries and seven films, it does not

23 *Nobel Gold: The Hideki Yukawa Story, 1954*, (DVD), archives.gov, manufactured by Create Space, an Amazon.com company.

carry much statistical significance. Even so, the data indicates that the Atoms for Peace USIS films were not evenly shown everywhere in the world, but the films best fit for each country were selected according to the economic or social situation of that country. The next section will take a closer look at the reasons why *Blessing of Atomic Energy* was screened in the most number of countries, revealing the international politics of the Cold War era lying behind the film.

***Blessing of Atomic Energy* as a Global Informational Film**

Why was *Blessing of Atomic Energy* released in 19 countries? Was it screened in all of the countries with the same purpose? To tackle these questions, I extracted some important characteristics from the film and the script. First, it was mostly filmed in Japan. The acknowledgement section in the beginning of the film lists the Japan Radioisotope Association (日本放射性同位元素協会), Scientific Research Institute (科学研究所), Kyoto University (京都大学), University of Tokyo (東京大学), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (農林省), Ministry of Construction (建設省), Ishikawajima Heavy Industries Co. (石川島重工業), and Hitachi Corporation (日立), which shows that all of the industrial, governmental, and educational organizations in Japan had a hand in the production of the film. The focus of the film is Japanese researchers and technicians actively working to find new uses of atomic energy. This trend of emphasizing the “activities of the locals” was also prominent in the Atoms for Peace USIS films that centered on countries other than the US, such as *Atomic Medicine in Brazil*.

Secondly, the US is featured in the beginning and the end of the film. After the animated explanation of nuclear fission, the story shifts to show that “peaceful uses of atomic energy” in Japan were successful through the imported radioisotopes from the national laboratory located in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. In other words, it shows that US assistance was behind Japanese research and development. Also, towards the end, the film em-

phasizes that power generation is the aspect where we can “most benefit” from peaceful uses of atomic energy and mentions that nuclear power generation has already been put into practical use in the US. In this way, the film illustrates that the “beginning” and the “most cutting-edge” uses of atomic energy in peaceful ways come from the US. The emphasis laid on US assistance is also evident in the aforementioned USIS film *Atomic Medicine in Brazil*. The film shows Donald Duck and other characters that Walt Disney personally drew on the wall of the children’s ward at São Paulo Hospital in the opening scene to emphasize US good will, and explains that radioisotopes from Oak Ridge National Laboratory was donated by the Rockefeller Foundation to Brazil and are being used in medicinal research.

Third, agriculture, medicine, industry, and power generation are introduced as packaged contents of peaceful uses of atomic energy. These four areas are introduced as the authentic contents of Atoms for Peace in most USIS films. The survey of grain production, cancer treatment through radioactive cobalt, and the homogenization of industrial products are themes that appear repeatedly in other USIS films as well. Power generation is introduced as the “aspect that we expect to gain the most” from atomic energy. Just like other USIS films, *Blessing of Atomic Energy* suggests to the viewers that agriculture, medicine, industry, and power generation are the definitions of “peaceful uses of atomic energy.” Needless to say, these four aspects are not solely aimed at building “peace.” Electric power generated by nuclear reactor can be used militarily, and nuclear reactors can be applied to nuclear submarines and nuclear aircraft carriers. The film defines “peaceful uses of atomic energy” from the USIA’s perspective and indoctrinates it into the viewers.

Lastly, this film paints a utopian future where atomic energy brings a bright and prosperous society. In the final scene, Japanese children are featured playing on the school grounds with the narration: “Just as when primitive man first discovered fire and gradually learned to make it serve his needs, so men of today are learning how the tremendous power of the atom, the second fire, can be made to serve mankind now and for all gen-

erations to come.” The message is that atomic energy will play a decisive role in Japan’s future.

The contents of the film described above, however, were interpreted in very different ways from country to country in the film catalogues. Especially there were significant differences in whether the first theme, i.e. “activities of the locals,” or the second theme, i.e. “US assistance” was emphasized. The Japanese USIS film catalogue explains that the film “describes the structure of the atom, the nature of radioisotopes, and its use in various fields in Japan” (1966 catalogue). It neither emphasizes Japanese achievement nor US assistance; instead, the catalogue focuses on scientific features such as the structure of the atom. However, in Malaysia, Australia, Pakistan, and Indonesia, where a ten-minute short version was screened, the film is described as “a complete survey of Japanese accomplishments in research,” and “achievements by Japan’s scientists and technicians in agriculture, medicine, and industry” (Indonesia 1958 catalogue. More or less the same explanation is given in three other countries). The achievements by the Japanese specialists are emphasized, and there is no mention of the structure of the atom or the radioisotopes. Since a shortened version was screened in these countries, perhaps the scientific explanation in the first part of the film might have been omitted. In any case, it is significant that the film emphasized Japanese achievement.

By contrast, in Peru, where a longer 30-minute version was screened, the film is interpreted as introducing “the peaceful uses of atomic energy as the greatest hope of human beings” and the “US production and exportation of radioisotopes to other countries.” It totally neglects the fact that the film was about Japan. In the UK, the film is introduced as a film about the “achievements by Japan’s scientists and technicians” that point to the “potential to improve all mankind.” The UK catalogue also mentions that the film “points out the US, Canada, Great Britain, and the Netherlands as Japan’s principal sources of isotopes,” and “indicates the willingness of Western nations to cooperate” in the advancement of peaceful uses of atomic energy. In short, it emphasizes contributions of the advanced Western countries, and universal goals, rather than Japan’s achievement of

the Atoms for Peace.

The different interpretations of the same film show that the film held different significances for different countries: 1) For some Asia-Pacific countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan, Japan was a “model nation” in using atomic energy in peaceful ways, and 2) for countries distant from Japan, such as Peru and the UK—and particularly for countries with more developed nuclear power generation technology such as the UK—the film focuses on the “assistance” aspect of countries with advanced nuclear technology, rather than Japan’s achievements. In Korea, neither of these scenarios would work to the advantage of the US government because neither achievement of the former colonizer nor Western assistance to it would be a popular theme in that country. The USIA knew it and therefore did not screen the film in Korea.

The fact that Japan was a “model country” in peaceful uses of atomic energy had special significance for US public diplomacy in the early Cold War era. In the late 1950s, international criticism abounded over thermo-nuclear experiments conducted by the US, UK and France in the Pacific Ocean. In particular, the Lucky Dragon Incident (第五福竜丸事件) where a Japanese tuna fishing boat was exposed to radioactive fallout near the Bikini Atoll in March 1954 was reported throughout the world, including the Asia-Pacific countries, resulting in worldwide distrust of the US. “Bad rumors” about radioactive fallouts spread to neighboring countries, negatively affecting US business in the Asia-Pacific Region.²⁴ Anti-nuclear movements gained strength in Japan, and the USSR denounced US deception in appealing for peace after causing exposure to radiation in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Bikini. Even in the US and Europe, anti-nuclear movements were prevalent. The US government was afraid that Japan would rise as a symbol for anti-nuclear, anti-American movements, which might possibly develop into a global civil movement. Therefore, by publicizing Japan’s peaceful uses of atomic energy with the help of the US,

24 “Work Status Report, April 1-30, 1954, IOC/SF,” Box 10, Entry A1 56, RG306, NACP.

the US attempted to enhance its image as a benevolent country, and to emphasize the strong bond of the US-Japan alliance to the rest of the world. Furthermore, this kind of message also informed the people of Asia-Pacific countries, where memories of Japan's horrendous actions lingered, that Japan was reborn into a peace-loving, pro-American country. In the backdrop of the Cold War, and on the eve of the conclusion of U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (1960), it was important for the U.S. to show the development of Japan as part of the free world.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the global dissemination of the Atoms for Peace USIS films, mainly based on the USIS film catalogues from 24 countries, scripts and reel films stored at the US National Archives. The results show that the US government selected films and countries to screen the films strategically, based on different intentions--to secure the market to export "hard" goods, such as nuclear reactors, to secure natural resources and expand its sphere of influence, or to urge Western countries to unite together.

This paper also focused on seven sample films, particularly *Blessing of Atomic Energy* which was screened in the most number of countries, and discussed why certain films were screened in certain countries, and why others were not. The reason behind the wide dissemination of *Blessing of Atomic Energy* could be explained by the US concern that Japan might become the symbol of an anti-American, anti-nuclear movement around the world. The US attempted to depict Japan as a country that had overcome its fear of atomic energy and was actively pursuing its peaceful uses with US assistance. Moreover, by screening this film in countries other than Japan, the US attempted to publicize the strong bond between the US and Japan, emphasizing the steadfastness of the anti-communist bloc.

To further advance research on the Atoms for Peace USIS films, it is important to find government documents that support US policies for

each country where the films were screened. However, given the situation where the records of the USIA international film section are not accessible, film catalogues, scripts and moving images are the most useful sources for exploring the significance of the Atoms for Peace USIS films.

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<Abstract>

The Atoms for Peace USIS Films:
Spreading the Gospel of the "Blessing" of Atomic Energy
in the Early Cold War Era

Tsuchiya Yuka

In 1955, the U.S. Information Service (USIS) Tokyo produced a thirty-minute documentary film *Blessing of Atomic Energy* in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The film introduced how the Japanese government, researchers, and companies were using radioisotopes offered by the U.S. Argonne National Laboratory for the “peaceful” purposes in agriculture, medicine, hygiene, industry, and disaster prevention. The film also showed the mechanism of atomic power generation, and explained that it was already put into practice in the U.S. and Europe.

The images of Japanese people enjoying the “blessing” of the “peaceful” use of atomic energy, ten years after the traumatic experience of A-bombs, were not only shown all over Japan, but also translated into different languages and shown in many countries, including the UK, Finland, Indonesia, Sudan, and Venezuela.

The film was part of some fifty educational and documentary films produced for President Eisenhower’s “Atoms for Peace” campaign – a global information dissemination programs on the U.S. leadership in the civilian use of nuclear energy. This paper will explore the roles USIS films played in disseminating information on the “peaceful” use of nuclear energy in the early Cold War era.

Keywords: Cold War, USA, USIS, films, atomic energy, Japan

〈국문초록〉

평화를 위한 원자력으로서의 USIS 영화: 냉전 시대 초기, 원자력의 “축복” 복음 전파하기

츠치야 유카(에히메 대학 국제/미국학 교수)

1955년, 도쿄에 있는 미국공보원(USIS)은 히로시마와 나가사키 원폭 10주년을 기념하는 <원자력의 축복 *Blessing of Atomic Energy*>이라는 30분 분량의 다큐멘터리를 제작했다. 이 다큐멘터리 영화는 일본 정부 및 연구자, 기업들을 상대로 미국 아르곤 국립연구소가 농업, 의학, 위생학, 산업, 재난 예방 등의 “평화적인” 목적을 위해 제공한 방사성 동위원소radio-isotopes의 사용법을 소개한다. 영화는 또한 원자력 발전의 메커니즘을 보여주고 있으며, 미국이나 유럽에서는 이미 원자력이 상용화되어 있음을 설명한다.

원자폭탄이라는 외상적 경험 후 10년이 지난 뒤, 원자력의 “평화적” 사용의 “축복”을 즐기는 이러한 일본인들에 대한 이미지는 일본 전역뿐만 아니라 영국, 핀란드, 인도네시아, 수단, 베네수엘라 등 다양한 나라의 언어로 번역되어 전세계 각국에 소개되었다.

이 영화는 아이젠하워 대통령의 “평화를 위한 원자력” 캠페인, 즉 핵 에너지의 민간 사용 측면에서 미국이 선두하고 있는 글로벌 정보 보급 프로그램을 위해 제작된 50여 가지의 교육 다큐멘터리 영화의 일부였다. 본 논문에서는 냉전 시대 초기 핵 에너지의 “평화적” 사용에 관한 정보를 널리 보급시키는 역할을 수행했던 USIS 영화들의 역할에 대해 고찰하고자 한다.

주제어: 냉전, 미국, 미 공보원, 영화, 원자력, 일본

