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Letter from Peter Celliers to Marcia Ximena Bravo, May 1, 1975

Peter Celliers

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May 1, 1975

To: Marcia-Ximena Bravo,
Director,
IWY Tribune

cc: Mildred Persinger

From: Peter Celliers

1.) The project involves publishing 12 eight-page tabloid dailies over a two-week period, June 19 to July 3.

For preliminary research and preparation of a number of reserve stories, any staff hired should have an extra week to ten days: to include an all-day planning session and at least one dry run in Mexico, along with interviews with arriving delegates and other pre-Conference coverage.

Staff should be in Mexico June 13 at latest.

2.) While actively at work, we have to count -- per your indication -- on coverage in Spanish and English of two consecutive sessions daily of the Tribune plus subsidiary group meetings and, in addition to plenary sessions at the beginning and end, two working committees and a committee of the whole in parallel sessions of the conference.

This seems to call for two English and two Spanish-language reporters each at the Tribune and Conference for a total of four and four -- or maybe we could run 3 and 3 as an economy, with a feature columnist shuttling between Tlalotelco and the Medical Center and counting also on limited help -- at least for features and interviews -- from the 10 "encounter" journalists, plus features from the staff reporters on weekends.

A photographer would be assigned to each meeting center and a cartoonist would alternate between the two.

3.) As for "desk" staff, we should count on a multi-lingual day editor (10 a.m. to 8 p.m.) to handle early stories, letters to the editor, reserve features, Conference and Tribune agendas, etc., and two (one Spanish, one English) night editors (6 p.m. to 4 a.m.) who would also read proof and double check the first press run. The night staff should be supplemented by a French speaking journalist to abstract stories into a column in French, just as

continued.....

The two night editors would abstract Spanish stories into an English column and vice versa. An editorial secretary and a motorcycle messenger should be assigned to both shifts. And a make-up editor -- who should be a Mexican union man -- would work from about 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.

4.) Deliveries to main hotels would presumably be handled by Novedades as part of the contract for printing -- and for office space, adequately furnished with desks, typewriters and enough telephones. Novedades should also supply two cars and drivers -- or at least one -- on a 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. shift.

5.) This estimate of staff may be high -- but, based on our discussion and some uncertainty as to the caliber of journalist available, it seems to be the lowest "safe" number. I myself would function in an overseeing, roving capacity able to substitute at any moment for any of the staff in English, French or Spanish, and providing critical liaison also with the Tribune Director.

6.) Source of staff is still somewhat uncertain -- since all the really good reporters (Mexican and foreign) in Mexico will presumably be covering these meetings for their papers. (We could, of course, ask them to deposit black copies with us and pay them for any story used.) Of the others who are true free-lancers or stringers for monthly or weekly publications, a very few (Marjorie Lockett, Bessie Galbraith, etc.) are not goof-offs.

If assigned to this task, I would propose to make some preliminary phone calls to Mexico to determine just how many experienced English-speaking or bi-lingual journalists might be available. I would also discuss by phone the availability of really responsible Mexican journalists. And would then plan to go to Mexico during the third week in May to interview and assign these people.

7.) Hopefully (working at very short notice!) we could find in Mexico the six news reporters and two photographers needed, also the French speaking translator and all support staff with the exception of the key desk editors. I am not at all sanguine, however, that any American free-lancer will work these long hours for \$25 a day or even \$40. I'm afraid they'd have to be paid close to U.S. rates or even a premium for short-term assignment.

I would want at least the two night editors to be people on leave from comparable U.S. jobs. They should be paid at least Guild rates, I feel -- which means, in addition to air fare, hotel and a per diem of \$15 for three weeks, about \$1,000 for this period. (Again, I am most concerned on such short notice about finding truly qualified people at anything less than premium rates.)

continued.....

8.) As for my overall organization and supervisory activity, this cannot begin until one assignment is completed, May 19 or 20. It also depends on my being able to set back another assignment (from June 9 to 27) ... which I think is possible.

I would ask for air fare and actual expenses for a preliminary interviewing and organizing trip in the third week in May. And, from June 14 through July 6, for air fare, a suite (for meetings) at the same inexpensive Mexico hotel where the staff is to be lodged, a bilingual secretary, per diem of \$25 plus an accountable allowance for unforeseen expenses, tips, entertainment, etc., of \$1200 (15,000 pesos).

My fee for recruiting, organizing and background research in New York, 24-hour supervisory and operational responsibility in Mexico and preparation of a final report for the Director would be \$15,000 -- one-third payable by May 15, one-third by June 13, and one-third on July 7.

9.) In the event of your acceptance, I would appreciate your advice by phone so that I can clear the time and, that being accomplished, would then ask you to sign attached copy of this outline and return same to me.

PJC:cc

AGREED:

_____ (date) _____

Marcia-Ximena Bravo,
Director,
For IWY Tribune