

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

4 April Letter From VISA on Soviet Family Visitation Policy

FROM:

Douglas J. MacEachin
D/SOVA

EXTENSION

NO.

ER 1852X 88

DATE

10 May 1988

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1. Director, Public Affairs

11 MAY 1988

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Executive Registry

12 MAY 1988

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
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Executive Registry

88-1852X

10 May 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Director of Public Affairs

FROM: Douglas J. MacEachin,
Director of Soviet Analysis

SUBJECT : 4 April Letter From VISA on Soviet
Family Visitation Policy

1. Action Required. None. This memo is in response to your query on the issue raised by the subject letter, regarding visitations between family members in the US and USSR.

2. Background. As the attached correspondence shows, this subject has become an important issue on Capitol Hill. The Congress has unanimously passed resolutions calling for the Administration to raise this issue at all appropriate opportunities, and the organization "VISA" apparently hopes to put it on the agenda of the upcoming summit.

New Soviet Rules and Procedures . . .

3. Although the Kremlin has taken several major steps to ease travel for individuals between the United States and the USSR (in both directions), it has not abandoned a system of control over travel in general, nor are procedures for tourists entering or leaving the USSR as easy as those in the West. Soviet officials have opened the door to foreign travel in large part to try to curb dissent by appeasing moderately critical citizens and to reduce the attractiveness of tasting "forbidden fruit." Moscow also hopes these changes will head off a rush to emigrate by allowing reunification with family and friends by means short of emigration. Among the steps taken are the following:

- o A resolution that took effect on 1 January 1987 reduced some of the red tape that traditionally has restricted short-term travel abroad. New regulations speed up and simplify the consideration of applications and the issuance of visas and set definite dates for considering requests for temporary travel. Travel requests are now supposed to be considered within one month or, if the trip is to visit seriously ill people or in connection with a relative's death, within three days.

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- o A Soviet Foreign Ministry official involved in human rights told an Assistant Secretary of State early this year that, as of mid-1987, those applying for temporary visits no longer required invitations from first-degree relatives.
- o Easier rules also have been applied to former Soviet citizens wishing to return to the USSR temporarily to visit relatives.
- o Judging from the number of tourist visas issued by the US Embassy in Moscow and by the Leningrad Consulate, many more Soviets left the USSR on temporary trips in 1987 than in 1986.
- o The Israeli press has reported a growing wave of Soviet tourists arriving in Israel to visit relatives, and many Israeli citizens have been traveling to the USSR for the same purpose. An Israeli paper reported that a placard in the Moscow emigration office announced, "Those wishing to visit Israel can now submit their request."
- o Moscow also has relaxed the rules for those seeking to visit relatives living just across the Soviet border. In June Izvestiya announced the easing of cross-border formalities for people living in specified areas along the frontiers with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania. They now need only a letter of invitation and their internal passports for stays of up to one week. On 1 January 1988 the Soviet media--reporting on the easing of formalities for Soviet citizens traveling to Eastern Europe--said that citizens planning trips would have to fill in only a short form and supply only two references. []

. . . But Restrictive Measures Continue

4. At the same time, the regime has put into place some new restrictions on those wishing to travel abroad for family visitation purposes:

- o [] Americans intending to marry Soviet citizens face several new bureaucratic obstacles--including a ban on registering marriages when the foreign partner is traveling on a tourist visa rather than a visitor's visa. (The visitor's visa is harder to obtain.) Foreigners must also provide Soviet marriage authorities with a translation of their passports into Russian, with the accuracy of the translation authenticated by the foreigner's Embassy, foreign ministry, or notary. [] in Leningrad [] authorities there are requiring additional paperwork for binational marriages, even when all of the required documents have been duly submitted and notarized. These new regulations are probably intended to slow down the marriage route to emigration.
- o The new rules permitting greater contact with the West have been applied in an inconsistent, arbitrary, and often contrary fashion. For example, despite the official claim that Soviets can make as many trips as they desire, one potential traveler asserted that the new rules allow only one trip per year to socialist countries and one every two years to capitalist countries. []

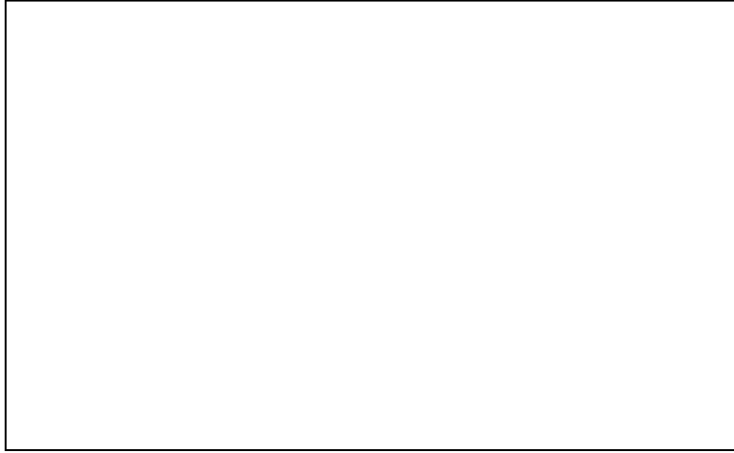
~~SECRET~~ [redacted]

5. These new restrictions and the regime's reluctance to abolish all existing controls probably reflect resistance within the leadership and the bureaucracy. Even Gorbachev's supporters undoubtedly recognize the risks of changing longstanding practice and allowing individual Soviet citizens greater access to Westerners. From the regime's perspective, one of the most worrisome consequences of increased foreign travel--by both officials and ordinary citizens--is the possibility of increased defections. For example, most Soviet married couples are barred from taking foreign trips together, for fear they might defect. [redacted]

[redacted]
Douglas J. MacEachin

~~SECRET~~ [redacted]

SUBJECT: 4 April Letter From VISA on Soviet
Family Visitation Policy





on Form

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY



VISA



Director of Congressional Affairs

VISITATION APPEAL

4 May 1988

Doug:

Would you please have somebody write a brief memorandum from you to the DCI explaining what this issue of family visitation amounts to. Because the Director first sent this to [redacted] you should send your reply back through [redacted] to keep the books in order.

Thanks.

[redacted]
John L. Helgeson
[redacted]

and H. Con. Res. 68 (405-0). These are "unrestricted family visits" issue of family visitation at all of so many Americans, deserves more

the people of peace would be well served if in a personal way." Unfortunately, it is impossible to exchange visits in their

For example, a recent caller and her two children who have never seen their father were denied a visa to the U.S. Why were

Family visitation and visitation are separate policies and policy must focus *equally* on both.

Family visits on the Moscow Summit tour to see their family in the Soviet Union, children, grandchildren, and

Family visits on the Moscow Summit tour is an issue to the attention of President

Family visits on the Moscow Summit tour is an issue to the attention of President (copy enclosed).

- 2.) Ask them to speak out publicly about the issue of family visits.
- 3.) Ask them to raise the family visits issue and promote the enclosed Recommendations for liberalized travel procedures.

Please send VISA a copy of your letter to the President and Secretary of State and their reply.



VISA
PO Box 2361
Berkeley, California 94702
(415) 540-VISA

URGENT ACTION APPEAL

William Webster, Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20505

Dear Bill:

In 1987, the 100th U.S. Congress unanimously passed S. Con. Res. 29 and H. Con. Res. 68 (405-0). These Resolutions called on the President and his Administration to promote "unrestricted family visits" between millions of relatives in the USA and USSR, and to "raise the issue of family visitation at all appropriate opportunities." This basic right, which affects the lives of so many Americans, deserves more than the scant mention it received at the Washington Summit.

Before the 1985 Geneva Summit, President Reagan stated: "... the cause of peace would be well served if more individuals and families ... could come to know each other in a personal way." Unfortunately, relatives, some as close as parent and child, find it difficult or impossible to exchange visits in their homes like normal people.

We receive many calls and letters from people denied visas. For example, a recent caller and her two children were denied visas. They wanted to visit her aged parents who have never seen their grandchildren. Even the relative of a White House staff member was denied a visa to the U.S. Why were they turned down? Because:

- 1.) Soviet policy tightly controls travel in both directions.
- 2.) The U.S. has no coordinated policy on family visits. Emigration and visitation are separate issues for many Americans of various ethnic groups and U.S. policy must focus equally on both.

An estimated 3 million Americans try to maintain contact with their loved ones in the Soviet Union and the Baltic States in spite of many obstacles. At present, few Soviet citizens are allowed to visit relatives in the USA, and Americans usually must take an expensive, guided tour to see their family in the Soviet Union. I'm sure you agree it is a basic human right for parents, children, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, and cousins to exchange visits in their homes.

Millions of Americans need your help to get a prominent place for family visits on the Moscow Summit agenda. Please your position to correct this injustice and to bring this issue to the attention of President Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz:

- 1.) Remind them of the Resolutions which Congress passed unanimously (copy enclosed).
- 2.) Ask them to speak out publicly about the issue of family visits.
- 3.) Ask them to raise the family visits issue and promote the enclosed Recommendations for liberalized travel procedures.

Please send VISA a copy of your letter to the President and Secretary of State and their reply.

Sincerely,
Tamara

Tamara Horodysky, Chair
April 4, 1988

Recommendations for Liberalized US-USSR Travel Procedures

The ideal situation for relatives would be elimination of all visa requirements, and for American and their relatives in the Soviet Union and the Baltic States to be allowed to travel with only a valid passport. Until such time, the following changes are recommended:

1. Establish a procedure for quick action in cases of serious illness or death.
2. Eliminate the 4-6 month-long invitation (vyzov) process for visitor's (private) visas.
3. Remove all relationship requirements for private visits.
4. Simplify forms.
5. Allow Americans the right to stay in their relative's homes.
 - a. Allow private visitor's visas to stay with relatives in their homes, rather than requiring Americans to take tours.
 - b. For those Americans who prefer to combine a tour with visits to relatives, increase the length of time permitted in each city (now limited to 3 or 4 days except in major cities).
 - c. Open up closed cities to Americans beyond the present limit of about 90 cities for overnight stays and an additional 90 for day trips.
6. Allow Soviet citizens to travel and to stay in American homes.
 - a. Eliminate the current 200 ruble visa fee for Soviet citizens (over one month's average salary, or 4 to 5 months pension for a collective farmer).
 - b. Allow more young people to travel to the West.
 - c. Allow families to travel together.
 - d. Increase period of validity of travel permission/international passports.
7. Open up more entry/exit points into the Soviet Union and the Baltic States.

Also, improve other means of communication: reinstate direct dial telephone communications; remove prohibitive duties from gift parcels; stop mail censorship and ensure delivery of all mail.

The New York Times

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 1988

Letters

For Soviet Emigrés, Family Visits Still Difficult

To the Editor: "Human Rights Promise, and Promises" (editorial, Feb. 23) notes in passing the loosening of travel restrictions for relatives in the United States and Soviet Union. Unfortunately, while 1987 brought some improvements, Soviet restrictions on family visits remain more onerous than for emigration.

Our Government and the media focus on emigration from the Soviet Union, and all but ignore the need for millions of relatives, including recent immigrants, to visit loved ones. Emigration and visiting are separate but related issues for many Americans, and United States policy should focus equally on both.

In 1987, recent émigrés were first allowed to return to the Soviet Union. However, like the millions of Americans of earlier emigrations, they must take tours to see their loved ones. They must stay in expensive hotels, restricted to foreigners, and are usually limited to stays of three or four days in all except the major Soviet cities.

Each year in a recent six-year period, an average of 980 Americans received permission to stay in relatives' homes. It takes four to six months to receive such a visa, while a tourist visa takes only a few weeks. A separate visa is needed to visit relatives in different regions.

In 1987, 5,700 Soviet citizens visited relatives in the United States, an increase from an average of 1,500 of past years. A visa to the West costs 200 rubles, about a month's salary, or five months' pension for a collective farmer. Travelers are mostly retired people, and two members of one family may rarely travel together.

While we welcome the recent changes in Soviet policy, they are woefully inadequate when measured against the needs of three million Americans of Armenian, Byelorussian, Estonian, Jewish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, Ukrainian or other descent who maintain contact with relatives in the Soviet Union.

Before the 1985 Geneva summit meeting, President Reagan said, "the cause of peace would be well served if more individuals and families ... could come to know each other in a personal way." Unfortunately, the Governments' interpretation means that "cultural exchanges" and "citizen diplomacy" flourish, while relatives in the two countries find their difficulties in maintaining normal human contacts continue.

Visits International for Soviets and Americans, VISA, of which I am a chairwoman, advocates simplifying travel procedures for family visits: We recommend eliminating visa fees and official invitation procedure, allowing home visits, opening more cities and creating a method for quick action in cases of serious illness or death.

TAMARA HORODYSKY
Berkeley, Calif., Feb. 26, 1988

VISA — Human rights advocates of exchanged family visits between millions of related people of many nationalities and ethnic groups in the USA and USSR.
VISA • PO Box 2361 • Berkeley, California 94702 • (415) 540-VISA



Congressional Record

100th CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

House Concurrent Resolution 68 Senate Concurrent Resolution 29

Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the inability of American citizens to maintain regular contact with relatives in the Soviet Union

Whereas millions of United States citizens, including members of national and ethnic groups such as Armenians, Byelorussians, Estonians, Germans, Jews, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians, have relatives in the Soviet Union;

Whereas the Soviet Union, as a signatory of the 1975 Final Act of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe, commonly known as the Helsinki Accords, committed itself to "favourably consider applications for travel with the purpose of allowing persons to enter or leave their territory temporarily, and on a regular basis if desired, in order to visit members of their families.";

Whereas in that same document the Soviet Union pledged that "applications for temporary visits to meet members of . . . families will be dealt with without distinction as to country of origin or destination . . . ; cases of urgent necessity — such as serious illness or death — will be given priority treatment.";

Whereas the Soviet Union has ratified the United Nations Charter and signed other international human rights documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, documents which clearly protect the right to leave one's country and return thereto;

Whereas in anticipation of the Geneva Summit Conference of November 1985, President Reagan stated, "... the cause of peace would be served if more individuals and families . . . could come to know each other in a personal way.";

Whereas home visits would immeasurably aid our understanding of the Soviet people and improve relations with the Soviet Union, since family visitation is one of the most basic forms of cultural exchange;

Whereas it is not proper for governments to decide which relationships constitute close family ties for the purpose of determining which relatives should be allowed to visit each other;

Whereas the present policies of the Soviet Union make it virtually impossible for the millions of relatives in the two countries to exchange visits in their homes, and relatives

who have used other forms of communications, such as mail, telephone, telegraph, and gift parcels have experienced enormous difficulties;

Whereas because of restrictive Soviet policies, less than 1,000 of the many thousands of Americans who visited the Soviet Union in 1986 were allowed a private visa to stay with their relatives in their homes, and only about 1,500 Soviet citizens were allowed to visit their relatives in the United States;

Whereas many Americans who have been frustrated by the delay or denial in obtaining private visas to visit family members in their homes in the Soviet Union have resorted to joining package tours to the Soviet Union as a means of seeing their family members;

Whereas relatives should be able to comfort and assist each other in the event of medical emergencies such as those which resulted from the Chomobyl disaster, or when specialized medical treatment is not available in a particular country;

Whereas in the case of serious illness or death the victim's relatives should be guaranteed expeditious determination of their visa applications;

Whereas family visitation is an issue which transcends political differences, and governments which permit normal and regular family visitation demonstrate a commitment to basic values of decency and fairness which are shared by all mankind; and

Whereas at the Vienna Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Follow-up Meeting, the United States delegation enumerated the inappropriate restrictions placed by Soviet authorities on Soviet citizens who wish to travel abroad and on United States citizens who wish to visit family members in the Soviet Union: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives and the Senate,
That it is the sense of the Congress that —

- (1) the promotion of unrestricted family visits between related people in the United States and the Soviet Union is an essential part of American policy toward the Soviet Union; and
- (2) the President, the Secretary of State, and other members of the administration should raise the issue of family visitation at all appropriate opportunities in discussion with the leadership of the Communist Party and the Government of the Soviet Union.

House Concurrent Resolution 68 introduced by Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) on March 5, 1987.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 29 introduced by Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Paul Simon (D-Ill),

Bill Bradley (D-NJ), Al D'Amato (R-NY), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), and Pete Wilson (R-Calif) on March 11, 1987.

VISA — Human rights advocates of visits between millions of related people of many national and ethnic groups in the USA and USSR
A Project of the World Without War Council of Northern California, an organization which, since 1958, links peace, freedom, and human rights concerns
VISA • PO Box 2361 • Berkeley, California 94702 • (415) 540-VISA