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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES HELD IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

Note by the United States Delegation

There is considerable evidence that, during the past two years, governments of the Communist bloc have taken a growing interest in attracting international meetings to their areas. In addition to sponsoring various meetings of private international organizations, Communist countries have been and will be acting as host to an increasing number of meetings under the auspices of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The following list is illustrative but not exhaustive:

1957

1. UN ECE Working Party on Mechanization of Agriculture  
MOSCOW  
June 14-July 3
2. FAO/ECE Timber Committee: Committee on Forest Working Techniques and Training of Forest Workers: 2nd Session  
MOSCOW  
Sept. 9-14
3. Ethnographic Film Seminar (UNESCO participated in this meeting and assisted to some extent, but exact details not available)  
PRAGUE  
September
4. Regional Meeting of European National Commissions for UNESCO (convened by the Yugoslav National Commission with assistance of UNESCO)  
DUBROVNIK  
Oct. 1-6

1958

5. Meeting of Experts on the Sociological Aspects of Peaceful Co-operation (convened by the International Sociological Association in collaboration with UNESCO; UNESCO extended invitations)  
MOSCOW  
Jan. 6-15
6. International Advisory Committee on Research in the Natural Sciences Programme of UNESCO (convened by UNESCO)  
MOSCOW  
May 7-9
7. ITU CCITT Study Groups VIII Working Party  
WARSAW  
May 19-23

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8. ITU CCIR Study Group XI (Television) MOSCOW  
May 28-June 10
9. FAO International Chestnut Commission: YUGOSLAVIA (AND GREECE)  
4th Session Sept 25 - Oct. 10
10. WMO Commission for Agricultural  
Meteorology: 2nd Session WARSAW  
September
11. Meeting on Peaceful Co-operation  
among nations (convened by UNESCO) PRAGUE  
September
12. Meeting of International Association  
of Legal Sciences (No direct UNESCO  
funds involved, although UNESCO sub-  
vention money used) WARSAW  
September

2. In addition to the foregoing, the ITU was invited by the Polish Government to hold its radio and plenipotentiary conferences in Warsaw in 1959. This invitation was not accepted, largely because of financial reservations expressed by the United States in the ITU Administrative Council.

3. The United States does not automatically oppose the holding of official international conferences behind the Iron Curtain. While it seems clear that the Communist governments hope to gain benefits, in terms of respectability and prestige, by acting as host to these conferences, such conferences may also afford free nations valuable opportunities for observation and contact. Therefore, the United States believes that invitations from Communist governments to United Nations bodies should be judged on an ad hoc basis, with acceptance or rejection of each invitation depending upon the apparent advantage or disadvantages involved in the particular situation. However, in view of increasing Communist bloc interest in meetings of this kind, the United States believes it desirable that other NATO governments be aware of some of the serious problems involved, which include:

(1) As indicated above, official meetings behind the Iron Curtain inevitably contribute somewhat to the prestige of the regimes which act as host. For this reason, it is often desirable for the free governments to differentiate between those countries whose governments maintain a measure of independence from and those which are completely under Soviet domination. On this basis, international meetings in Poland or Yugoslavia would normally be less objectionable than meetings in Hungary, or Bulgaria, for example.

(2) One consequence of holding official meetings in Communist countries may be to complicate seriously the problem of maintaining the representation of the Republic of China, as well as the problem of preventing representation from such areas as East Germany, North Korea, North Vietnam and Outer Mongolia. The host government usually supplies the chairman for these meetings, thus creating potential parliamentary difficulties for the free world delegations. Moreover,

the host government may be able to influence the deliberations on representation and membership questions in other ways, as by contriving public demonstrations and pressures, or by imposing obstacles to the attendance of particular free world delegations.

(3) One of the most serious problems involved in virtually all official meetings held behind the Iron Curtain stems from the fact that the facilities for maintaining security within and among the free world delegations are usually wholly inadequate. Meeting space is often limited, and in some localities it is very difficult for free world delegations to hold confidential conversations among themselves without the risk of having these conversations monitored.

(4) A special geographic problem may arise in connection with international conferences held in Warsaw. Delegates proceeding to Warsaw by rail via East Germany would be required to obtain GDR visas. The same would be true of travellers by air from Berlin-Schoenfeld. While delegations deliberately seeking to avoid obtaining GDR visas could undoubtedly find alternative travel routes, delegates from a number of non-Communist countries might choose to travel by East Germany as more direct and convenient. If the volume of such cases were high, this might have an undesirable effect upon our policy of preventing any increase in the international stature and authority of the GDR.

(5) The United States delegation suggests that the subject of official international meetings in Communist bloc countries be referred to the Committee of Political Advisers for consideration. The United States is not proposing the development of any comprehensive NATO policy on the subject. However, the United States believes that the matter is of legitimate interest to all NATO governments and that it may be desirable for these governments to concert their policies in opposing acceptance of particular Soviet bloc invitations which might have consequences adverse to free world interests. Therefore a general NATO discussion at this time may be useful in laying the groundwork for more effective co-operation on specific cases in the future.

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