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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
ENCLOSING A REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS FOR SIMPLIFICATION
OF FORMALITIES IN INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT

(Circulated to the Members of the Council for their Information
in Pursuance of Paragraph 2 of Chapter IV of the Report of the
Committee on Arrangements for Consultation with Non-Governmental
Organizations (E/43/Rev.2, 1 July 1946)

International Headquarters
38 Cours Albert 1, Paris.
February 3, 1947

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

I have the honor to submit herewith, for the consideration of the Committee of Experts entrusted with the preparation for a World Conference on Passports and Frontier Formalities, the English and French texts of the Report drawn up by the Committee of Experts of the International Chamber of Commerce.

In the course of the last two years, the International Chamber of Commerce has frequently drawn attention to the urgent need for simplification of formalities in matters relating to passports, visas, customs inspection of luggage, currency control and consular regulations concerning the carriage of goods. On July 15, 1946, I submitted to you the resolution on this question adopted by the Council of the International Chamber of Commerce at its 64th Meeting in Paris on June 20th and 21st 1946, and laid particular emphasis on the recommendation urging the organization of an international conference at an early date. The resolution and its appended report are contained in the International Chamber of Commerce Brochure 102.

It is therefore with particular gratification that the International Chamber of Commerce has learned of the setting up by the Economic and Social Council of the above-mentioned Committee of Experts.

May I draw your attention to one point arising out of the Report. In the opinion of the International Chamber of Commerce, it would be unfortunate if the Committee of Experts, interpreting too strictly its terms of reference as they appear in the Preliminary Memorandum (E/CONF/PASS/PC/2 of December 5, 1946) should limit itself to an examination of questions of passport and frontier formalities. One of the greatest barriers to international passenger traffic at the present time lies in the fact in the regulations governing the allocation of foreign exchange to travellers. This question is undoubtedly bound up with the economic and financial situation

Mr. Trygve Lie, Secretary-General,
United Nations.
I hope Success,
New York.

/of various

of various countries, but, with all due regard to existing difficulties, it is possible to make a substantial improvement in the present system. Very little would be achieved merely by simplifying certain formalities and by leaving untouched regulations such as those governing the allocation of foreign exchange.

It is for that reason that the International Chamber of Commerce urges that the Committee of Experts set up by the Economic and Social Council be authorized to deal with the whole problem of the movement of travellers and their luggage and to examine all formalities which impede such movement.

As regards the movement of goods, the International Chamber of Commerce has already brought out in its June resolution the equal importance of international action for the simplification of the consular and other formalities at present acting as barriers to trade, and we trust that the Economic and Social Council will see its way to taking similar action in this field as well.

The International Chamber of Commerce hopes to submit more detailed proposals on this subject after further study by its Committee of Experts.

I have the honor to remain, dear Mr. Secretary General,

Respectfully yours,

(s) Winthrop W. Aldrich

President
International Chamber of Commerce

INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
International Headquarters
38, Cours Albert Premier, Paris 8°

Transport and Communications
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FORMALITIES
HAMPERING INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Report
of the
Committee of Experts for the Simplification of Formalities
in International Transport

submitted by the
International Chamber of Commerce

FORMALITIES HAMPERING INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

The International Chamber of Commerce urges the gradual return, with the least possible delay, to a regime similar to the one in force prior to 1914, under which hindrances to travel would be reduced to a minimum. It is of the opinion that in present circumstances countries would derive greater benefit from the free movement of large numbers of travellers, and especially of businessmen, than from maintaining measures of protection and security. There might have been some justification for these measures a year ago, but their continuance to-day represents a loss rather than a gain for the countries concerned.

The resumption of international trade, upon which depend the reconstruction of a world ravaged by war, as well as the restoration of a reasonable standard of living for the masses, demands, in fact, that artificial difficulties that hamper and may even prevent travel for business or pleasure be abolished. In particular, personal contact between businessmen of different countries is necessary if international commercial relations are to be maintained, and last-minute decisions and rapidity of movement are the essence of business travel.

It is also much to be regretted that the efforts of carriers to re-establish and speed up international communications should so often be defeated by administrative regulations and controls. It is imperative that the administrative regime concerned with the movements of passengers and goods be brought into harmony with the requirements of a world where speedier and more perfected methods of transportation are available.

In 1914, when trains were slower, motor-cars in their infancy and there were no aeroplanes, a businessman could decide to make a journey from one capital-city to another and accomplish the journey in a matter of hours. In 1947, between making this decision and putting it into effect, weeks and even months may elapse. This situation, arising out of the war, is to-day both absurd and pernicious.

/As a first

As a first step in the right direction which should be taken immediately, the ICC recommends:

the abolition of formalities introduced during the war but which, with the end of hostilities, no longer serve any useful purpose; the reduction, simplification and relaxation of other controls and formalities wherever possible.

The Chamber is aware that certain formalities are due to deepseated economic and political difficulties from which the world is still suffering, and that these formalities will disappear only with the disappearance of the difficulties that led to their introduction. Every effort should therefore be made to overcome the causes and, as in the past, the ICC will exert itself to the utmost, within the limits of its sphere of action, to bring this about.

But even these formalities could be lightened and modified in such a way as to render them less irksome and costly for carriers and passengers already so sorely tried in their everyday life by other administrative demands on them.

The ICC is firmly convinced that if the legitimate anxieties of governments and the no less real and legitimate grievances of passengers and carriers were frankly discussed, it would be possible to bring about immediately a considerable improvement in the present unsatisfactory situation.

Moreover, to impede traffic as a whole with strict regulations directed solely against certain abuses which could be dealt with by less cumbersome means is a policy that is likely in the long run to prove disastrous to the general interest. A few risks and losses may have to be accepted but this is better than to see the whole transportation system paralyzed.

It is obvious, besides, that countries whose mutual relations are established on a more liberal basis would reap the benefit in the form of

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increased trade. It appears, consequently, that the interests of governments, which are bound up with those of their nationals, would best be served by the adoption, in this field, of a bold policy aiming at the sweeping away of obstacles. This is the very policy advocated by government conventions and conferences, and more especially by the International Convention for the Simplification of Customs Formalities of 3 November 1923, and the Passport Conference of 1926. In view of the urgent necessity of abolishing the obstacles raised by the present formalities, the ICC requests governments to apply these provisions and recommendations without delay. They are still perfectly valid. In this manner, before even attempting the task of complete revision, much could be done to alleviate the ills from which transportation is suffering.

In order to hasten and facilitate this task of revision, the ICC submits for the consideration of governments and competent official international organizations the following recommendations drawn up by the Committee of Experts set up by the Chamber for this purpose.

A. PASSPORTS AND VISAS

1. Passports

The ICC is of the opinion that the objective to be attained with the least possible delay is the return to the pre-1914 regime, e.g. the abolition of the compulsory passport. This is already an accomplished fact between certain countries and should be adopted progressively by the remainder.

One simplification for travellers who are nationals of countries requiring that they be holders of a national identity card, would be the recognition by other countries of the validity of these identity documents for the crossing of frontiers. In certain cases this simplification has already been adopted.

The ICC earnestly requests governments to carry out this measure either by independent decisions or by means of bilateral agreements which would naturally first be concluded between countries maintaining close
/relations.

relations.

Until such time as compulsory passports shall have been suppressed, the ICC recommends that the present regime be improved and, more especially, that:

passports be obtainable easily and rapidly, without complicated procedure and the production of an undue number of documents which entails loss of time and energy;

the period of validity be extended to the maximum, in no case less than two years. In this connection it is recommended that a method be adopted similar to that of the United Kingdom which delivers to its nationals passports valid for five years and renewable for a further period of five years. The renewal of passports at too frequent intervals entailing as it does time and expense, is thus avoided;

passports be valid for all foreign countries, or to the largest groups of countries possible;

the granting of passports be no longer considered as a source of revenue. In some cases, the charges are such as to be almost prohibitive. The charges should be calculated in such a manner as not to exceed the expense of their preparation and delivery to applicants..

These modifications, and particularly the last-mentioned, which is of the greatest importance, should have the effect of restoring to passports their fundamental character which is that of a universally recognized means of identification which should be available to all citizens without undue difficulty or excessive cost.

The ICC also views with favour every possible move towards simplifying passports and making them more uniform, as proposed by the Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization (§ 8 and Annex 4 of the PICA0 Recommendations).

/Further,

Further, and independently of the special problem of immigration control, it is important that no measure with this in view should render the movements of non-immigrant travellers more difficult or more complicated.

Finally, the ICC urges the granting of collective passports offering certain advantages particularly as regards charges, to be made available to certain categories of travellers.

2. Visas

The ICC notes with satisfaction that visa requirements between various countries have in many cases been abolished by means of bilateral agreements and that there is an increasing tendency to-day to do away with this formality.

It urges that more agreements of this nature be made, in order to bring about as quickly as possible the suppression of exit visas, entry visas and transit visas.

In point of fact, formalities in connection with visas are frequently even more troublesome than those for obtaining a passport, especially for the many people who reside far from the few big towns provided with consulates.

Exit visas, an emergency measure which may have been justified by war-time conditions, are now meaningless and have, indeed, already been abolished in many countries. They should be abolished for permanent foreign residents as well as for the nationals of the countries concerned.

Entry visas should also be abolished, or where this is impracticable immediately, they should be obtainable with ease and a minimum of time-lag.

To the inconveniences of the present visa regime must be added the difficulties caused by the fact that, although in the course of a single journey it may be necessary to cross the same country more than once, it is impossible to obtain two entry visas with one application.

The Chamber strongly opposes the maintenance of transit visas, which are particularly inconvenient on long journeys which entail passing through

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several countries. The formalities are often complicated and costs are increased in proportion to the number of transit visas required.

It is well-nigh impossible to find any economic justification for insistence on transit visas. If certain countries see in their suppression a danger to their security, the police of those countries should have recourse to other measures which would not put obstacles in the way of normal passenger traffic for the sake of meeting isolated cases.

The suppression of the transit visa should be particularly easy where travellers making non-stop journeys are concerned, whether by aeroplane, train or ship or where passengers are not allowed to go beyond the limits of an air-port.

It should be observed that traffic will naturally give preference to the territory of countries granting the greatest transit facilities.

Countries which insist on the maintenance of visas should at least validate them for a period not inferior to a year and place no limit on the number of journeys. This applies to all categories of visas.

It is imperative that delays and formalities be reduced to a minimum especially as regards the number and complexity of forms to be filled in before a visa can be obtained. The importance of this to businessmen cannot be over-stressed as their journeys have often to be undertaken at short notice. Furthermore, photos should not be required for visas, thus saving time and expense.

The dimensions of visa stamps should be kept within reasonable limits. Some of the present stamps completely fill a page of the passport. Such irritating requirements as the taking of fingerprints should also be abolished.

One of the most effective means of reducing time-lag and frequently costs, is to empower local agents, especially consuls, to deliver visas on their own authority. When this is not sanctioned the consul is generally obliged to forward particulars to the authorities of his own

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country, frequently by cable, and these costs, which are often considerable, must be added to the others already borne by the traveller.

Charges connected with visas should be reduced for the reasons already mentioned in connection with passports.

Police requirements with which travellers visiting certain countries still have to comply, should be abolished, at all events for stays of short duration. Only in cases where these exceed normal time-limits - two months for instance - should they be required to appear before the police authorities to state the length of their stay.

B. FOREIGN EXCHANGE

1. Amount and Composition of the Sum Allowed to Travellers

Currency restrictions have given rise to a further category of hindrances which often constitute the main obstacle to travel, which already bristles with difficulties of all kinds. Certain of these regulations are almost in the nature of a prohibition and, by their very stringency encourage and even oblige the traveller - who is compelled to undertake a journey - to have recourse to illegal means. It is apparent that in many cases these regulations should be revised so as to take into account their repercussions "de facto".

The Chamber recognizes that this question is bound up with the economic and financial situation in various countries, but it considers that even taking this situation into account, and without in any way aggravating it, it is possible to improve the present system considerably. Certain tourists on business journeys, far from compromising still further the balance of payments, tend, on the contrary, to restore it. It is generally the countries obliged to watch their balance of payments most closely which are most concerned with developing their export trade, and consequently in allowing their exporters to travel. Moreover, exports of currency of currency for business journeys tend to cancel out.

Among the countries limiting the sums of money allowed to their

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nationals for journeys abroad, some allow a lump sum annually in the form of a "basic allowance", others calculate this sum according to the journey or the number of weeks to be spend abroad, others again by travelling-days.

The ICC recommends the adoption of a practical, expeditious and flexible system for the granting of currency, avoiding excessive controls which are more costly than effective. A strict control, for example, of the number of days spent abroad involves red tape, additional staff or the over-working of the existing staff - hence heavy expenses for practically negligible results.

The system of currency allowances should provide for the granting of larger amounts when it can be shown that these are required for business journeys, which by their very nature entail spending on a liberal scale.

Every traveller should be entitled to a certain amount of currency to enable him to meet expenses until such time as he is able to cash cheques. It frequently happens that a traveller passes through a country without having the opportunity to call at a bank or that he reaches his country of destination on days or at times when the banks are closed.

It would be advisable, also, that the amount of local currency that a traveller is authorized to take out of a foreign country be increased.

As things stand, the traveller is obliged to spend his remaining currency before leaving the country and should unforeseen circumstances oblige him to delay his departure for a few days (air-craft held up by adverse weather, for example) he finds himself penniless.

An additional sum should be allocated to motorists to provide for inevitable expenditure for petrol, oil, garages and possible repairs, all of which must be paid for in the currency of the country they may be crossing.

2. Exchange Offices

The ICC urges the institution at the principal frontier posts of

/exchange

exchange offices open during traffic hours, even at night, for the purpose of cashing bankers' cheques as well as exchanging the foreign currency travellers have on them.

It has been noted that it is sometimes impossible for travellers to obtain before their departure any currency of the country they intend to visit. Furthermore, as stated above, they may pass through a country at a time or on days when the banks are closed.

In addition, the cheques with which travellers going abroad are provided should enjoy special facilities of encashment, or the use of letters of credit and travellers' cheques be extended. It is often very inconvenient for a traveller with only a small sum in notes to have to wait until he can find an opportunity of going to the bank, often some way away, at which his cheque is payable.

C. FRONTIER FORMALITIES

Frontier controls should be organized in such a manner as: not to lengthen a journey or to lengthen it as little as possible. It is an economic absurdity to oblige passengers to lose through formalities all the advantages of extra speed put at their disposal by technical progress in up-to-date transportation; not to subject passengers to undue annoyance or fatigue. It too often happens, even to-day, that passengers are required to get out of the train twice (on both sides of the frontier), sometimes in the middle of the night, and are obliged to remain standing for an hour each time while various formalities are being attended to.

Consequently, the ICC recommends:

that control of passports, luggage, currency and, where applicable, health, be combined and carried out simultaneously or at least in immediate succession, during the course of the journey, that is to say: at sea: on board the ship; by rail: in the train, either enroute or when halted at a frontier station; by road: in adjacent custom-houses.

/This practice

This practice, already followed in many cases, should become general; that should control en route be impracticable, these formalities be confined to one frontier station only, in which the authorities of both countries concerned would carry out their duties.

Moreover, steps should be taken to reduce, as far as possible, the long waits inflicted on passengers: Additional control staff should be employed where necessary and the filling-in of forms to which the traveller is subjected on passing the frontier, reduced to a minimum. A special place should be set apart in the customs offices for passengers with nothing to declare to avoid their having to stand about until other travellers have finished their often lengthy discussions with customs officials about the dutiable goods for which they are liable. Naturally, heavy penalties should be inflicted on persons taking advantage of this facility.

All police formalities should take place either in the course of the journey or during the crossing of the frontier. In certain South American countries, passports are withdrawn and passengers obliged to fetch them the following morning, which is not only troublesome but may be the cause of serious errors. The holder of a passport should never at any time, on any pretext whatsoever, be deprived of it.

Customs examination of registered luggage should take place preferably at the place of arrival or, if this is not possible, at the place of departure.

Registered luggage in transit as well as luggage of passengers in transit by air should not be subject to customs examination in any of the countries through which it may pass.

Written declarations concerning luggage should not be demanded by customs authorities.

/D. PUBLIC HEALTH

D. PUBLIC HEALTH FORMALITIES

The International Chamber of Commerce requests that where these formalities are deemed necessary, they be reduced to a minimum in order not to prolong needlessly the length of the journey and that they be carried out in such a manner as to cause the least possible inconvenience to passengers. Inspections by public health authorities should not be occasions for demanding the production of superfluous documents. Health certificates, in particular, should be dispensed with; they impose an obligation without practical value as they are not an effective means of keeping a check on disease.

All medical examinations should be free of charge.
