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*Note du chef par intérim de la Direction de liaison avec la Défense
pour le sous-secrétaire d'État par intérim aux Affaires extérieures*

*Memorandum from Acting Head, Defence Liaison Division,
to Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs*

SECRET

[Ottawa], December 2, 1948

GRANTING OF VISAS TO SOVIET DIPLOMATS AND OFFICIALS

On October 29th we implemented a policy which Mr. Pearson had approved early in September and instructed our Embassy in Moscow to refer to the Department all future requests for visas for Soviet diplomats and officials except couriers. Mr. Watkins has strongly recommended reconsideration of this policy which he feels would involve us in a visa war with the Russians which we would not possibly win. He points out in his letter to Mr. Chance of November 19th† that we are at present getting comparatively good service from the Russians for entry and exit visas for our officials. If we start holding up visas for the Russians, even for a comparatively short time, they will reciprocate by delaying our requests for six or eight months, instead of the two or three months that it is at present taking.

2. While I am inclined to agree that we could not hope to win a visa war with the Russians, I do think that we are getting a poor bargain with them at present when they are taking two or three months to grant visas to us and we grant their visas in two or three days. It has never been my intention that we should delay granting visas to Soviet officials for a matter of months but I do think there are advantages in requests of this kind being referred to Ottawa for decision so that we know in advance who is coming. Then, if, as happened last August, the Russians suddenly decide to double the strength of their Military Attaché's office, we have the opportunity to refuse. In other cases we should not normally delay the granting of a visa by more than two or three weeks.

3. To make my proposal more concrete, I have drafted the attached telegram† in reply to Mr. Watkin's letter of November 19th and his telegrams Nos. 228† and 234†. Mr. Chance and Mr. Mayrand agree with my memorandum and the attached draft reply to Mr. Watkins, so does Mr. Measures.

- G.G. CREAN