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NASA - Space Task Group  
Langley Field, Virginia  
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~~MEMORANDUM For Project Director~~

Subject: Exchange of visits with Russian Astronauts

1. The Russians have recently announced their man-in-space program and have given some publicity to the pilots selected. In the eyes of the rest of the world, it appears that Project Mercury is placed in a competitive position, whether we like it or not. This, of course, sets us up for another barrage of unfavorable propaganda when, and if, the Russians achieve space flight before we do.
2. Certain action at this time might place us in a better position to gain information about their program and also take the propaganda initiative away from the Russians with regard to manned space flight. Suggested action is to propose mutual visits between the Astronauts of the two countries with the purpose of sharing information on training and mutual problem areas.
3. Propaganda-wise, we apparently stand to gain a great deal and could lose little or nothing.
  - (a) The U.S. would have taken the initiative in sponsoring international cooperation in the manned space field.
  - (b) Such a proposal would support, to the world, our statements of the peaceful intent of Project Mercury as a scientific exploration with no ulterior motives.
  - (c) It is in keeping with the current political atmosphere engendered by the Krushchev visit and the proposed presidential visit to Russia.
4. There appears to be little we could lose, in that practically all of the details of Project Mercury are already public domain and have been covered repeatedly in the press. The Russian program, on the other hand, has been secret, so anything we could learn would be new information.
5. Refusal of the Russians to cooperate in such a proposal would certainly reflect unfavorably in the eyes of other countries. These are countries already concerned about where the American-Russian space race is leading.

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- 2 -

6. Timing of such a proposal is very important. If such a proposal is made, it should be done very soon, before either Russia or the U.S. has accomplished a man-in-space mission.

7. If we wait until we make the first orbital flight, and then propose an exchange, it would appear that we are "rubbing it in" a little and are willing to throw a little information to our poor cousins who could not do it themselves. This would probably do us more harm than good in the attitude with the rest of the world.

8. If, on the other hand, we wait until the Russians have made the first orbital flight before we propose such an exchange, it would appear that we are trying to get information on how they did it because we have not been able to do the same thing. This would also do us harm in the eyes of other countries.

9. To summarize, we stand to gain information in an exchange of visits, while giving little information that is not already known. Propoganda value of such a proposal and visit should be very favorable for us, if the proposal is made from the U.S. and before either country has made an orbital flight.

10. One way to assess the value of such a proposal is to think of our reaction and the reaction of other countries if the Russians make such a proposal first. It appears that we stand to gain by making the proposal first.

11. It is realized that there are many considerations involved in such a proposal. NASA, State Department, Intelligence, and many other government sources concerned must have vital inputs that will determine whether the proposal is not only feasible, but advisable.

12. The proposal is herewith submitted for consideration.

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