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EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY  
AND THE SOVIET BLOC

Note by the Chairman of the Committee on  
Information and Cultural Relations

This paper is submitted in response to the Council's request and as a basis of discussion in the Council on 26th June, 1957.

2. While time has not permitted the Committee on Information and Cultural Relations to prepare an agreed report, the attached paper is the result of an exchange of views and information, and of discussion, in the Committee.

(Signed) A. CASARDI

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CONTACTS BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY AND THE SOVIET BLOC

Introduction

1. The Committee on Information and Cultural Relations is under instructions from the Council to report periodically at its discretion, on exchanges between the Atlantic Community and the Soviet Bloc (1). The Committee's last report, submitted to the Council in July, 1956, analysed the Soviet and West exchange programmes (2). The conclusion drawn was that the Soviets probably derived somewhat greater gains but that it should be possible to tilt the balance of advantage in the Western favour, provided the West held fast to its aims and methods, as outlined in that report. Special considerations applying to contacts with the Satellites were not dealt with in the report.

2. In the light of events in the Soviet Bloc last autumn it appears the impact of contacts with the West may be greater, and the field for exploiting it more profitable, than seemed at that time to be the case. For this and other reasons most members of the Atlantic Alliance, who have had contacts with the Soviet Bloc, have decided that their interests would best be served by resuming them on a gradual and cautious basis, since the advantages outweigh the drawbacks. Other members of the Alliance have adopted a more reserved approach, and have taken the position that the desirability of exchanges with the Soviet Bloc can only be judged on an ad hoc basis.

3. Exchanges with the Soviet Bloc reached a peak in 1956 until the impact of Hungary on free world opinion led to wholesale cancellation or suspension of exchanges. Approximately 1,500 delegations were exchanged during the year. Of this number approximately 1,080 were exchanges with the countries of the Free World, 546 of them being with NATO countries.

I. CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

4. More tourists from the Free World visited the Soviet Union than at any time in history although they had little direct contact with the people. Soviet tourists to Western Europe numbered 2,000 in 1956 compared to practically none in 1955. Soviet citizens abroad were shielded by Soviet officials from becoming well acquainted with the peoples of the lands they visited but undoubtedly were able to get a good general idea of conditions there. In the cultural field the Soviet authorities favoured large-scale manifestations as having the widest possible propaganda effects on Western and other non-Communist public opinion. In the scientific and technological fields they favoured exchanges which could result in higher productivity and greater technological advance in Soviet industries and laboratories. However, the benefits were by no means one-sided. The Soviet intelligentsia and technocracy are important and influential in Soviet society: there is evidence that many members of both groups were deeply impressed by what they learned of the West.

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(1) C-R(56)12, Item VI  
(2) C-M(56)98

5. The Soviet campaign for cultural contact with the West was officially renewed in the statement made by the Soviet Minister of Culture, Mr. Mikhaïlov, to the Supreme Soviet on 12th February, 1957. Towards this end the Soviet Union has taken other initiatives, e.g.:

- In a flood of diplomatic notes and propaganda statements the Soviet Union has expressed the desire to resume contacts with the West.
- The rate of the rouble for tourists has recently been adjusted to a more realistic level.
- A State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries was set up in May this year to promote and co-ordinate cultural exchanges.
- Tourist travel by car is being actively promoted for the first time by Intourist, the official Soviet travel organization.
- The Ukraine Delegation to the recent session of the Economic Commission for Europe tabled a resolution urging the greater development of East/West contacts. The final version of the resolution, which was unanimously adopted, is attached at Annex.

6. As stated above, most countries of the Alliance have agreed to a cautious but gradual resumption of contacts with the Soviet Union, which were interrupted last November, having in mind the principles set out in C-M(56)98 and the following considerations:

- (a) The cessation of contacts prevents the West from exploiting the tug-of-war which is now going on between the more progressive elements in Soviet life and the reactionaries. Contacts between the former and Western intellectuals would have a healthy effect and provide a means of injecting Western ideas. It would be unfortunate if the Soviet intelligentsia's only contacts with the outside world were with neutralist countries.
- (b) Soviet public statements favouring the continuation of cultural exchanges, show signs of contending that our present attitude towards contacts indicates that we are intent on reviving the cold war.
- (c) Unless there are satisfactory alternative channels, the Soviet authorities may build up the follow-travelling "friendship" societies as the channel for exchanges, and may invite unrepresentative bodies to stage cultural manifestations in the Soviet Union at the Russians' expense.
- (d) Western countries cannot, in general, prevent arrangements for some contacts being made by private individuals.

- (c) Contacts with Russians and visits to the Soviet Union fill certain gaps in the Western Powers' knowledge of the Soviet Union. The Soviet authorities probably gain less knowledge from reciprocal visits than we do.

Special considerations

7. While the Soviet authorities still appear to be thinking primarily in terms of large organized exchanges and cultural showpieces, it would appear desirable for the West to concentrate on exchanges:

- (a) which can be warranted on humanitarian grounds; or
- (b) which are of definite value from the standpoint of knowledge which they can produce of the Soviet Union; or
- (c) which provide access to selected sections of Soviet society (in particular students, considering the prevalent unrest among them and the desirability of making contacts with minds which are still in a formative stage); or
- (d) which are so arranged that the Western way of life is likely to make an impact on the Soviet visitors.

The acceptance of the above criteria would mean limiting visits for the time being to small and unobtrusive delegations and avoiding any activity or large-scale manifestation which is likely to attract considerable publicity. As stated in C-M(56)98, an effort should be made to attain general reciprocity as to numbers and kinds of visits.

II. CONTACTS WITH THE SATELLITES

8. Satellite governments also are pressing for exchanges. This is not surprising. They want to provide carefully controlled contacts with the West as a safety valve for unrest among the intellectuals and the managerial and scientific classes. They also wish to obtain propaganda advantages from large scale delegations and other similar demonstrations.

9. In the view of most delegations the considerations which guide Western policy in regard to contacts with the satellites are broadly similar to those which govern contacts with the Soviet Union (1). They feel that one conclusion which might be drawn from recent events in Hungary and Poland is that it would be profitable to divert to the satellites much of the attention hitherto given to the Soviet Union. The populations in the satellites have only been subjected to Communist indoctrination for a decade, and to that extent should be more receptive to Western ideas. Moreover, the Communist ideal in the satellites appears in the guise of a foreign imposed ideology, and an instrument of Russian imperialism.

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(1) C-M(56)98

10. Apart from any intelligence value, the advantages to the West of contacts with the satellites include the possibility of:

- (a) lessening uniformity among the countries of the Soviet Bloc by encouraging an awareness of their national cultures, and
- (b) showing the anti-Communist and anti-Russian elements in these countries that Western countries have not forgotten them nor the traditional ties which previously existed.

Special considerations

11. In addition to the considerations set out in paragraph 7 which, it is felt, generally apply also to contacts with the satellite countries, most delegations consider that the following points concerning individual satellite countries are to be noted:

- (a) One important aim of Western policy should be to press for the maintenance or opening of offices dealing with cultural matters in satellite countries. This is one of the best ways of stimulating the natural interchange of ideas and flow of visitors which we want. Some NATO countries already have, or have had, particular cultural ties (including cultural offices) in one or other of the satellites, and this will, of course, influence the areas to which they devote their efforts.
- (b) Exchanges should in particular be encouraged with Poland. They should be allowed to expand normally and as far as practicable taking into account the delicate position of the Polish Government.
- (c) Public opinion in the West is not ready for officially-sponsored exchanges with Hungary.
- (d) Of the rest (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and Roumania), Czechoslovakia is of greatest interest to the West; however, it is also probably the one in which the Communist régime is most firmly entrenched.

RESOLUTION

"The Economic Commission for Europe,

Noting with satisfaction that, between the 11th and 12th Sessions of the ECE, there has been an extension of business contacts between European countries, as advocated in Resolution 4 (XI),

Invites its Committee to examine each year, during their first session, the feasibility of developing contacts still further and, more especially, of organizing study tours in the fields covered by their respective spheres of competence."

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Note: This is an unofficial translation of the text of the Resolution.