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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL RELATIONS

FOREIGN STUDENTS IN THE SATELLITE STATES AND YUGOSLAVIA⁽¹⁾

Note by the United Kingdom Delegation

Facilities for foreign students in bloc countries are still on a modest scale. The total number of such students (bloc and Afro-Asian) at universities and high schools in the satellites and in Yugoslavia in the academic year 1959-60 probably does not exceed 8,000, three-quarters of whom may come from the bloc. This figure, which relates, insofar as it is possible to distinguish them, to students engaged on courses covering several years, may be compared with those for foreign students at university in the leading countries in this field which for 1957-58 were: United States, 43,193; France, 17,176; Federal Germany, 13,916; United Kingdom, 11,276; and USSR, 11,266.

2. Among the satellites, Czechoslovakia and East Germany are ahead, each with about 2,000 foreign students. For the others the approximate current figures are: Poland, 1,000 plus; Roumania, 900; Bulgaria, 500; and Hungary, 300. Yugoslavia is host to more than 1,000, of whom 500 are at universities.

3. The satellite figures could be inflated by the inclusion of short-term visitors. East Germany, for example, has recently claimed a foreign student population of 4,000; this total evidently takes into account attendance at short courses and seminars, and may be compared with the figure of 42,000 students from 120 different countries recently announced by the British Council as working in the United Kingdom during the year 1959 - 60.

4. Admission to colleges and universities in the satellite countries is largely a matter of inter-governmental arrangement; recent cultural agreements have included student exchange clauses. Scholarships are also offered under the auspices of the International Union of Students (whose secretariat is in Prague) and the World Federation of Democratic Youth

(1) This note is a contribution to a series on "Soviet Cultural Penetration of Developing Countries", of which document AC/52-WP(60)37 was the first.

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(secretariat in Budapest), both Communist front organizations, and by specialised agencies of the United Nations such as WHO and UNESCO.

5. In the period up to 1958 the main impression derived from the figures is of the predominantly Asian background of the visiting students. In 1957-58, in the five countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland and Roumania) for which an analysis is available, the visitors from communist countries were divided as follows:-

| | | |
|----------------------------|------|-------------|
| USSR | 323 | Total |
| European satellites, about | 1169 | 1492 |
| China | 693 | |
| Outer Mongolia | 85 | |
| North Korea | 1246 | Total |
| North Vietnam | 188 | 2212 |
| | | <u>3704</u> |

Thus nearly half the visiting student population, which totalled approximately 4,750, came from the Asian bloc states - North Koreans being particularly prominent. The analysis for the remainder is less detailed, but the largest groups appear to have come from Indonesia and the United Arab Republic.

6. The Asian trend is reportedly passing and, as students from the Far East complete their courses, they are being replaced by representatives of the new republics of the Near East and especially of Africa, and by smaller contingents from Latin America. Indeed half of the 300 IUS scholarships available next year are to be awarded to Africans.

7. This switch of the expanding educational facilities to the developing countries suggests that conversion may be regarded as more profitable than preaching to the nominally converted. In an article published in January, 1959, Dr. Luduk Holubek, head of the foreign relations department of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education, announced the establishment at the Charles University of a special institution for the political training of foreign students. He went on to say quite frankly: "We want our foreign guests to return to their countries not only as outstanding experts, but also as Czechoslovakia's dedicated friends and adherents of socialist ideas".

8. An important recent development in the sphere of indoctrination has been the establishment in East Germany and Hungary of specialised trade union schools. These are intended to provide short courses on union organization and methods as well

as on Marxism-Leninism. The rapid turnover envisaged will doubtless provide regular contacts with both active and potential leaders in the developing countries.

9. While the political indoctrination of visiting students is a common aim in the satellite countries, the extra-curricular methods employed vary somewhat in subtlety. At one end of the scale, special bonuses are paid to Communist adherents in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, and substantial cuts made in the bursaries of those who refuse to take part in propaganda broadcasts in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In East Germany, on the other hand, V.I.P. treatment is apparently lavished on Africans, regardless of any immediate returns. There have also been many cases of coloured students, nearly all of whom are male, being encouraged, notably in Poland and East Germany, to marry during their period of study. This serves both to demonstrate the absence of race prejudice and to ensure a measure of subsequent control.

10. In addition to the recruitment of individuals as speakers for radio programmes beamed to their native countries, student groups are regularly mobilised to support the celebrations of special "Anti-Colonial" days, anniversaries etc.

11. Apart from these political overtones, the majority of the students involved are concerned with technical fields. This contrasts with the "liberal arts" traditions of, for example, the universities of India and Pakistan. The figures suggest, as might be expected, that the proportion of technical students among the visitors to the satellite countries is rather higher than that for foreign students in the world at large. Roumania and Poland are particularly so in the specialist fields of oil prospecting and shipbuilding respectively.

12. It seems likely that many of the overseas students arrive because they have failed to obtain admission to universities and institutions in the West. When, for example, many of the large number of UAR students sent to the bloc in 1958 were withdrawn in the summer of 1959 owing to the cooling off in political relations, it was found difficult to place them elsewhere at short notice and some returned home.

13. The impact on indigenous student communities brings various problems. Irritation and jealousy have been aroused by the attentions lavished on the visitors in the shape of special allowances, hostels and free theatre tickets. There are, on the other hand, reports that studies are handicapped by inadequate tuition and language difficulties.

14. Preliminary language courses lasting a year are provided in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, and Poland has a course of several months. Elsewhere it seems that the numbers involved have somewhat overloaded the meagre facilities available and that students are often left to their own devices.

15. Even in thorough-going Czechoslovakia the normal regulations do not apply to Arabs, who are not compelled to attend lectures and who may take their exams more than once if they fail. It is, however, suspected that the examiners there commonly set lower passmarks for the visitors - an exercise in mutual face-saving which may serve to forestall criticism of teaching methods.

16. It is too early to assess how far the object of indoctrinating potential Afro-Asian leaders is being achieved. It seems clear that the students are not all as malleable as the régimes may have expected, and it may well prove that many of the students of science and technology acquire a picture of Socialism, and have an effect on their fellow-students, which is quite the reverse of the sponsors' hopes. On the other hand, in view of the important role assumed by the trade unions in parts of Africa, the expansion of specialised trade union school facilities may well prove profitable to the Soviet bloc.

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