Making Non-Dissident Youth: The IFYE and Agrarian Youth in Asia and America

By Gregg Andrew Brazinsky

1968 is known first and foremost as a year in which youth protests shook the world and produced a crisis in authority. Most often the literature explaining this phenomenon has focused on urban milieus and university campuses. Describing the protests that swept the globe in 1968, Jeremi Suri writes that “men and women on diverse city streets perceived themselves as participants in a shared ‘movement’ against the police, the military, and established political institutions.”¹ But not all of the world’s youth were urban youth. In many places agrarian youth remained an equally important if somewhat less volatile constituency. This was especially true in Asia where economic growth was creating a revolution in expectations that encompassed the countryside as well as the cities. During the late 1960s, agrarian youth became just as much a cause for concern among Asian political rulers as did university students.

From Washington, U.S. intelligence agencies kept an anxious eye on student activities both on American soil and around the world.² Academic and popular historians have already spilled a good deal of ink writing on these protest movements and the official response to them.³ Far less attention has been devoted to official American

² The CIA produced a lengthy report on the subject that was distributed to high-ranking officials in the Nixon administration. See for instance CIA Memorandum for Henry Kissinger, http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/releases/dec10/47.pdf.
efforts to reach agrarian youth both within the United States and abroad. This essay explores some of these efforts, focusing on Asia. The United States had invested significant resources to promoting agricultural development in the region during the previous decade.\(^4\) Political elites in both the United States and non-communist Asia believed that the active cooperation of agrarian youth was critical if their economies and societies were to achieve continued progress. They actively sought to engage these youths and turn them away from the restlessness and disaffection that had taken hold in universities around the world.

Washington’s most important mechanism for engaging agrarian youth both in the United States and around the world was the International Farm Youth Exchange (IFYE) program. The IFYE was established in 1948 when the dawn of the Cold War was ushering in a new era of American globalism. The National 4-H Foundation, whose headquarters were located within the Cooperative States Research and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provided the necessary financial support. The USDA envisioned the program as an agrarian version of the kind of “people-to-people” initiatives that Washington used during the 1940s and 1950s to promote cooperation with its allies and deepen the social linkages between Americans and other peoples in the Free World.\(^5\) Initially the IFYE was restricted to exchanges between American and European farm youths but as the non-Western world became an increasingly important priority for American officials, the program was expanded into Asia, Africa, and Latin America.


\(^5\) For a good overview of these efforts see Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 19-60.
During the 1950s, American fears that rural areas in Asia would become breeding grounds for the type of agrarian based socialist revolution that had triumphed in China were the most critical driving force behind the expansion of the IFYE to the region. By the late 1960s, these fears had subsided somewhat. In Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, land reforms had alleviated some of the most significant sources of agrarian discontent by guaranteeing property rights to former tenant farmers. In the Philippines, the state successfully contained rural insurgents through a combination of cooptation and repression. Even in the absence of agrarian revolution, however, the outlook and political orientation of agrarian youths remained a source of concern. American and Asian leaders alike tended to believe that rural youth would be a critical modernizing force that could bolster national productivity and strengthen Free World solidarity.

In this context, the IFYE became an important vehicle for shaping the outlook of Asia’s agrarian youth. This essay argues that the IFYE’s activities in Asia were part of a larger social project implemented by Asian and American development experts and social leader during the late 1960s. This project sought to mold youth into a force that could contribute to the modernization of Asia through international cooperation while steering them away from forms of dissent that could destabilize their societies. In training seminars and other special programs, the IFYE brought together youth from around the region and exhorted them to labor for the betterment of their villages and their countries. National progress, they were told, could only occur if youth stood firm in their convictions, avoided radical protests, and looked for ways to contribute to national development.

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6 This is noted by Gabriel N. Rosenberg, *The 4-H Harvest: Sexuality and the State in Rural America* (Philadelphia: UPenn Press, 2016), 188-92.
At the same time, the IFYE also had another important component: assuring that American farm youth remained supportive of U.S. Cold War objectives in Asia. In an era when university students were rapidly losing faith in much of what their political leaders told them about Vietnam, Southeast Asia, and U.S. motives, the IFYE encouraged American farm youth to embrace what Christina Klein has called “the global imaginary of integration.” Their energies and attentions were to be turned outward so that they formed new sentimental attachments with farm families in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and other anti-Communist Asian countries. Although the late 1960s were a time of American retrenchment in the Pacific with U.S. military commitments being scaled back in accordance with the Nixon Doctrine, Washington by no means wanted to abdicate its leadership role in Asia. The new familial bonds formed between American farm youths and their Asian hosts would strengthen U.S. ascendancy in the Pacific despite changing geostrategic realities.

**Cultivating Asia’s Rural Youth**

American efforts to influence agrarian youth in Asia did not begin in 1968. It was much more the case that IFYE’s activities in the late 1960s and early 1970s built on earlier American programs to mold Asia’s youth while steering some of these programs in a slightly different direction. The establishment of 4-H Clubs as a vehicle for the rural transformation of Asia had been an important and relatively successful component of American foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s. These clubs had first been established in the United States during the early twentieth century to promote education on agricultural issues. They were introduced in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the

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7 Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 23.
Philippines after World War II along with the broader expansion of American influence in these countries. The clubs were especially popular in South Korea, which boasted 29,821 clubs and over 700,000 members by 1967. In 1970, Taiwan’s 4-H Club membership stood at 82,405. While the clubs were not quite as successful on the island as they were in South Korea, this still represented a significant number given Taiwan’s relatively small size and population. In the Philippines, there were a total of 4,605 clubs and 117,423 members. These clubs were important because the vast majority of Asian youth invited to participate in IFYE programs were drawn from the 4-H Club leadership.

One of the most ambitious of these programs was the Asian Farm Youth Exchange. In 1968, this program invited 4-H Club leaders from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, India, and the Philippines on extended tours of the United States. After spending some time on American farm homes, the program’s participants gathered at the University of the Philippines College of Agriculture where they attended a special ten-day long seminar. Throughout the seminar, they listened to speeches and participated in activities that were unmistakably geared at consciousness raising. The seminar urged participants to contribute to the productivity of their communities and embrace a sense of progressive nationalism while discouraging the kind of questioning of authority that prevailed at urban universities. It was also hoped that through fostering small-scale

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9 Y.K. Yang to Grant A. Schrum, Director, National 4-H Club Foundation, Record Group (hereafter RG) 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 60, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA).
11 Ibid.,
social solidarities among the participants, the seminar would bind Free World Asian countries together in pursuit of common objectives.

Speeches given to the participants by the senior leadership were simultaneously hopeful and cautionary. They characterized youth as important agents of change but also voiced concerns about the threat that youth protests posed to stability and authority. B.C. Osias, the Chairman of the National 4-H Council of the Philippines delivered the opening address at the seminar. His speech made apparent from the outset the kind of guidance that participants would be receiving. “Your fellow youth throughout the world are challenging the establishments to which they have fallen reluctant heirs,” Osias explained. “Youth in America, France, and England, the young peoples from the Iron to the Bamboo curtains have challenged both democracy and communism.” With youth around the world struggling to break free from the ideological bonds imposed by the Cold War, Osias contended that farm youth has a special responsibility to further the development of their countries by choosing progress over destruction: “In the productive potential of agriculture, the farm youth of every country holds the key to national survival.”

If farm youth sought out ways to make agriculture more productive and became more engaged in different forms of civic action their nations would flourish, Osias believed; if they did not it would ultimately lead to stagnation and hardship.

Osias’s other key point of emphasis was Free World internationalism. He hoped that participants in the seminar would gain a stronger sense of mutual respect and a better understanding of the host country, the Philippines. “For you are particularly blessed with

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the newfound means to bridge the national gaps of misunderstanding with a new inspiration of international understanding,” he told participants. He noted that the countries represented at the seminar shared a common identity as “emerging countries” and encouraged them to embrace a mutual commitment to Asian development.\textsuperscript{13} Through urging youth from Free World Asian countries to work together, speakers such as Osias sought to create social linkages that could underpin these nations’ shared commitment to containing the spread of Communism. He promoted the interconnected Cold War precepts of anti-communism and modernization.

In the course of the seminar, a wide range of other speakers addressed more specific topics relating to 4-H Clubs, the IFYE, and the potential role of these organizations to contribute solutions to more specific problems plaguing agrarian life in Asia and the developing world. These included brief speeches on the role of 4-H Clubs in community, how youth programs could be developed, and the role of 4-H Clubs in forest conservation. Often, these speeches went beyond their specific topics to address broader questions of the role of youth in developing Asia. They included for instance a lecture on “The Role of 4H Clubs in Forest Conservation,” which noted in its introduction that: “More and more, the youth are becoming impatient with what they believe is the inept management by the adults of the affairs of their countries.” As a result, youth were “agitating for greater and more active participation and involvement in these national, and even international issues.” But even if turmoil and ferment prevailed among the youth of many countries, the 4-H clubs were nevertheless helping to disprove “the myth that young age and irresponsibility always go together” and performing

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.,
“tremendous service not only for themselves but for their societies and countries as well.”14

The speaker went on to describe the important role that forestry played in international development and exhorted participants in the program to implement forestry projects. Doing so, he argued, would enable them to demonstrate that “in addition to improving the family economics through forestry, they can also improve the national welfare by planting bare hills with trees.” They would thus serve as “the pioneers and models of what is expected to be an ever—increasing forestry—conscious populace who shall contribute to the rapid economic development of their country.”15 Through connecting local development projects to the grander causes of economic growth and development in this way, social leaders aimed to embed broad political and international issues within the lived experiences and everyday activities of participating farm youth. This, they hoped, would help to turn these youth into nation builders who were immune to the penchant for disruptive protests that gripped their urban peers.

While participants in the seminar spent a significant amount of time listening to lectures and speeches, they also participated in a wide range of other activities that included more formal tours of research institutes and agricultural development projects as well as more informal social activities. Many of the more formal activities were likely calculated to inspire the participants with a greater faith that their futures and the future of their nations could be made brighter through the introduction of new technologies and framing methods. Youth attending the seminar spent an entire day visiting the

14 Ibid.,
15 Ibid.,
International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños. As Nick Cullather and other scholars have noted, the IRRI occupied an especially important place in the symbolic geography of development experts working in Southeast Asia during the late 1960s. The institute had been the beneficiary of multi-million dollar grants from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. It was created for the purpose of promoting project-oriented research in the Philippines and other Asian countries. IRRI was best known for developing IR-8 or “miracle rice,” a new variety of rice that produced higher yields in less time than those that Asian farmers had traditionally used. The institute had also been envisioned as a place that could help agronomists from all of Asia to develop collaborative professional identities. By taking the seminar’s participants on a tour of this spectacle of modern scientific achievement and multi-national collaboration, the IFYE program leadership hoped to foster a similar commitment to technological progress and Free World cooperation among the next generation of Asian agriculture experts.

The seminar complemented these kinds of formal educational activities with more informal social activities where the participants could interact in a more relaxed and less guarded way. These included: a talent show, after dinner socials, tours of different cities, and even a folk dance. Such activities were intended to create new bonds of friendship among the participants and promote mutual understanding between Free World Asian countries at the grassroots level. Through discussing common problems and lived experiences, they were expected to develop a shared sense of purpose that

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16 Ibid.,
17 Cullather, The Hungry World, 159-166.
would ultimately contribute to the unity and prosperity of the Asian region. This kind of transnational networking would, it was hoped, have a very different complexion than the variety that was linking urban youth and university students.

The cooperative extension service was sufficiently pleased with the seminar that it sponsored a number of similar events. Two years later, in November 1970, another group of rural youth leaders from around Asia convened in the Philippines for a program that was markedly similar to the one held in 1968. Once again, social leaders exhorted them to focus on making positive contributions to national development rather than social protests. This time, Francisco F. Saguiguit, the Commissioner of the Agricultural Productivity Commission, gave a brief address touching on these themes. “The youths in Asia and the whole world as well are undergoing a tremendous change of attitudes and reactions to their local environments. They are restless, bitter and even desperate. In some instance they have been misled by the cynicism of a cynical age,” he warned. Nevertheless, he still believed it was possible to tap the potential force that youth represented by working with the “restless youths of this era who are willing to do good and do it every day in the great spirit of 4H.”

The IFYE once again arranged for the students to tour the IRRI where they were able to meet with the institute’s leaders. By 1970, the “miracle rice” that the institute developed was already widely in use in India, the Philippines and elsewhere giving the institute’s leadership a chance to simultaneously praise its achievements and encourage the young seminar participants to engage with economic and social problems. V.E. Ross, one of the scientists working at the institute boasted to the seminar participants that IR-8

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19 “8\textsuperscript{th} Regional IFYE-PRYLE Rural Youth Leaders Seminar,” November 7-15, 1970, RG 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 62, NARA.
had led to a 45% increase in food grain production in India since its introduction. Historians have later questioned the degree to which this increase in production was actually attributable to the new rice grain but during the seminar, scientists at the IRRI treated the success of IR-8 as a self-evident fact. Photographs in the final report on the seminar show scientists at the institute leading participants on a tour where they could see “miracle rice” growing in the fields for themselves. Through such activities, the program aimed to inspire the youth with a sense of what could be achieved through the application of science to mankind’s problems, firming up their belief in modernization as a universal process that could be achieved anywhere with the right inputs.

It is difficult to fully assess the exact impact that these seminars had on the youth who participated in them. It is worth noting, however, that some of the brief reflections on the program collected by the IFYE did seem to echo key points made by social and political leaders during the seminar. Upon arriving in the Philippines, for instance, one Indian participant wrote, “Much have I learned during my six months stay in the United States as an IFYE. …Asian and African youth today have a tremendous responsibility in the economic, social educational and cultural upliftment of the area.” The student expressed hope that the seminar would be “a stepping stone to youth participation in Asian progress.” Of course, such views were not necessarily uniform among the farm youth who participated in these exchange programs. Nonetheless, the student’s embrace of responsibility and progress as values that Asian youth needed to adopt demonstrates

20 Ibid.,
the power of these kinds of programs to mold the outlook of at least some of their participants.

In the aftermath of these seminars, the national 4-H Clubs made efforts to disseminate reports on the proceedings more widely through newsletters and different kinds of pamphlets that targeted their membership. The 4-H Club newsletter in the Philippines, for instance, summarized a speech given by the Vice President of the University of the Philippines at the seminar on “Asian Youth for Progress.” The speech had cautioned, “to destroy the existing order does not necessarily promote progress nor will drastic change” while optimistically telling participants that “the foundations for acceptable programs of change lie in yourselves.”22 By transmitting these types messages to youth at the local level, social leaders looked to shape the outlook of the rising generation of Asian youth, encouraging what were considered constructive attitudes and reducing the chances of angry dissent.

While these international youth seminars were perhaps the most ambitious program that official US agencies were involved in, numerous local programs were initiated with similar objectives in mind. In November 1970, for instance, the USDA initiated a new agricultural training program in conjunction with the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR) in Taiwan. The JCRR had been established in 1948 as part of a much larger program of U.S. economic assistance to China. With the Guomindang on the verge of defeat, the JCRR soon moved to Taiwan where it played an important role in planning and implementing the land reforms carried out on the island during the

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early 1950s. By the late 1960s, with the land reforms in Taiwan long completed and the island increasingly being billed as one of the success stories of capitalist development, the JCRR turned its attention to education and youth programs. A visit by W.F. Pressly, the Director of the International Division of the National 4-H Foundation, provided the occasion for extended talks about the proposed program. The plans called for a fairly rigorous program that could be used to provide special training for a group of 15 to 30 Taiwanese farm youth. It would involve six months of training and orientation in Taiwan including intensive English language classes. Participants would then spend eighteen months in the United States including three months of “institutional training,” which would place them at a university or other training institute, and fifteen months living with an American farm family. Through combining intensive training with long-term exposure to American family life, this program sought to shape a new generation of agrarian youth leaders in Taiwan, inculcating in them a commitment to national development and an appreciation for the United States.

While the political orientation of Asia’s rural youth may never have been the highest priority for American officials, official U.S. agencies devoted a significant amount of resources and attention to creating organic communities that integrated young people from Free World Asian countries. They sought to turn Asian youth into a force that would support modernization and embrace the agenda of conservative social leaders rather than engage in mass protest or other radical forms of dissent. Farm youth

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exchange programs did not stop with seeking to engage and influence young people in Asia. American youth were an equally important part of farm youth exchange programs and were expected to contribute to some of the same causes—Free World solidarity, economic development, and the maintenance of social order—that the IFYE wanted Asian youth to embrace. At the same time, they were expected not simply to embrace this agenda but also become global ambassadors for it.

**American Farm Youth Abroad**

As the IFYE paid increasing attention to Asian youth during the late 1960s and early 1970s, it also encouraged a limited number of American farm youth to spend extended periods of time in Asia. They were, of course, most frequently dispatched to those countries with which the U.S. was most closely allied—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Even for American farm youth of relatively modest means, spending time on the farms and in the villages of these countries unquestionably presented some significant hardships. Although their host families were often relatively well off by local standards, they frequently lacked basic amenities of American life such as electric power and running water. Nonetheless, American youth travelling to Asia were expected to acclimate themselves to local customs to the greatest extent possible in order to foster new international bonds of friendship. At the same time, they maintained some degree of contact with the IFYE and other American officials, who tried to keep them acquainted with larger U.S. initiatives in their host countries.

While the cultural and economic gaps that separated American farm youth from their peers in developing Asia countries were significant, however, there were some factors that made it easier for Americans to understand and fit into village life. One of
the cornerstones of U.S. policy in Asia during the late 1940s and early 1950s was strong advocacy for land reform. In part due to American pressure and guidance, the governments in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan broke up large landholdings and redistributed the land to tenant farmers. The Americans that participated in the IFYE also tended to come from small farming households in the Midwest and Great Plains that still tended to embrace the notion of an egalitarian society rooted in independent landholders. Thus despite the differences in customs, food, and living standards, American farm youth could still relate to the independent spirit, family oriented culture, and work ethic they encountered in Asian villages. James Lory, an IFYE representative who spent time working in several farm households in South Korea found that family life on a Korean farm was not entirely unlike that of his native place, especially when one compared the roles of specific family members. The Korean wife’s duty, for instance, was “similar to a Wisconsin farmer’s wife in that she cares for the children, washes the clothes, helps prepare the meals, and works in the garden.” Such comments may seem like rather generic cross-cultural comparisons celebrating a pastoral ideal that would have appeared increasingly outmoded to urban youth of the era, but to Lory these perceived similarities in life on American and Korean farms made Koreans themselves much more relatable. Small landholders in South Korea shared, in his view, the same basic family values prized in the American Midwest.

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26 Newsletter No. 3, Life on a Korean Dairy Farm, RG 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 60, NARA.
The perceived similarities in turn made it easier for American IFYE participants to forge meaningful new social connections as they experienced life in different Asian countries. In written reflections on their experiences, American farm youth often described new sentimental attachments that they had formed with their host families and the people of the countries that they visited. Diann Wiens, a junior at Kansas State Teachers College who spent a year in Japan, described her activities in the country and her relationship with her host family in a series of brief reports that she filed with the IFYE. Wiens was fully engaged in the farm work done by her host family; she reported in detail about how she helped her host brother to harvest rice and prepare it to be taken to market. Through doing so she believed that she had “gained a better understanding of the Japanese people--their lifestyle and agriculture.” More importantly, she believed, she had formed genuine friendships during her stay: “By sharing laughter, tears, sweat, frustration and joy with my families and friends in Japan the barriers to understanding have crumbled and been replaced by bonds of love and friendship.” While Wiens did not necessarily view her stay in Japan as a way of advancing American foreign policy objectives, the new bonds of friendship that she described were exactly the sort of emotional and intellectual connections that U.S. officials sought to create between American citizens and the peoples of Asia and Africa during the Cold War. Moreover, one of the guiding principles behind virtually all of the exchange programs that Washington initiated during the Cold War was to have Americans who travelled abroad foster a favorable image of the United States by showing what its people were really

27 “Kansas 4-H News: News from a 1971 Kansas IFYE--Diann Wiens,” RG 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 64, NARA.
like. By working together with her Japanese host family to harvest rice and perform other tasks on the farm, Wiens unconsciously embodied the idea of America as a benevolent force that was committed to helping Asia overcome its economic problems.

Wiens’s experience in Japan led her to believe that some of the political disagreements that had manifested themselves in U.S.-Japanese relations could be overcome through greater contacts between the two peoples and better cultural communication. She noted that, “At present there are areas of political difference between the two countries of Japan and the United States.” Yet Wiens explained that these differences left her more convinced of the IFYE’s significance because “in the end its is ‘people’ who hold the key to peace and world understanding.” While she did not explain or take any kind of stance on the political side of U.S.-Japan relations, the young Midwesterner nonetheless believed that the attachments she had formed with her hosts would, in the long run, help to knit the two countries closer together and overcome issues plaguing the relationship. At a time when many other young people in America were raising big questions about U.S. policy in Asia, Wiens seemed to embrace some of its key assumptions. Rather than looking to undermine or protest American globalism, she focused on ways to enhance it.

Other Americans traveling to Asia through the IFYE were similarly moved by their day-to-day interactions with people in their host countries. Carolyn Neil, a graduate of Kansas State University and recipient of several 4-H Club awards during her youth, was one of two students chosen to visit Taiwan in 1971. Neil too came to feel a kind of

28 Such an emphasis is described in, among other places, Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 50.
29 “Kansas 4-H News: News from a 1971 Kansas IFYE--Diann Wiens,” RG 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 64, NARA.
sentimental attachment to her host country that readily lent itself to political support. During her time in Taiwan, Neil was especially impressed by a national 4-H Club event that she received an invitation to attend. The event drew 4-H Club members from around Taiwan together for several days of camping, talent contests, singing, and games. Although Neil had at best a rudimentary knowledge of Chinese, she was by her own account able to enjoy and participate in many of the activities. She thought that the camp would “certainly be remembered by all who attended.” Neil wrote enthusiastically, “The good friends and good times one has had at camps always make fond memories no matter if you live in the USA, Taiwan or another country.” Through her participation in the IFYE and related 4-H Club activities in Taiwan, Neil came to feel a new attachment to her peers in a distant part of the world that was deeply connected to the U.S. geopolitically. Even while Neil’s reflections made clear that she perceived a great cultural distance between youth in the ROC and the American heartland, the 4-H Clubs nonetheless created a sense of shared identity.

Neil’s experiences eventually translated into both a greater awareness of Taiwan’s international position and support for stronger relations between Washington and Taipei. Indeed, the conclusion of Neil’s program coincided roughly with the U.N. decision to expel the ROC government and admit the PRC. Neil and other participants told one of the officials administering the IFYE program in Taiwan that Washington should “make every effort to continue” the program in Taiwan, “especially in light of current UN

30 “News from a 1971 Kansas IFYE—Carolyn Neil,” RG 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 64, NARA.
action.” Of course, such sentiments may have run against the grain of Nixon administration policy, which had place a growing emphasis on engagement with Beijing, and been reflective of more traditional Cold War objectives. Nonetheless, Neil’s expression of support for continuing American exchanges with Taiwan despite the U.N. decision demonstrated how the personal connections fostered by these programs interfaced with strategic issues.

While Americans who travelled to Asia through the IFYE program spent much of their time working with and getting to know their host families, officials in the extension service made sure that these participants also gained exposure to some of the rural youth projects that were supported by the U.S. aid program and American philanthropic organizations. They were therefore often invited to participate in tours of aid projects or other programs being implemented in small Asian villages. The underlying purpose of these activities was to make sure that IFYE participants left Asia with a broader understanding of how the U.S. was contributing to development in Asia and thus perhaps gain their acquiescence for an expansive American role in the region.

Caroline S. Gardner, an IFYE participant from New Hampshire, who spent time in South Korea reported enthusiastically about how the IFYE arranged for her to spend time at the 4-H Training Farm, which had been set up in Kyonggi Province. The farm received funding and guidance from the American-Korean Foundation (AKF), a philanthropic organization which had been set up after the Korean War to provide humanitarian relief. South Korea’s Office of Rural Development selected 4-H Club members from around the country several times a year to participate in the special

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31 Discussions with 1971 Delegates, 6 January 1972, RG 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 64, NARA.
training program while the AKF paid for their expenses. All of the trainees who spent time on the farm received special instruction in leadership and citizenship as well as more pragmatic topics such as care of field crops and live stock. Gardner recalled being “very impressed with what the trainees were doing, the facilities at the farm and the instructors.”

While observing the 4-H Training Farm, Gardner also gained a greater familiarity with the other American aid organizations—both official and unofficial—working in South Korea at the time. She noted for instance that the United States Operations Mission and several other agencies had also assisted with the project.

Though Gardner did not necessarily spend a great deal of time meeting with officials from these organizations, her visit to the 4-H Training Farm made her both more aware and more supportive of the much larger American development initiatives that were being implemented in Korea.

By the time American IFYE participants left their host countries in Asia, their outlooks had often been transformed in numerous ways. They had formed new emotional connections to their host families and other friends that they encountered. These new sentimental bonds seemed to go hand in hand with a new awareness of America’s broader strategic and economic influence in Asia. Much as they believed that these new personal connections they had formed would last a lifetime, they hoped that the United States broader commitment to Asia would be durable. While their urban counterparts demanded America withdraw from Vietnam and scale down its global presence, at least some rural youth came to favor the continuation of America’s informal empire in Asia.

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32 Gardner to Cooperative Extension Service, 9 December 1970, RG 33, Records of the Extension Service, Box 60, NARA.
33 Ibid.,
Conclusion

As urban youth and university students around the world became caught up in a wave of protests against social and political rulers during the late 1960s and 1970s, agrarian youth tended to be far more quiescent. While some of this may have simply reflected differences between urban and agrarian youth culture, IFYE programs helped to reinforce these differences. In Asia, IFYE sponsored seminars and other activities encouraged Asian youth to place their faith in nation building and development and to reject the radical forms of dissent that prevailed in Western cities. American farm youth who spent time in Asia through the program often formed sentimental bonds with their host country that in turn led them to embrace traditional American Cold War objectives. The IFYE elicited the consent of agrarian youth in both Asia and America and often won it helping at least one sea of tranquility amidst the stormy waters of youth radicalism during the late 1960s.