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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL RELATIONS

ANGLO-SOVIET CULTURAL TALKS

Note by the United Kingdom Delegation

Early in February this year, the Chairman of the Soviet State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, Mr. Zhukov, invited the Chairman of the Soviet Relations Committee of the British Council to visit Moscow in order to arrange a joint programme of exchanges and visits for this year. Owing to the absence abroad of the Director-General of the British Council, the Soviet Relations Committee sent an interim reply to Mr. Zhukov, stating that they would consider meanwhile an agenda which could most usefully be the basis of discussions.

2. Proposals for a number of exchanges covering the calendar year 1958 and the financial year 1958-59 had been submitted to the Soviet Government before Mr. Zhukov's invitation was received, and a consolidated list of such proposals has already been sent to Mr. Zhukov. Many of these proposals have been accepted, and some are taking place or have already taken place. A few more proposals are in preparation but the completion of the programme does not, in itself, require a visit to Moscow.

3. The Soviet Relations Committee, in consultation with Her Majesty's Government, have now completed their consideration of the form and scope of the negotiations proposed by Mr. Zhukov. The Committee share Her Majesty's Government's view, as expressed in the Prime Minister's letter of 2nd September to Mr. Bulganin, that the present procedure, whereby discussions about the programme of cultural and other exchanges already take place through the Soviet Embassy in London and Her Majesty's Embassy in Moscow, is the most practical. The Committee, however, recognise that it may well be necessary to respond in some positive way to the Soviet invitation in order to overcome obstruction to the programme of exchanges already put to the Russians.

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4. On the other hand, the Committee consider, and Her Majesty's Government agree, that the proper development of Anglo-Soviet cultural relations is inconsistent with and is hindered by obstacles to the free exchanges of information between institutions and peoples in the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. Thus, the Committee consider that any discussions, other than those conducted ad hoc through the diplomatic channel, should be in the context of an initiative to remove these obstacles.

5. It has therefore been decided that Her Majesty's Government should take advantage of the invitation extended by Mr. Zhukov to propose to the Soviet Government that discussions should take place forthwith in London or Moscow with a view to reaching agreements designed to promote the free exchange of information and views between the Soviet and British peoples. For these discussions Her Majesty's Government will propose the following agenda:

- (a) the desirability of ensuring that each country's broadcasts to the other are free from jamming;
- (b) the issue and unobstructed distribution in each country of periodicals published by the other country, in the language of the first country;
- (c) the removal of obstacles in the way of the free passage of information from one country to the other, and of the free and uninterrupted sale and circulation of books, periodicals and other publications of one country in the other country (including the establishment of reading rooms);
- (d) the exchange, sale and distribution of films of each country in the other;
- (e) the facilitating of travel by diplomatists, journalists and other visitors, including tourists, to and in each country;
- (f) the need for exchanges between the two countries to be conducted through representative and responsible channels.

We would also offer to clarify, in the course of the discussions, any points which may still be outstanding in the current exchange programme of the Soviet Relations Committee.

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