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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL RELATIONS

OUTLINE OF FUTURE PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCT OF  
NATO TOURS OF JOURNALISTS

(Approved by the Committee on 21st October, 1955)

Noting that the unanimous view of the delegates to the Information Policy Conference last January in favour of the continuation of NATO Journalists' Tours has been re-affirmed more recently by views expressed by all delegations, the Committee on Information and Cultural Relations has been considering ways and means of making these tours more effective in the future in the light of the experience of the past three years.

2. As a result of the discussions in the Committee, suggestions for re-defining the purpose of the programme have emerged and specific proposals for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the tours been put forward. These are summarised below:

3. Definitions. The purpose of the Tours of Journalists, as originally set out in AC/24-D/36(Revised), particularly paragraph 7(j), may be more accurately re-defined as increasing and improving public understanding about the work and achievements of NATO and of the peoples and institutions of the member countries. It is recognised that this task can be accomplished only by repetition and insistence, and the programme, therefore, is essentially long-term; its results must be sought in the growth of a true community spirit among the 15 nations of NATO.

4. The word "journalist" may be interpreted liberally to include persons who influence public opinion, including, for instance, parliamentary correspondents, editors-in-chief, political commentators or other specialists, lecturers on international affairs, and government information offices. (This broadened definition of "journalist" is merely recognition of an evolution that is already taking place in the development of the tours.)

5. Administrative Arrangements. Successful operation of the NATO Tours of Journalists demands close co-operation between member countries and the Information Division. The responsibility is shared (a) by host countries that are being visited by tours, (b) by the countries that nominate participating journalists, and (c) by the Information Division, which must co-ordinate (a) and (b), as well as arrange transport, provide an escort officer, etc.

6. As in the past and to facilitate planning by national authorities, the Information Division will undertake, in conjunction with national authorities, to establish the tour programme by December-January (or as soon as possible after the information budget for the subsequent year is approved).

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7. Since the selection of appropriate participants in tours is to a large extent dependent on the type of tour arranged by host countries, it is essential that all concerned know well in advance whether the host country plans to arrange a tour which will, in a general way, fulfil the purpose of the tours as defined in paragraph 3 above, or whether it will be devoted to a more specialised topic (economics, agriculture, defence effort, atomic energy, etc.), in which case the countries nominating participants in the tours must exercise a special care in the selection of journals and journalists. On the whole, past experience indicates that tours devoted to specialised topics should be organized with great caution.

8. To assist host countries and the Information Division, governments should inform the Secretariat of the names of journalists chosen for a given tour at least three weeks in advance of their arrival in Paris. Furthermore, as it has been found helpful to host governments, both for internal publicity and for engaging the interest of Ministers and other officials, information should be made available about the individual journalists and the journals they represent, e.g., that journalist X is an important leader writer on journal Y, which is one of the leading conservative or socialist papers of country Z.

9. Tours should allow journalists adequate time to sort out their impressions and put them on paper. The hospitable temptation to crowd as much as possible into a four- or five-day visit still often defeats the purpose of the tours.

10. Selection of Journalists. The continued success of the tours depends in large measure on the selection of the right journals to be represented and the best individuals to represent them. The selection of the journalists is primarily a national responsibility, but considerations other than purely national ones are involved: the tours are internationally financed for a clearly defined purpose, and host countries are called upon to make a special effort of organization and hospitality to receive each tour. Therefore, selection should be made to the fullest possible extent in consultation with host governments whenever they so desire. Such consultations could be carried out between the national Information Services and the diplomatic missions of host governments. Nominees should, of course, have at least a good working knowledge of English or French.

11. In the past, ten, or at the most, twelve journalists have proved a manageable number. During the coming year the Information Division will, on an experimental basis, sponsor smaller parties, if specially qualified members can be chosen to participate in them. Furthermore, and also as an experiment, the Information Division will consider individual nominations from member governments of exceptionally qualified journalists to be sent on unescorted visits to NATO countries.

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