

From World War to Cold War: Creating the Army’s “Multilanguage School at Monterey”

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The history of the Defense Language Institute—DLI—traces back to the years before World War II. This paper describes how the U.S. Army developed a Japanese language school to help it fight that war and why, during a time of severe resource constraints caused by force reductions at the very beginning of the Cold War, it transformed that single-language program into a multi-language school whose essential qualities have endured to the current time.¹

The Japanese Language Program of World War II

In the Far East, at the end of the Spanish American War, the United States established colonial administration over the Philippines and constructed its most important naval base in the Pacific at Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. By becoming an Asian power, U.S. military forces inevitably had to contend with Japan, which had risen suddenly on the international stage following spectacular victories during the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. By 1931, Japan had deployed its Imperial Army into northern China in defiance of world opinion as expressed by the League of Nations and tensions between the United States and the Japanese Empire grew steadily until the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937. In response to that conflict, and incidents such as the “Rape of Nanking,” the United States imposed a trade embargo that inspired the Japanese Naval High Command to begin planning for the conquest of the Philippines and war with the United States.

¹ All citations reference sources found in the Historical Records Collection (archives) of the Defense Language Institute, maintained by the Command History Office, Building 4275, Ord Military Community, Seaside, Ca.

The acute and growing tension between the United States and Japan was not lost upon the ambassadors and staffs of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. This was especially true for the young Army and Navy assistant attachés sent to Japan on lengthy tours. These men were expected to understand, liaison, and report upon the militarily significant activities of the Japanese military and for that reason needed to study the language and culture of the country, a difficult task given the complexity of the Japanese language. Although they may have been selected for the program due their previous interest or training in the language or culture of Japan, a lot more was needed. Fortunately, the embassy had a language training program, and the young attachés were able to hire local tutors, one of whom, Naoe Naganuma, was quite gifted and created an entire curriculum focused upon teaching Japanese to English-speakers. In time, a small cadre of Japanese-speaking Orientalists rose in rank within their respective services. As war between the United States and Japan grew more likely in the late 1930s, some Army and Navy officers moved to create dedicated Japanese language training programs for military servicemen, adapting the Naganuma readers for that purpose.²

Two Army graduates of the Tokyo program, Lt. Col. John Weckerling and Capt. Kai E. Rasmussen were especially keen to establish an Army Japanese language program during the summer of 1941. They gained permission to canvass enlisted men serving in the U.S. Fourth Army area of command to determine their suitability to be trained as military linguists. Weckerling and Rasmussen focused their attention upon second-generation Japanese Americans, known as Nisei, already serving in the ranks following the peacetime draft of 1940. The two found a gifted private, John Aiso, a Harvard-trained attorney, and offered him the chief instructor position. At first Aiso refused, planning to finish his enlistment and return to law, but after

² Cameron Binkley, *Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center: A Pictorial History* (Monterey: DLIFLC, 2011), pp. 10-16.

Weckerling appealed to his patriotism, Aiso consented, remembering it as the first time anyone ever told him he was an American. Weckerling discharged Aiso to avoid having a private in charge of the faculty. The three of them then set up a small secret Japanese language school in an abandoned aircraft hangar on Crissy Field at the Presidio of San Francisco. Class began the first day of November 1941 with 4 civilian Japanese American instructors, 58 enlisted Nisei students, and 2 enlisted Caucasian students. The latter two had to “qualify” because the program focused upon training what are today called “heritage speakers,” or those who already had familiarity with the Japanese language and culture. The difficulty of the language, the urgency of the need to train military linguists, and the availability of a pool of already enlisted candidates meant that the Army could pursue a short-cut. In the beginning, Weckerling and Rasmussen had hoped that they could find fully fledged native speakers, but this hope was dashed as most Nisei soldiers spoke only English with a smattering of Japanese picked up from their parents. Hence, while the Army could accelerate the deployment of Japanese linguists, these would still need training to upgrade their basic Japanese language skills, to teach the students Japanese military terminology, and to train them in the techniques of interpretation, translation, and interrogation.³

The Fourth Army’s Japanese language program operated for only six months before it had to relocate to comply with War Department orders excluding all persons of Japanese descent from the West Coast following the onset of war with Japan. In fact, the program was lucky to retain its uniformed Nisei personnel as the Army purged many others from its ranks.

³ Many sources discuss the WWII-era history of the Defense Language Institute, the most definitive account is: Dr. James C. McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists: Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service during World War II* (Washington, DC: Dept. of the Army, 2008); McNaughton touches upon the origins of the Army Language School in “Fixing the Language Problem: A Case Study in Joint Training Management,” unpublished manuscript, December 1995, copy in possession of author; See also Joseph D. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai: The Secret Role of Nisei in America's Pacific Victory* (Pettigrew Enterprises, 1979); Primary sources include: *The MISLS Album* (Fort Snelling: MISLS, 1946) and interviews with early students or instructors, such as David W. Swift, Jr., *First Class: Nisei Linguists in World War II* (San Francisco: National Japanese American Historical Society, 2008), 2nd edition.

Fortunately, senior leaders listened to the personal testimonies of white officers like Rasmussen who refused to let hysterical racism impact their mission.⁴ Re-designated as the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), the program relocated to Minnesota under Rasmussen who was selected as commandant. The best of the school's first graduates were detailed to continue with the school as uniformed instructors.



Figure 1 Before World War II, Capt. Kai Rasmussen served as a junior attaché with the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo, where he studied Japanese. He is shown here (center) with a Japanese artillery regiment in Sendai, Japan, 1939. (DLIFLC archives.)

While assigned to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, MISLS reached its maximum size of 160 instructors, the majority being enlisted men overseen by about 40 senior civilian instructors. By 1944, these had trained some three thousand graduates deployed in special detachments with military units across the Pacific Theater. As documented in *Nisei Linguists*, school graduates

⁴ Following Pearl Harbor, most Nisei soldiers in the U.S. Army serving outside Hawaii were branded “enemy aliens” and discharged. This hasty decision was later rescinded and many former soldiers re-enlisted from War Relocation Centers.

had a major impact on the course and success of the Pacific war by translating captured documents, interrogating prisoners of war, and helping to negotiate the surrender of Japanese field forces, including coaxing resistant soldiers from bunkers and tunnels. They were credited by senior officers and writers at the time for contributions that shortened the war by up to two years.⁵ Meanwhile, through the first half of 1945, more than a thousand new students arrived for language training at Fort Snelling while another 650 arrived that July. By then, the school had even begun its first small classes for Nisei women serving in the Women's Army Corps.⁶

MISLS made a tentative effort to teach Chinese and Korean, but the school had a hard time finding Mandarin-speaking instructors while the surrender of Japan appeared to negate the Army's need for Korean linguists.⁷ These programs were not productive and were cancelled.⁸ At war's end, Maj. Gen. Clayton Bissell, head of the War Department's Intelligence Division, came to Fort Snelling on one of many visits. He told students that "just as former graduates served as the vital connecting link between Allied soldiers and the Japanese in combat, the Nisei will serve as the language bridge between the Allied occupation forces and the 80 million people of Japan."⁹ The Japanese language program would continue.

A series of difficulties now beset MISLS. Already, the program faced a shortage of incoming students familiar with Japanese. As the war went on, fewer enlistment-age Nisei were learning the tongue in part because speaking Japanese was discouraged in War Relocation Centers and teaching it was forbidden. MISLS adjusted by developing a curriculum designed

⁵ See McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists*, especially page 460.

⁶ Dr. James McNaughton, "School's Move to the Presidio of Monterey: Language Institute Crossed Country by Train," *Globe*, 20 October 1988, p. 8.

⁷ Because an invasion of the Korean Peninsula became unnecessary. Many MISLS graduates served in Korea, however, interrogating and helping to administered surrendered Japanese military forces.

⁸ Shigeya Kihara, Interview, 19 July 1991, in RG10.02-03/ff11 (Japanese Instructor, 1941-1974).

⁹ McNaughton, "School's Move to the Presidio of Monterey...by Train," pp. 8-9.

entirely for non-Japanese speakers.¹⁰ This transition mark an important change in the school's history for it was never again possible to recruit large numbers of native speakers as students. The exigency of world war and the ability of the Army to syphon heritage speakers from a large pool of Japanese American draftees was a peculiarity of time and place.

At any rate, new students continued to arrive in installments. The Japanese language program reached its apex in October with an enrollment of 1,836 students. Months before, staff introduced terminology and training scenarios oriented for occupation duty and even dropped military classes all together as the program shifted to civil affairs in courses shortened to six months.¹¹ MISLS instructors were also detailed to civil affairs staging areas at bases across the country. These organizations provided training to troops being deployed to Japan or Korea for occupation duty and included some instruction in Japanese.¹² The deployments began a drawdown of MISLS staff.

Unexpectedly, with the war over, MISLS entered a period of harder work, turmoil, and organizational danger. The school faced the need for fundamental adjustment to an operating environment radically different from the one that gave it birth—general demobilization. Chaos reigned throughout the Army after Congress ordered the discharge of millions of men and while the Army proceeded to disband seventy-four of ninety-one divisions. Many MISLS uniformed instructors became eligible for and were immediately discharged. The rapid loss of personnel placed a strain on remaining instructors.¹³ Skilled interpreters, of course, were still in high

¹⁰ Kihara, Interview, 19 July 1991; Tetsuo Imagawa, Interview, 19 July 1991, in RG10.02-03/ff5 (Japanese Instructor, 1942-1976). Similarly, during WWI German Americans stopped speaking German openly and abandoned a flourishing German language press.

¹¹ Kihara, Interview, 19 July 1991; and "Draft History of the Army Language School, 1 November 1941- 20 April 1959," [ca. 1959], pg. 2, in RG24.05-05/ff5 (Public Affairs Section—History of ALS).

¹² MISLS sent two instructors to Monterey before the school arrived. Kihara, Interview, 19 July 1991.

¹³ Maj. Gen. S. J. Chamberlin, Letter to Col. Kai E. Rasmussen, 9 July 1946, in RG24.05-03/ff2 (ALS).

demand for occupation duty. At the same time, Congress limited involuntary service to just eighteen months, so recruiting new students required desperate measures by Army staff to secure approval to attract regular Army three-year enlistees to the program by offering automatic promotions.¹⁴ Moreover, post-victory Nisei students did not have the same motivations as those who had served during the war and previously unusual discipline problems became a concern.¹⁵ Then, in early 1946, Colonel Rasmussen, who had overseen the school through the war, was appointed military attaché to newly liberated Norway while John Aiso, having previously accepted an Army commission, was re-assigned to Japan.¹⁶ The loss of the founding commandant and most senior instructor were heavy blows to morale. Also on the minds of many was the announced closure of Fort Snelling. The school would have to move again. Why not to Japan? In March 1946, War Department planners offered the school to General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters—the Far East Command. MacArthur, however, declined to host the school apparently for reasons owing to a lack of facilities and the new service length restrictions making it difficult for MISLS graduates to serve full tours.¹⁷ A wise decision, at the time it contributed to uncertainty about the school's future.

Fortunately, Rasmussen found a vacant post on the West Coast and gained approval to return the school to California, which boosted everyone's morale. Most of the school's instructors and students originally came from the West Coast or Hawaii. Families of the faculty and students alike were returning there from War Relocation Centers. The move also situated the program closer to Japan where most MISLS graduates were headed and to the pool of future

¹⁴ Maj. Gen. S. J. Chamberlin, Letter to Col. Elliott R. Thorpe, 9 July 1946, in RG24-05-03/ff2 (ALS).

¹⁵ The problems created for MISLS by victory in Japan are recounted in detail in McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists*, pp. 417-420.

¹⁶ McNaughton, "School's Move to the Presidio of Monterey...by Train," pp. 8-9.

¹⁷ War Department Memo: "Language Training," to Conferees attending D/I Conference (12 April 1947), 11 April 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff4 (ALS).

Japanese language program enlistees. In May 1946, the War Department directed MISLS to relocate to California to a post vacated by a civil affairs unit shipped to Japan.¹⁸ That June, 925 enlisted men, 15 officers, and the remaining instructors boarded trains and a few private automobiles for the Presidio of Monterey where classes resumed on 15 July.¹⁹



Figure 2 Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill, 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) with MISLS graduates Herbert Miyasaki and Akiji Yoshimura (r) behind enemy lines in Burma, May 1944. (DLIFLC archives.)

MISLS under Col. Elliott R. Thorpe

On 25 July 1946, Col. Elliott R. Thorpe assumed command of MISLS.²⁰ As a result of changes he made, Thorpe was destined to be the last MISLS commandant as well. Thorpe had readily accepted the assignment and reported from service as General MacArthur's Chief of

¹⁸ McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists*, pp. 417-420.

¹⁹ McNaughton, "School's Move to the Presidio of Monterey...by Train," pp. 8-9.

²⁰ General Orders 33: Assumption of Command, HQMISLS, 25 July 1946, in RG24.05-03/ff2 (ALS).

Counterintelligence. He was an ideal candidate for the job. As it happened, Thorpe's mission was less about re-rooting the school in the soil of a new location than re-orienting it to the context and military needs of a post-war world. Under Rasmussen, MISLS had begun with a handful of instructors sitting on orange crates in an abandoned aircraft hangar. By war's end it had trained more than 6,000 Japanese-speaking linguists credited with having helped to shorten the war. But once the war was over, the value of that program became debatable. For a time, the occupation sustained the Army's interest in the Japanese language program, but the occupation would not last forever either. Indeed, practically every other government Japanese language program began to close down. Once MISLS was set up in Monterey, new recruits continued to trickle in, but by the spring of 1947, the Japanese program had shrunk to just 400 students.²¹

Thorpe was an Infantry officer, but significant experience doing intelligence work was key to his function. As a military attaché in Dutch-controlled Java, Thorpe conveyed Dutch-intercepted warnings indicating an imminent Japanese attack upon Hawaii, the Philippines, and Thailand that went unheeded by the American military bureaucracy days before Pearl Harbor.²² During the occupation, Thorpe was responsible for Japanese Emperor Hirohito and played an important role in reorganizing Japan by establishing a system to screen militarists from government, releasing political prisoners, and helping determine which Japanese officials to try for war crimes. He was also responsible for hundreds of MISLS graduates doing counterintelligence work.²³ He was certainly familiar with the value that cultural understanding and language proficiency had for diplomatic and intelligence gathering.

²¹ McNaughton, "School's Move to the Presidio of Monterey...by Train," pp. 8-9.

²² Thorpe's overlooked report, based upon intelligence intercepts provided to him by officials in Dutch-controlled Java, was only one of many examples of the failure of a dysfunctional prewar U.S. intelligence system to warn about the impending Japanese attack. See Col. John Hughes-Wilson, *Military Intelligence Blunders* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1999), pp. 60-101.

²³ "Last Survivor of MacArthur's Staff: E.R. Thorpe, Warning of Hawaii Attack Ignored," *Los Angeles Times* (obituaries), 1 July 1989; and McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists*, pp. 327-328.

Thorpe's assignment as MISLS commandant only lasted from July 1946 until the fall of 1947, ending in a minor controversy. During his command, however, the Army made key decisions affecting the fate of the school, decisions that Thorpe helped shape and implement and that still effect how the school functions to this day. Indeed, in his memoir, *East Wind, Rain*, Thorpe specifically claimed credit for building the Army's "Multilanguage school at Monterey."²⁴ In preparing for his command, Thorpe invested some time exploring college foreign language programs. Combining what he learned there with his own experience, as well as input from his Nisei advisers and the War Department's Intelligence Division, Thorpe laid the foundation for a school that could teach some twenty languages while performing many other related tasks.²⁵ In command, Thorpe's first move was to restore Nisei morale and to sort out the fate of the program amidst the turmoil of change the Army faced at the end of World War II.

Thorpe realized that MISLS "had suffered from the too-rapid demobilization of personnel." He may have tried to repair any frayed relations after the hard pairing the school had taken prior to the move. One of the few early photographs taken of MISLS in Monterey depicts four instructors as Thorpe presents each with a special award for their wartime service.²⁶ Nurturing the support of these men was important to Thorpe. Instructor Shigeeya Kihara, for example, was so valuable to the school that the Army declined to let him join the officer corps and to fight in the Pacific Theater as he had wanted.²⁷ Making Japanese American faculty feel welcome at a time when their families were forced into War Relocation Camps had been a high priority of MISLS intelligence officers from the start of the school. Thorpe continued this

²⁴ Elliott R. Thorpe, *East Wind, Rain: An Intimate Account of an Intelligence Officer in the Pacific, 1939-1949* (Boston: Gambit Inc., 1969), pg. 255.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 255-258; and Brig. Gen. Elliott R. Thorpe, Interviewed in 1981 by Lt. Col. J. H. Griffin, Senior Officers Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, pp. 81-87, in RG24.10-01/ff2.

²⁶ Photograph IA.DLI.2010.03-13 (Figure 3), in RG22.24.A/ff3 (ALS, 1940s). From the left: Yutaka Munakata, Thomas Tanimoto, Tetsuo Imagawa, and Shigeeya Kihara.

²⁷ Kihara, Interview, 19 July 1991.

tradition and emphasized Nisei loyalty to the United States before and during the war. Kihara and other early faculty held high regard for those Army officers who swam against the stream of racism, their goals fixed on the military need to employ Nisei skills. In Minnesota, according to Kihara, Japanese Americans were treated on par with Caucasian officers both at work and socially. Nisei children went to school with white children. The Pacific War, he noted with irony, forced Japanese Americans to face the most virulent episode of racism while it nonetheless promoted their fuller integration into American society through their Army service.²⁸



Figure 3 Col. Elliott R. Thorpe presents four MISLS instructors with special awards for their wartime service. (DLIFLC archives.)

Officers like Rasmussen and Thorpe set the tone for the culture of respect that MISLS enshrined, but it was the faculty who diffused that tradition to the new staff. This is what Thorpe

²⁸ Kihara, Interview, 19 July 1991.

meant in saying that the Nisei were the “solid base on which to build the multilanguage school.”²⁹ The Japanese American faculty of MISLS were an ideal role model and helped Thorpe maintain continuity in the school’s teaching traditions and in the institutional culture required for the successful operation of a truly multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and indeed, multi-racial organization. A school eventually composed of faculty from all over the world would not have succeeded if racism or intolerance had been permitted. Implicitly, new arrivals learned about, shared in, and were measured against the wartime standards of MISLS. For an entire year, new instructors were even expected to adopt Japanese American culinary preferences—it took that long before the mess hall provided menu items not focused on the MISLS fare of rice, fish, and tofu!³⁰

Why did the Army decide to transform the single language MISLS into a multi-language program? After all, the Chinese and Korean classes begun in Minnesota had not amounted to much and were cancelled before MISLS moved to California. By March 1946, however, diplomat George Kennan had advised the government on post-war strategy to contain Moscow while Winston Churchill had gone to Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, to declare that the Soviet Union had imposed an “iron curtain” across the European continent requiring the unequivocal commitment of the great powers of the “English-speaking world” to unite in organizing and policing the postwar world. To Thorpe and his associates in Army Intelligence that meant the ability to understand the Russian-speaking world. School staff from that era also recalled growing American interest in the Middle East and the need for Arabic speakers in the Office of Special Services (the CIA’s predecessor).³¹ By May 1946, communist-back insurgents

²⁹ Thorpe, *East Wind, Rain*, pp. 255-258.

³⁰ Robert Franco, Interview, [?] July 1991, in RG10.02-02/ff8 (Spanish Instructor, 1947-1979).

³¹ Donald Likas, Interview, 29 July 1991, in RG10.02-03/ff14 (Greek Chair, 1947-1950).

were fighting in both Greece and China while the Soviets were threatening Turkey. A few things were surely becoming clear.

Still, when Maj. Gen. S. J. Chamberlin, the War Department's Director of Intelligence, officially welcomed Thorpe to command of MISLS in July, he wrote mainly to assure Thorpe of the "continued interest of the War Department in the successful production of military Japanese linguists for duty with the occupation forces in Japan." The letter solicited Thorpe to forward his comments or recommendations for any required changes, but curiously made no remark about launching additional courses in any other languages.³² The decision to transform MISLS into a multi-language program was made after Thorpe's arrival in Monterey.

What is known is that by the end of 1944, the Army was planning for post-war reform of its intelligence system. A subordinate plan to reform training for Army intelligence was also in a draft stage by the summer of 1945. That plan noted the system's numerous training deficiencies before and during WWII. Among its findings "was a lack of anticipation of impending needs for interpreters, translators, interrogators, broadcasters, liaison personnel, etc., in all languages, including the lesser tongues." The report found that "the sources of such personnel were neither determined nor controlled, nor were training facilities established" and remarked that the only successful effort, driven by dire need, "to meet the many demands and requirements" was the "catch-as-catch-can Japanese language school." The plan also provided an appendix listing Military Intelligence language requirements divided into "Essential" and "Subsidiary" categories. The list indeed included twenty languages or regional language groupings.³³ The plan offered no advice about how to resolve the discrepancy between these requirements and the

³² Chamberlin, Letter to Thorpe, 9 July 1946.

³³ The Essential languages included: French, German, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Japanese. The Subsidiary languages included: Arabic, Annamese (Vietnamese), Balkan, Baltic, East European, and Scandinavian tongues, as well as Hindi, Siamese (Thai), and Turkish.

lack of sufficiently trained uniformed linguists other than to have them “farmed out” to various academic organizations. A revision of the draft, however, stated that “some means must be established for encouraging the study of certain languages, so that we will not be dependent upon refugees or immigrants; and for maintaining the fluency of language graduates.”³⁴

Between 1945 and 1947, the Army attempted to determine and resolve its language training requirements, but the solution—a multi-language school—was not at first obvious to officers of that era even despite the success of the Japanese language program. However, accomplishment and adaptability did mark the program for serious consideration.

In August 1946, the Army announced an effort called “Language and Area Training” intended for selected officers and a limited number of enlisted and civilian personnel. The program essentially provided authority and funds that could be used at civilian universities, the Naval Intelligence School, study abroad, or a combination of these methods. The Naval Intelligence School assumed responsibility for providing foreign language training to Naval officers following the demise of its wartime university language training program. A few Army officers attended the school’s four-month Portuguese and six-month Russian program.³⁵ The War Department hoped this program would “produce staff officers fluent in the language of a particular country” and knowledgeable in its culture, history, economy, and geography “for postwar duties in the Intelligence Division, the Attaché System, and military missions to foreign countries and to create a pool of trained linguists for future eventualities.”³⁶ Just one example of demobilization confusion, the planned scope of this program was curtailed, though not

³⁴ “Post-War Military Intelligence Training Plan (draft),” ca. August 1945, in RG24-05-03/ff2 (ALS). This document was reproduced at the National Archives, which declassified it in 1995).

³⁵ War Dept. Memo: “Language Training,” to Conferees attending D/I Conference, 11 April 1947.

³⁶ War Dept. Circular 250, 27 August 1946, in RG24-05-03/ff2 (ALS).

eliminated, due to “the action of enforced economy” only weeks after being announced.³⁷ Still, the Army was able to establish relations with two universities to which it sent small numbers of officers on a four-year-long training program. Those who went to Yale University studied Chinese with follow-on training in Beijing, then controlled by the Republic of China. Those who went to Columbia University’s School of International Affairs studied the Soviet Union, including Russian, prior to overseas assignment. A program evaluation concluded that the students thought the language training was insufficient to prepare them for an overseas tour and that trying to learn Russian simultaneously while writing papers distracted them from doing well at either. The review recommended additional language training for these officers prior to the course so that they could peruse source material in Russian, expedite further language training, and allow more time for area studies.³⁸

The finding above supported adaptive use of MISLS, but the Army had a predicament to resolve. In October 1946, the Intelligence Division had resumed “negotiations” with the Far East Command in the hope that it might reconsider assuming responsibility for the Japanese linguist training mission. This second attempt to move MISLS to Japan likely banked on Thorpe’s good relations with MacArthur’s staff. Indeed, the Pacific Theater command did not turn down the second offer outright, but many administrative issues remained. A final decision was thus postponed until April 1947. Meanwhile, the Army had a demand for Russian linguists that exceeded its training capacity. Thorpe thus initiated a one-year-long course for thirty officers and enlisted men that began in October 1946.³⁹ If MacArthur changed his mind, MISLS would

³⁷ War Dept. Memo: “Program for training personnel to speak foreign languages,” 20 November 1946, in RG24.05-03/ff2 (ALS).

³⁸ Memo: “Reports on Trip to Columbia University,” 22 November 1946, in RG24.05-03/ff2 (ALS).

³⁹ War Dept. Memo: “Language Training,” to Conferees attending D/I Conference, 11 April 1947. Between September 1946 and April 1947, MISLS reduced its student load from 800 to 400, but that included the addition of 30 Russian students and 9 additional Army officers enrolled in the four-year area program in Japanese who came to MISLS for one year of Japanese language training.

vacate the Presidio of Monterey and the Army would have to find some other way to provide Russian language training. On the other hand, the outlook that the Far East Command would accept the MISLS training mission was doubtful. In that case, experimenting with MISLS to see if it could reorganize to teach other languages during the interim was a logical approach.

In September 1946, Thorpe appointed the first MISLS Russian language instructor by simply tasking a Japanese Department instructor named Alexander Vorobyoff who spoke Russian. Vorobyoff was a U.S. Army master sergeant of Russian ancestry who had grown up in Japan before immigrating to the United States before WWII. The multilingual Vorobyoff was the sole MISLS instructor in Monterey to transition to teaching in another department. Thorpe also hired a civilian instructor, Gleb Drujina, who was working on a doctorate at Stanford University.⁴⁰ With two instructors, the Russian Department was organized in October 1946.⁴¹ Classes began at once and included four officers and five enlisted men. By April 1947, there were three more Russian courses underway ranging in size from seven to eleven students with each including a mixture of officers and enlisted men.⁴² Mixing officers and enlisted men together was a change from the MISLS approach and was likely driven by expediency.

Thorpe found the school's first Russian Department chair by transferring Maj. Nicholas E. Mitchell, an associate professor at the nearby Naval Postgraduate School on terminal leave.⁴³ Mitchell was happy to accept the challenge, which kept him uniformed. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, he had served in the U.S. Army Air Corps and was an official interpreter for President

⁴⁰ Kihara, Interview, 19 July 1991; "The Birth of the Russian Department at Army Language School," [195?], in RG25.11-03/ff7 (History—Russian Dept.).

⁴¹ "Draft History of the Army Language School," [ca. 1959], pg. 6.

⁴² War Dept. Memo: "Language Training," to Conferees attending D/I Conference, 11 April 1947. See Tab A.

⁴³ Nicholas E. Mitchell, Interview, 13 November 1987, in RG10.02-04/ff1 (Russian Chair, 1947-1950).

Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Tehran Conference and for President Harry S. Truman for the Potsdam Conference. Mitchell had trained Russian pilots in Iran under the Lend-Lease Act.⁴⁴



Figure 4 Alexander Vorobyoff (in uniform), fluent in Russian and Japanese, started as an MISLS Japanese instructor before becoming the first instructor of the MISLS Russian language program. (DLIFLC archives.)

In establishing the Russian language program, how did Thorpe decided who was qualified to teach? Thorpe had visited several university foreign language programs. He only found one teaching Arabic.⁴⁵ Of the seven students in that class, all were interested in either theology or archeology. University courses in Greek focused upon the ancient language, not the modern. Such

programs little helped the Army recruit its own language instructors. Thorpe also found the fluency of instructors at university programs problematic. He interviewed a Russian instructor, who was really a professor of French, who was himself taking a correspondence course for Russian and was only a lesson or two ahead of his students. For this reason, Thorpe determined to “allow no one to teach a language who was not indigenous to the country where that language was used.” This decision—that the school’s instructors had to have native fluency ahead of any

⁴⁴ “Nicholas E. Mitchell,” *Monterey Herald* (obituary), 20 January 1988, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Thorpe noted that many colleges claimed in their course catalogs to offer many courses. In actuality, most were only offered occasionally, or not at all.

other credential—followed the tradition established earlier by the Japanese program for which it was more of an unwritten rule. Thorpe fixed this notion as a key precept governing the school's operation. Certainly, native fluency distinguishes instructor credentials to this day.⁴⁶

In considering the disposition of MISLS, the Army evaluated the fact that there would be a continuing need to support the Far East Command with Japanese linguists for some time while it had already invested in classroom improvements to adapt facilities at the Presidio of Monterey. A survey completed in 1946 suggested Army requirements for trained linguists to serve in the Far East, Latin America, and Europe were more than a thousand. Most were pegged for the Far East Command; predominantly Japanese, but Russian, Chinese, and Korean were also needed. The principle difficulty with the Army using the Naval Intelligence School for courses was that the program required excellent students or those who already possessed knowledge of the language and the Army's dropout rate from the program was 70 percent. The university programs were acceptable for officers in the area program, but they also needed pre-training in their languages to be advantaged while it was less expensive to send them to MISLS for the first year than to a university. These issues directed attention back to MISLS. According to the Intelligence Division, "MISLS has one of the finest Japanese language courses in the country and it is recognized as such by other institutions." MISLS had instituted the Russian section to help address the fact that the Army was turning away personnel for Russian language training because it could not accommodate the need. Evaluators were not wholly satisfied with the course, but the only reason more languages could not be taught in Monterey was a lack of funding and uncertainty about moving the Japanese section to Japan.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Thorpe, *East Wind, Rain*, pp. 255-258.

⁴⁷ War Dept. Memo: "Language Training," to Conferees attending D/I Conference (12 April 1947), 11 April 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff4 (ALS). See Tab A and D.

In conclusion, the Intelligence Division asserted, “those connected with language training are of the opinion that the Army should have a flexible language school. It should be able to teach any language required” and it should have several additional desirable qualities, such as being able to train selected personnel from all major forces, be able to design courses of varying lengths while not exceeding a year, and have flexible start dates (unlike university programs).⁴⁸ Adapted as a multi-language program, MISLS offered a solution to all these needs.

At some point during his command, Thorpe received a visit by two colonels who had come “to close out” the school and “dispose of the personnel” because the Army had decided it “cannot afford to keep the operation going.” Called to Washington, Thorpe argued against this notion with the conviction of a “Methodist preacher” seeking converts.⁴⁹ He later recounted his remarks to an Army intelligence panel. “The Interpreter is the middleman,” he said,

and the middleman always takes a profit. He can say what he’s been told but he can say it in such a way that he’s put a twist to it. Now, we’d better have our own. Here we’ve gone all over the world relying on a few nations to do our talking for us, and they always take a little percentage for the middle-man.⁵⁰

Whether Thorpe swayed anyone’s view with his folksy anecdote is unknown. The question did after all seem more about how to obtain military linguists rather than whether to have them. His account does indicate, however, that the fate of the school, its existence at all, was quite uncertain from a Pentagon perspective.

Finally, MacArthur removed lingering uncertainty about moving MISLS to Japan by declining again to accept the school. The War Department was still responsible, however, to supply his command with Japanese linguists and that made the Presidio of Monterey the best

⁴⁸ War Dept. Memo: “Language Training,” to Conferees attending D/I Conference, 11 April 1947.

⁴⁹ Thorpe, *East Wind, Rain*, pp. 255-258. Thorpe recounted the same story of having to convince the Army not to close the school in his 1981 interview. See Thorpe, Interviewed in 1981 by Lt. Col. J. H. Griffin, pp. 81-87.

⁵⁰ Thorpe, Interviewed in 1981 by Lt. Col. J. H. Griffin, pp. 86-87.

location for continuing to administer MISLS. The school was already operational, continued use of military facilities reduced overhead, and the program was near the source of Nisei students. Moreover, MISLS had begun teaching Russian. The Intelligence Division knew the answer and authorized an expansion of the program to include additional required languages “within the limits of funds, availability of students, and overhead personnel.” It recommended MISLS be placed under the commanding general, Ground Forces Command, to provide needed support following the school’s reorganization.⁵¹

On 13 May, Colonel Thorpe activated a headquarters company and the first of several troop units.⁵² In early June, he appointed Lt. Col. Fred B. Keller, Jr., as head of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.⁵³ Keller had served as the MISLS troop battalion commander in Minnesota.⁵⁴ Thorpe detailed him as the first instructor of the Spanish program probably because he had served in Cuba during the war. With Keller came Lieutenant Gaston Pardue and Robert Franco, an enlisted man who became the first platoon sergeant for the non-Nisei enlisted instructors of which there were eventually several. Franco had learned military terminology while enrolled in a Mexican ROTC-type program prior to immigrating to the United States and joining the 46th Infantry Division (known as the “Tex-Mex” division) during the war.⁵⁵ In establishing new language departments, Thorpe first looked for those in uniform who already spoke the target language. Some came from nearby Fort Ord.⁵⁶ Indeed, the first Spanish

⁵¹ Memo: “Establishing Army Language Training School,” 18 April 1947, Col. S.P. Walker, Acting Chief, Training Group, War Dept., to Conferees attending D/I Conference (18 April 1947), in RG24.05-03/ff4 (ALS).

⁵² “Draft History of the Army Language School,” [ca. 1959], pg. 3.

⁵³ The Army had an interest in Portuguese-controlled territory during WWII and sent officers to learn Portuguese at the Naval Intelligence School, but the course did not meet Army needs. Spanish was pegged in 1945 as an “essential” or strategic language and the Army anticipated needing as many Spanish as Russian linguists.

⁵⁴ MISLS Album, pg. 126.

⁵⁵ Franco, Interview [?] July 1991.

⁵⁶ Proximity to Fort Ord offered many advantages for an Army language school in Monterey. As a basic training base, many language students would go there first and the garrison could support the school logistically.

students were also Fort Ord officers who volunteered for the clearly “experimental” course that was to employ the same methods used earlier to teach Japanese and Russian. Future courses were only to be given to personnel selected for duty in Spanish-speaking regions.⁵⁷ Thorpe found other instructors by soliciting the War Department to conduct a search and by posting notices in Army circulars for men in uniform who were native-speakers of Arabic, Greek, Turkish, Persian or Korean, languages particularly difficult to staff, so that once located they could be transferred to the school as teachers or teaching assistants.⁵⁸

Surprisingly, MISLS found many in uniform to serve as language instructors. But this strategy was problematic. First, there were not that many speakers of some languages in the U.S. Army. Second, military staff eventually rotated to a new assignment leaving key spots to refill, which is what happened to Mitchell, the first head of Russian Department, as well as Aiso. Third, some students had problems distinguishing classroom authority from rank.⁵⁹ As a result, beginning in the 1950s, the school would completely civilianize its language instructors. Also, what qualified as fluency? Thorpe soon realized that he needed Russian instructors who were familiar with “the communist idiom” and not White Russian émigrés who were still speaking among themselves using a Czarist dialect. M. Sgt. Vorobyoff was one of these as were many other early Russian instructors.⁶⁰ Some of the first Russian program graduates were not considered well trained and this was a major one reason why.⁶¹ Similarly, Turkish speakers in

⁵⁷ “Presidio Tries Experiment in Teaching Spanish,” Fort Ord *Panorama*, 8 August 1947, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸ Col. Elliott R. Thorpe, Letters to Col. Paul A. Gavan, 11 and 18 July 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS).

⁵⁹ Retired Hungarian Department Chairman Joseph St. Clair discussed this problem at length in a 1991 interview. The use of enlisted men as instructors had worked well for Nisei students, but it proved to be a unique aspect of the culturally homogeneous environment of MISLS. See Joseph St. Clair, Interview, 22 July 1991, in RG10.02-04/ff13 (Hungarian Chair, 1948-1978).

⁶⁰ See, for example, Fred Sorri, “Paul Petroff Retires from Russian Dept. after Seven Years with Presidio School,” *Monterey Herald*, 8 July 1954, about a former major general of the White Russian Army who retired as a Russian language instructor from the Army Language School in 1954.

⁶¹ “The Army Language School, 1946-1954,” Summary of ALS Oral History interviews, in RG10.02-05/ff3 “ALS Oral History Program.”

the United States tended to be from the minority Christian community within Turkey and spoke a separate dialect from the majority Muslim population.⁶²



Figure 5 Brig. Gen. Elliott R. Thorpe was General Douglas MacArthur's counterintelligence chief and an ideal choice to lead the transformation of MISLS. (U.S. Army photo courtesy University of Rhode Island.)

Finding native speakers who knew the current dialect of the target country's language would prove a perennial issue, and it meant having a flexible attitude and looking beyond the Army or even the United States to find instructors. Thorpe recalled hiring a Russian soldier liberated from a German prison camp in the U.S. sector of Germany who had married an American nurse that the school was able to hire under the "War Bride Act."⁶³ MISLS found Ann Arpajolou, the school's first civilian female instructor, working at a Greek newspaper in New York City. She never imagined the U.S. Army would hire a woman, but the school picked her

⁶² Thorpe, Interviewed in 1981 by Lt. Col. J. H. Griffin.

⁶³ Thorpe, *East Wind, Rain*, pp. 257; and Thorpe, Interviewed in 1981 by Lt. Col. J. H. Griffin, pp. 82-83.

over several engineers, shop-owners, and professionals because she had previously taught grammar school in Greece prior to WWII. Arpajolou headed the Greek Department and for many years was the only female department chair.⁶⁴ As remembered by Robert Franco, in the beginning “we were all a group of improvised instructors.” In line with Thorpe’s key principle, they all knew their own language; anything else, like actual experience teaching, was gravy.⁶⁵

Eventually, the school placed ads in foreign language newspapers in major cities where large ethnic communities existed, such as Boston, Chicago, and New York. Letters were also sent to the foreign language departments of major universities in the hopes of finding a few native speaking students or perhaps their foreign born instructors. At the time, there were still a lot of displaced people from the war in “international houses.” So, the Army could find candidates to interview. Once the Army approved a course of instruction, it scheduled students quickly. Instructors were often hired just days prior to a class start date. If candidates spoke fluently and knew enough English, they were hired. Training or experience as teachers was desirable, but not the deciding criteria. Of course, the rush to staff classes led to some poor choices. There were no reliable tests to determine proficiency and some teachers claimed more than they could deliver and had to be relieved.⁶⁶ In one unfortunate and well publicized case, the school hired a former Vichy France official apparently convicted by a French court of collaboration with the Nazis, which led to controversy and an IG investigation.⁶⁷ An inspection

⁶⁴ Judy Karas, “A Woman of Firsts,” *Monterey Herald*, 8 March 1996, pp. 1D, 3D. Capt. Sonja Beaumont, Women’s Army Corps, served as a French instructor, which class began the same date as the Greek class. Together they were the first two women to serve as faculty instructors. See General Order 15, HQALS, 25 September 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff5 (ALS, 1947).

⁶⁵ Robert Franco, Interviewed [?] July 1991, in RG10.02-02/ff8 (Spanish Instructor, 1947-1979).

⁶⁶ Joseph St. Clair, Interviewed 22 July 1991, in RG10.02-04/ff13 (Hungarian Chair, 1948-1978).

⁶⁷ Gaspard Weiss created controversy after becoming head of the French Dept. Following the IG investigation, he was removed from his position of chairman and resigned as instructor the following year. Several articles document this affair, such as Ritch Lovejoy, “Monterey Presidio Language Department Head Investigated as Nazi Sympathizer,” *Monterey Herald*, 6 December 1952, pp. 1-2.

of the school in late 1947 found much inconsistency in the methods and caliber of instruction and a lack of supervisory efforts to promote better teaching through faculty development.⁶⁸

There was also no curriculum or unified method of instruction until the arrival of D. Lee Hamilton in 1951.⁶⁹ And it was difficult to acquire current teaching materials from countries behind the Iron Curtain. Faculty, however, would learn teaching methods and curriculum would improve with time. Former students assigned as assistant military attachés developed the habit of sending their former professors bundles of materials that they collected on overseas assignments. This behavior was analogous to how Army attachés stationed in Japan before the war had collected similar materials used later to establish the Fourth Army school.⁷⁰ But lack of structure had benefits as well. According to Capt. Donald Likas, Chair of the Greek Department, the Army offered the first professors an opportunity to help start an entirely new and very unique school almost from scratch. The situation presented a good degree of academic freedom, which inspired applicants and boosted morale. “That’s why,” said Likas, “they worked so hard. That’s why they were so loyal and that’s why...they’d better themselves. They matured very greatly. I saw that in many teachers.”⁷¹ Of course, that was just luck—the Army had no choice.

On 23 June 1947, Colonel Thorpe published a roster listing official faculty appointments of MISLS, which included Lt. Col. Lachlan M. Sinclair, Director of Academic Training (who had served with MISLS at Fort Snelling); Tsutomu P. Tekawa, Professor of Japanese and

⁶⁸ Memo: “Report of the Army Language School,” Chief, Strategic Section Training Group to Chief, Training Group, 22 October 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS).

⁶⁹ Hamilton became Academic Dean in 1951. A reserve officer and University of Texas professor, Hamilton and a team he brought with him introduced the first standardized teaching method across the departments of the school and is credited with deploying the aural-oral method and memorized dialogs, an approach that was considered superior by some standards, less so by others, but later so closely identified with the Army Language School that it became known as the “Army Method.” Hamilton’s impact on the school is discussed in several faculty interviews from the period. See “The Army Language School, 1946-1954” [Lt. Cmdr. Donald F. McCabe?], in RG10-02-05/ff3 (ALS Oral History Program—General Info). This is a brief summary of a dozen oral history interviews.

⁷⁰ Col. Alexander Burz, Interviewed 10 July 1991, in RG10.02-01/ff8 (Romanian Chair, 1949-1952).

⁷¹ Donald Likas, Interviewed 29 July 1991, in RG10.02-03/ff14 (Greek Chair, 1947-1950).

Chairman of the Department of Japanese; Major Mitchell, Professor of Russian and Chairman of the Department of Russian along with his assistant chairman now Warrant Officer Alexander Vorobyoff; and Lt. Col. Keller, Professor of Spanish and Chairman of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, although he had no instructors yet. Other staff included twenty-three associate or assistant professors of Japanese, eighteen instructors of Japanese, two assistant professors of Russian, seven instructors of Russian, and one instructor of physical education.⁷² This was the first official staff and organization of the Army's first multi-language school. At first, the Japanese and Russian instructors shared one large faculty room converted from a barracks and divided into two halves. The Russian instructors were on one side, the Japanese on the other. No one complained about the makeshift billets, but, said Shigeya Kihara, when the instructors returned to their desks at day's end, "we fought the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 all over again."⁷³ Founded on a bedrock of tolerance, management of a multi-language school nevertheless meant managing cultural complexity.

By the end of his tour, Colonel Thorpe had fought a few of his own battles with the garrison commander at nearby Fort Ord, who reported to Sixth Army headquarters, Presidio of San Francisco. Fort Ord was supporting the school's administrative and logistical needs. Their poor relationship was infecting officers assigned to both commands and an Army report recommended Thorpe's relief as soon as practical to resolve the problem.⁷⁴ One can imagine the scenario—two officers supposedly of equal rank but one of them, Thorpe, had actually served as a brigadier general before accepting a reduction in rank to remain on active duty during demobilization. Moreover, Thorpe had served with the legendary General MacArthur, which

⁷² General Order No. 10, HQMISLS, 23 June 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS).

⁷³ Shigeya Kihara, "The Beginning: Mustering Linguists," undated article in RG25.01-01/ff17.

⁷⁴ Memo: "Report of the Army Language School," Chief, Strategic Section Training Group to Chief, Training Group, 22 October 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS).

could have created a gulf between two colonels of different temperance. It was likely, however, that any personality clash was exacerbated by a violation of the “unity of command” principle, the notion that a commander should have effective scope of authority to perform his main mission while reporting solely to a single superior headquarters. Thus, while Fort Ord supported MISLS logistically, all MISLS training and personnel problems were handled directly by the Intelligence Division of the War Department to which Thorpe reported. The Intelligence Division acknowledged that this split responsibility had “numerous disadvantages.” For this reason, the Army re-designated MISLS as an Army specialty school and placed it under the command authority of Army Ground Forces (Sixth Army) following the reorganization of MISLS into a multi-language school.⁷⁵

In July 1947, the Army authorized MISLS to conduct instruction in Arabic, French, Greek, Korean, Persian, and Turkish.⁷⁶ Thorpe’s training director, Lt. Col. Lachlan Sinclair, immediately set out on a whirlwind trip to interview candidate instructors for these languages. Some departments were again at first staffed entirely with military personnel, such as the French Department, whose first class began 1 December 1947. This department included Maj. Frederick Stevens (Instructor of French and Chairman of the French Department), Capt. Sonja Beaumont (Women’s Army Corps), and 1Lt. Kaarel R. Pusta.⁷⁷ All departments were activated by November and classes started soon after.

⁷⁵ War Dept. Memos: “Language Training,” to Conferees attending D/I Conference, 11 and 18 April 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff4 (ALS).

⁷⁶ “Draft History of the Army Language School,” ca. 1959, pg. 3.

⁷⁷ General Order 15, HQALS, 25 September 1947, in RG24.05-03, ff5 (ALS, 1947); and Memo: “History of USALS French Dept., to Major Garrison, Intelligence Officer, 9 April 1959, in RG25.01.01, ff9 (French 1947).



Figure 6 The first faculty of the MISLS multi-language school included Capt. Sonja Beaumont, Women's Army Corps, and to her immediate left Capt. Donald Likas, Greek Department Chair. (DLIFLC archives.)

The Army's multi-language school continued to have the unique problem of finding qualified native-speaking faculty, but the school abandoned the MISLS model of selecting students who already spoke a target language. From its start, the Russian program did not select heritage speakers—50 percent of those enrolled in February 1947 were of Irish background.⁷⁸ Some courses, such as Arabic, tended to have officers enrolled in the structured multi-year program that proceeded to university work, study abroad, and assignment as an attaché; other courses tended to have mostly enlisted men, such as Greek, where graduates were destined to serve as interpreters or crypto analysts monitoring the Greek civil war.⁷⁹ After several examples, Thorpe complained that the Army could not take the word of students who claimed to speak Russian or Korean, but who arrived without being able to read or write and who would need the

⁷⁸ Thorne Hall, "Unique Army School at Presidio," *Monterey Herald*, 21 February 1947.

⁷⁹ "The Army Language School, 1946-1954" [Lt. Cmdr. Donald F. McCabe?].

same amount of training as the normal American graduates with no language training. One student was a former displaced person who had only been in the country a short time, which raised the issue of loyalty and future placement into a job requiring a security clearance. Because of such issues, the school gained authority to develop and administer foreign language proficiency tests to anyone claiming to speak a foreign language while the Army decided that soldiers without solid and unquestionable loyalty could not be sent to MISLS.⁸⁰

On 1 September 1947, the War Department certified the success of Thorpe's reorganization of MISLS and redesignated it as the Army Language School, an enterprise better suited to the needs of a post-war "Cold War" world.⁸¹ That same month, the school established four Departments that would allow the easier administration of grouped languages. These were: Far Eastern Languages headed by Tekawa, Slavic Languages headed by Mitchell, Romanic Languages headed by Keller, and Middle Eastern Languages headed by Likas.⁸² On 22 November 1947, Thorpe was reassigned to Thailand as military attaché, his final assignment before retiring in 1949. At this juncture, school enrollment reached its lowest point of about 300 students characterized by declining requirements for Japanese language students and the slow increase in enrollments in the new Russian and Spanish courses. With a steady state need for 200 Japanese linguists per year coupled to growth in several additional languages, enrollment was expected to stabilize at around 500 students.⁸³ Col. Charles H. Barnwell, who succeeded Thorpe as commandant, and who likewise came from MacArthur's staff, soon had approval to

⁸⁰ Col. Elliott R. Thorpe, Letter to Chief, Training Group (Intelligence Division), 28 August 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS). Joseph St. Clair discusses apparent efforts by the Army to place heritage students into early courses following the MISLS model, and why in many cases it created more problems than it solved. See Joseph St. Clair, Interviewed 22 July 1991, in RG10.02-04/ff13 (Hungarian Chair, 1948-1978).

⁸¹ General Order 84, War Dept., 8 September 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS, 1947). The term "Cold War" is attributed to presidential advisor Bernard Baruch who coined the phrase in late 1947 to describe the state of relations between the Western democracies and those areas dominated by communism.

⁸² General Order 15, HQALS, 25 September 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff5 (ALS, 1947).

⁸³ War Dept. Memo: "Language Training," to Conferees attending D/I Conference, 11 April 1947.

establish ten more departments, which included several East European and Scandinavian languages. German, however, was only added in 1951 after the Berlin Blockade crisis while the Scandinavian programs were later canceled, proving that the Army's ability to predict its future foreign language needs remained more art than science.⁸⁴ On the other hand, the Army certainly knew it would have such needs. By 1952, the class size of the Army Language School exceeded 1,300 students with 24 languages taught in residence.⁸⁵

The last commencements of MISLS took place at the Presidio of Monterey sports arena in the summer of 1947 and included only graduates of the Japanese language course. The July event featured a program with a dramatic photograph of a local military monument as did many later programs.⁸⁶ The first commencement of the Army Language School was held on 24 October 1947 at the same venue, but its program guide was a bit different. The ceremony included just fourteen Japanese language graduates, but added the first nine graduates of the Russian language program. This commencement guide featured the photograph of a Nisei color guard in starched khaki uniforms marching on the parade ground at Fort Snelling. Meanwhile, the existing Nisei men's choir was replaced by Russian language students singing Russian folk songs. Obvious to those at the time, this commencement marked a true changing of the guard—the transformation of the Army's Japanese into its multi-language school.⁸⁷

To conclude, the Army's Japanese Language program successfully met military needs in a flexible and adaptive manner during WWII. The program established a clear example that allowed decision-makers to compare options when, in the war's aftermath, the Army

⁸⁴ An unexpected funding shortfall in 1955 eliminated several positions and departments.

⁸⁵ "Advanced Planning for Army Language School," 1952, in RG24.05-03/ff11 (ALS, 1952).

⁸⁶ Program: "Commencement—Military Intelligence Service Language School," 3 July 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS).

⁸⁷ Program: "Commencement—The Army Language School," 24 October 1947, in RG24.05-03/ff3 (ALS).

simultaneously faced rapid demobilization and the need to secure new foreign language training for both military officers and enlisted personnel. The commitment of MISLS faculty to their

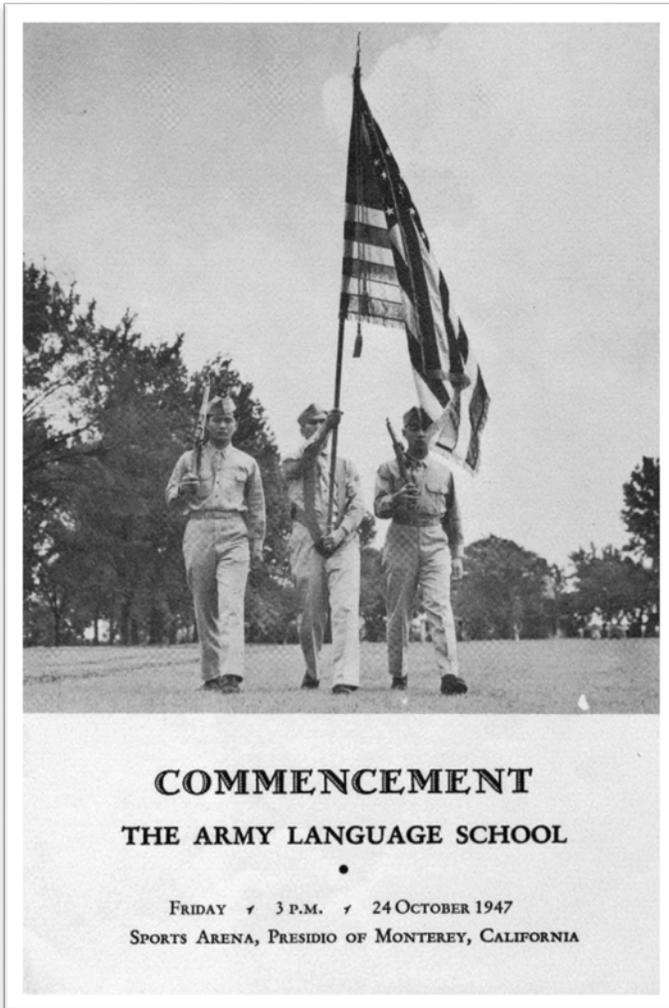


Figure 8 The first commencement program of the Army Language School included both Japanese and Russian language program graduates and featured for the last time the Nisei color guard. (DLIFLC archives.)

work and of Army officers to place military need above the era's racist impediments secured a lasting foundation upon which to construct a multi-cultural training institution. The Army Language School embedded this and other MISLS norms, especially that instructors possess native proficiency in the languages they taught. The new school refined wartime practices by moving to a fully civilian teaching force and by focusing

instruction upon non-heritage students, which suited post-war recruitment. Finally, it was also important that the Army purposely selected qualified commanders like Rasmussen and Thorpe whose effective leadership ensured that MISLS left an enduring legacy.