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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL RELATIONS

CONTACTS BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC COMMUNITY AND THE
SOVIET BLOC

Memorandum by the Canadian Delegation

The Canadian experience in the matter of exchanges of visits and information with the Soviet bloc has not been very different from that of other NATO countries. Canadian authorities see the Soviet drive in this direction primarily as an attempt to obtain scientific and technical information directly from the West and to develop continuing contacts with individuals for both political and technical purposes. It has the additional political objectives of trying to convince the people of the West that the Russians are reasonable people, anxious to engage in normal contacts with the Western world and of lulling Western fears of Soviet intentions.

2. The Soviet Embassy in Canada - making its proposals through many channels, both official and private - has been trying to promote exchanges in fields as divergent as energetics, lumbering and concert artists. Canada has already received delegations of agriculturists, churchmen and medical specialists, and expects to receive later this year a group of fisheries experts and a group of timber experts. A group of Canadian lumbermen will visit the Soviet Union this year and it is hoped to institute an exchange of meteorological information in which field there is much to be learned from the Russians.

3. Canadian authorities see some advantages in a limited number of exchanges with the Soviet bloc, particularly as a means generally of breaking down the isolation of the Russians. Increased contacts may help remove the Soviet misconception that Canada is a member of an aggressive Western alliance which intends to attack the Soviet Union. In those scientific and technical fields in which the Soviet Union is ahead of us, Canadian research and industry stand to gain by suitable exchanges. We also stand to gain from an intelligence point of view because of our relative paucity of knowledge of the Soviet Union. Many of the disadvantages stem from the fact that the initiative has until recently been largely in Soviet hands but this is being corrected and we are proposing some exchanges of our own choosing. There is, of course, the ever present danger of the unchanging Soviet predilection for subversion and espionage as well as the danger, which is not at the moment strong in Canada, that those personal contacts with Russians may induce our people to believe, without reminders to the contrary, that the Soviet Union has changed its basic aims and methods.

4. The Canadian Government has agreed, while recognising the dangers, that the exchange of visits can be useful and should within

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limits be approved. Our overriding consideration is that it should be reciprocal, so that the benefits do not accrue predominantly to the Soviet side. It is the intention of the Canadian authorities to suggest shortly certain ground rules to the Russians governing the conduct of these exchanges.

5. There is an additional point which is of importance. We have noticed that Canadian Communists and their front organizations are trying to take advantage of the exchange of visits in order to enhance their own position. The Canadian Government has decided and has stated publicly, that it will not grant visas to visitors from the Soviet bloc who intend to come to Canada under the auspices of Communist or Communist front organizations. We see no reason why we should allow advantage to accrue to domestic Communists because of the slightly easier atmosphere which prevails in Canadian-Soviet relations. This point has been made clear to the Soviet Government.

6. Canada welcomes an exchange of information through NATO about contacts with the Soviet bloc. The Russians are undoubtedly going to use every device to promote their own interests in these exchanges and if we continue our consultations we may be able to anticipate and find answers for some of the problems which will arise.

7. Attached herewith (Annex) is an Aide-Mémoire presented by the Canadian Embassy in Moscow to the Soviet Foreign Ministry at the beginning of May, which outlines, in general terms, the Canadian approach to the question of exchanges of visits between Canada and the USSR. The Canadian Government's intention not to issue visas to visitors invited to Canada by Communist dominated organizations has been signified orally to the Soviet authorities.

Palais de Chaillot,
Paris, XVIIe.

AIDE-MEMOIRE

The Canadian Government has received in recent months a number of proposals from the Soviet Government for exchanges of visits between Canada and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It has also noted with interest the various proposals made by the Soviet Ambassador in Ottawa to private groups and individuals in Canada for such exchanges. The Canadian Government welcomes exchanges of visits between the USSR and Canada which contribute to greater mutual understanding between the two governments and peoples. It is prepared to assist in the development of such exchanges and would like to suggest certain conditions and criteria which, in the Canadian view, will contribute to better relations between our two countries. The purpose of this aide-mémoire is to outline these conditions and criteria, which may be further elaborated in the light of experience.

2. The Canadian Government considers that exchanges of visits should be based on the principle of reciprocity, and that there should not be a marked imbalance of visits in either direction. It will be for each Government to suggest to the other what visits it would like to take place. This principle of reciprocity need not be confined rigidly to an exchange of visits in a particular field; each Government should be prepared in certain circumstances to consider, for example, a visit in one field as matched by a return visit in quite a different one. This flexible approach should enable both countries to derive the maximum benefit from the exchange of visits.

3. So far as official Soviet visits to Canada are concerned, the Canadian Government would find it difficult to receive more than a limited number of groups from the USSR in the course of a year. In 1956, for example, it would be preferable if major visits could be confined to those of a Soviet timber delegation and a Soviet fisheries delegation. The Canadian Government would not, of course, consider sending more than a roughly equivalent number of Canadian delegations to the USSR under official Canadian Government sponsorship. Proposals for other more limited exchanges in both directions, particularly where some preliminary arrangements have already been made, can be considered separately.

4. In general, it is the opinion of the Canadian Government that it will be easier to make suitable arrangements if visiting delegations are small in size. The size of the delegations should be agreed in accordance with the preference of the host government. In accordance with normal Canadian practice, the Canadian Government would prefer to pay the expenses of any of its officials visiting the USSR.

5. In order to ensure the most effective handling of the exchange of visits between Canada and the USSR, the Soviet Ambassador in Ottawa is requested to take up directly with the Department of External Affairs in the first instance any proposals concerning official exchanges.

6. Apart from Soviet visits to Canada at the invitation of the Canadian Government, there remain visits to Canada proposed by Soviet representatives to private groups in Canada. In such cases, the Soviet Ambassador is requested to inform the Department of External Affairs concurrently of proposals for such visits.