

21 Feb 61 meeting

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The Embassy of the United States of America presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and has the honor to draw the Ministry's attention to the difficulties which have lately arisen in connection with the dispatch of the Embassy's unaccompanied diplomatic pouches through Soviet postal channels. In view of the fact that the dispatch of such pouches has been carried out for a number of years without difficulty and, in particular, without reference to limitation as to the number of pouches, the Embassy would be grateful for the Ministry's assistance in restoring the arrangements which obtained before the present difficulties arose.

Embassy of the United States of America,

Moscow, January 25, 1961.

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As suggested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on December 10, 1960, the Embassy raised the question of unaccompanied diplomatic pouches with the Moscow Customs House, as the competent Soviet authority. The Customs House stated, on December 30, 1960, that the Ministry of Communications was competent in the issue which has arisen, and undertook to clarify the issue with the Ministry of Communications. On January 6, 1961, the Customs House informed the Embassy that neither it nor the Ministry of Communications was competent, and that the Embassy should once more address itself to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This delay in settling the issue obviously creates difficulty for the Embassy's operations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Customs House have referred to an alleged agreement of January, 1955, between the Embassy and the Ministry of Communications setting a weekly limit of 8-12 on the number of unaccompanied diplomatic pouches to be sent by the Embassy through Soviet postal channels. The Customs

House referred on December 30 to a written agreement to this effect, but on January 6 stated that no written agreement was involved, merely a Ministry of Communications record of the conversation at the time.

The Embassy has had the Department of State records carefully checked, and has also been in touch with the Embassy representative who took part in the January 1955 discussions with the Ministry of Communications. These investigations confirm that no written agreement is involved. The Embassy representative who took part in the discussions recalls that there was no indication from the Soviet side concerning limitations in response to his statement on the number of pouches to be sent at that time. Since that time, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is doubtless aware, the Embassy has regularly sent pouches considerably in excess of the figure now said to constitute an agreed weekly limit, without objection of any kind from the Soviet side. It may also be recalled that the Ministry note of October 21, 1954, does not mention any limitation on the number of pouches. The Embassy wishes also to point out that the Government of the United States imposes no restrictions as to the number of unaccompanied diplomatic pouches received or sent by foreign diplomatic missions in the United States.

Embassy of the United States of America,

Moscow, January 25, 1961.