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EXCHANGE OF NOTES WITH USSR ON CONSULAR MATTERS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, today announced the signature of an agreement with the USSR covering certain consular questions.

The main purpose of the agreement, concluded by an exchange of notes (see annex) in Moscow between the Canadian Ambassador and the Soviet foreign ministry on July 14th, is to protect citizens of each country visiting the other from the difficulties sometimes created by different citizenship legislation.

It also provides that the area of jurisdiction of a Canadian Consulate when it is eventually opened in the USSR will be of comparable size to the area of jurisdiction of the Soviet Consulate-General in Montreal, which covers the Province of Quebec.

At the same time the Secretary of State for External Affairs reports continuing progress toward the solution of the question of reunification of families separated by the Second World War and its aftermath.

Since 1964 the Prime Minister has been in direct correspondence with Mr. Khrushchev, and subsequently with Mr. Kosygin on this subject. The Secretary of State for External Affairs also raised it with the Soviet Premier in Moscow in November 1966. There have been many other discussions of the question, including those initiated by the Canadian parliamentary delegation on its visit to the USSR in 1965.

The results of efforts on both sides and of the continuing work of the Canadian Red Cross in cooperation with the Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent have been encouraging. In 1965 and 1966 the number of people able to leave the Soviet Union to join their families in Canada has more than doubled over the two preceding years, to over 400.

In discussions with Canadian representatives the Soviet Union has confirmed its intention to continue to give sympathetic and benevolent consideration to applications from people in the USSR wishing to depart to join their families in Canada. The Secretary of State for External Affairs is therefore hopeful that this matter, once a serious obstacle to improved understanding between Canada and the USSR, will continue to be resolved satisfactorily.

Excellency:

I have the honour to refer to recent discussions between representatives of the Governments of Canada and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning certain consular matters and, further to these discussions, to make the following proposals on this subject:

1. Applications of persons for the renunciation of the citizenship of Canada or the USSR will be examined by the competent authorities in accordance with the legislation of the state whose citizenship they wish to renounce. In the consideration of these applications the place of permanent residence of the applicants will also be taken into account.
2. A person who visits the territory of Canada on a Soviet passport furnished with a Canadian visa or the territory of the USSR on a Canadian passport furnished with a Soviet visa will not be denied permission to leave Soviet or Canadian territory, as the case may be, only on the grounds that the matter of his citizenship is interpreted differently by the two Governments, and that he is regarded as a citizen of the state he is visiting.
3. The authorities of each state will examine on the basis of their domestic legislation, without delay and in a spirit of goodwill, any application submitted by a representative of the diplomatic mission or consular office of the other state with regard to consular access to persons who, having entered Canada on a Soviet passport furnished with a Canadian visa or the USSR on a Canadian passport furnished with a Soviet visa, have been detained or arrested.
4. The authorities of each state will return to the authorities of the other state the Canadian or Soviet passports, as the case may be, which they hold or which are surrendered to them for safekeeping.
5. When a Canadian consular office is established in the USSR, the Soviet authorities will agree to its functioning within a consular territory, the boundaries of which will be established by agreement between the two states and which will be comparable in size to the consular territory accorded to the Consulate-General of the USSR in Canada.

If the foregoing proposals are acceptable to the Government of the USSR, I have the further honour to propose that this Note, which is authentic in French and English, and your reply, shall constitute an agreement between our two Governments on these matters, effective the date of your reply and to remain valid until six months from the day when one of the Governments informs the other in writing its wish to terminate it.

Accept, Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Ambassador,