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Facilities and Services for the Geneva Conference
on Asian problems, 26 April.

FACILITIES AND SERVICES FOR THE
GENEVA CONFERENCE ON ASIAN PROBLEMS

This memorandum outlines some of the problems relating to the provision of facilities and services for the Geneva Conference on Asian Problems and lists the areas in which the United Nations Secretariat could be of assistance and other areas in which the Secretariat either could or should not provide assistance.

1. LOCALE OF THE CONFERENCE

The Secretariat would be in a much better position to assist in servicing and could provide better facilities if the meeting were held in the Palais des Nations rather than in some other building in the city of Geneva. It would, of course, not be impossible to equip some other building properly but the time is very short for making the necessary preparations if such a decision should be taken.

2. CONFERENCE SERVICES

The question of the languages of the Conference would have to be solved first and from its solution would depend the extent of assistance the Secretariat can give to the Conference.

The question of the frequency of the meetings will also have a bearing on the amount of United Nations to be made available to the Conference.

The following has been prepared on the assumption that 1) English, French, Russian and Chinese shall be the languages of the Conference and 2) that not than one formal meeting per day is held.

Interpretation:

It is likely that participants to the meeting will insist on consecutive interpretation which is the technique normally used in conferences of this nature. The Secretary-General should point out, however, that full consecutive interpretation in four languages will be very difficult to apply as it will lengthen considerably each debate. He would, therefore, suggest as an alternative, a system which combines both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation and which in its broad lines would consist in interpreting speeches once consecutively into a chosen language, this consecutive interpretation being in its turn rendered simultaneously in the other languages.

The Secretariat cannot provide from Chinese into any other language, interpreters of a caliber worthy of the importance of the Conference. Whatever has been done in the past on the very rare occasions when speeches in Chinese had to be translated were makeshift arrangements, not altogether very satisfactory. In consequence, the participants who shall elect to speak in Chinese will have to provide interpreters into one of the other official languages. This interpretation will be rendered into the other languages. The Secretariat, however, will be in a position to provide interpreters into English, French, Russian and Chinese, in either of the two methods of interpretation. Speeches in languages other than the languages of the Conference will have to be dealt with under the general language rules of the United Nations, that is, the speaker will have to provide interpretation into one of the languages of the Conference.

Records and Documentation:

It is assumed that following the practice of conferences of this sort no record of the proceedings will be issued. If an exception to this practice

were contemplated it might be of interest to note that verbatim records would have to be used and not summary records in view of the delicate character of the proceedings which do not lend themselves easily to summarization. If it should be decided that no official records should be kept of the proceedings of the Conference, the question might be discussed as to the advisability of having several precis-writers and verbatim reporters for special meetings should records be desired.

The Secretary-General does not have at his disposal any staff able to establish verbatim records in Chinese. Moreover, the Secretariat will not be able to provide staff for recording speeches into Russian as the whole complement of such staff at Headquarters will have to be kept there for servicing the Security Council. From the information we have received no such staff is available in Geneva. As regards English and French, the Secretary-General may provide in each language one or two experienced verbatim reporters from New York as team leaders. The complement will have to be recruited in Europe, but this recruitment may be difficult in view of the fact that Parliaments will be in session at the time of the Conference.

It may be felt necessary to provide during the Conference an official translation of the set speeches delivered during the open meetings, the texts of which will be provided by the speakers themselves. It will probably also be necessary to translate during the Conference, official communications for participants, draft resolutions pertaining to procedural questions, etc. The Secretariat will be in a position to provide such translation services into any of the official languages of the Conference on which the present assumptions are based. But it will not be able to translate into these languages, speeches or documents submitted in Korean.

Rather than having a written record it may be thought desirable to take a sound recording of the proceedings. Four portable allied recorders suitable for making high fidelity records are available in the European Office. With this equipment it would be possible to record everything that was said on the floor in the original language and if desired to record one of the languages as it was interpreted by the simultaneous interpretation method.

Reproduction and Distribution of Documents:

The above mentioned documents can very easily be reproduced in Geneva. Distribution will also be effected there but only to participants at the Conference. The Conference may decide that these documents can also go to press representatives and to any observers to which distribution has been approved. This documentation will be symbolized in such a way as to avoid confusion with United Nations documentation.

3. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS RELATING TO CONFERENCE SERVICES

It may be possible that the delegations represented at the Conference will wish to set up a small central secretariat to assume some of the responsibilities for the technical direction of the Conference. If there is to be rotating chairmanship, for example, it might put the United Nations Secretariat to considerable disadvantage to receive varying instructions from successive chairmen. The difficulties, however, of establishing such a secretariat and the possible resultant decision not to do so, would mean that there should be detailed and advance clarification of the role of the United Nations Secretariat both in relation to the delegations and to the elected officers of the Conference.

The size and composition of the various delegations will also have some bearing on the extent of the Secretariat services that might be rendered. If the meeting is to be held in the Palais des Nations, the Council Chamber would

be the appropriate place for the meeting and the rooms adjacent to the Chamber would be available for the Secretariat and press services. Arrangements could be made for such ancillary services as secretarial and clerical assistance, pool supervisors, messengers, guards, cleaners, etc. Assistance could also be given in arranging for offices, working areas, telephone and telegraph service, local transportation, typewriters, office equipment and other physical and technical matters. The space available in the Palais des Nations, however, is not adequate for providing delegations with office space. Such arrangements should be provided by delegations in their hotels or other city buildings. The Secretariat would not be in a position to provide assistance in arranging for hotel accommodations.

4. PUBLIC INFORMATION MEDIA

It is estimated by the Secretariat that approximately one thousand press correspondents, two hundred radio correspondents and a considerable number of film and visual information personnel will attend this Conference. The Secretariat is willing to provide the maximum services without becoming involved in substance unless specifically called upon by elected members of the Conference to deal with matters of joint or general interest.

The Palais des Nations is lacking in facilities for modern information media such as radio, film and television. Only the press can be served without additional facilities. The Secretariat would be able to make modest improvements in the deficient areas including, for example, installation of from eight to ten radio studios. It would be necessary also to convert some available floor space into working areas for the correspondents while installation of additional lines for telegraph and radio operators will also be required by the Swiss PTT.

Press Services:

The Secretariat believes that in this field its task should be limited chiefly to liaison with only a limited, if any, amount of production material. Liaison might include the accreditation of correspondents. It would involve also arrangements for working space, telephone and cable facilities and for general guidance of a non-substantive nature in the form required by the various nationality groups represented. It might assist delegations in arranging briefings.

The production mentioned above would consist of the issuance of such communiques as the Conference itself or its special committees might decide to publish from time to time. Delegations' speeches and other statements might also have to be reproduced and circulated to the press. If there is no Conference summary or verbatim record, the pressure for the issuance of formal delegation statements at the Conference would likely be increased.

The question as to whether meetings will be open or closed will also have a considerable bearing on the volume and character of the services of press officials.

Radio Services:

The Secretariat in this field would be able to provide liaison and also some assistance on carefully agreed lines in the field of production.

It might be expected that all the major radio systems of the world and also quite a few national systems operating on a more modest scale will have their correspondents at the Conference in numbers varying from twelve (BBC) to one. Radio correspondents need more attention than press correspondents particularly since they must have studio space and technical equipment at their disposal to be able to fulfill their task. The Secretariat has already suggested in the

strongest possible terms that the respective broadcasting companies should secure whatever studio and technical facilities they can find in Geneva outside the Palais des Nations. In fact, very few such facilities exist since the Swiss Federal Radio has only a modestly equipped station in this canton. For this reason, it would seem necessary to install temporary studios in the Palais under contractual arrangements with Swiss Radio.

Film and Visual Information Services:

In this field the Secretariat believes that its duties should be limited fully to liaison. The delicate nature of the Conference will require very strict supervision of the representatives of the newsreel and still-photo industries.

5. EDUCATIONAL AND NGO SERVICES

Geneva is the headquarters for most international NGO's which, in fact, maintain a permanent personnel there with no less than seven hundred offices. It would have to be decided what type of documentation would be provided to them during the Conference.

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