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MEETING OF EXPERTS ON PASSPORTS AND FRONTIER FORMALITIES

PREPARATORY MEMORANDUM

ANNEX 17

MEMORANDUM DRAWN UP BY THE INTERNATIONAL
CRIMINAL POLICE COMMISSION

SIXTEENTH SESSION - PARIS

9 - 12 JUNE 1947

COUNTERFEITING AND FORGERY OF PASSPORTS

Study of technical methods and devices to
prevent such practices.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM AND EXISTING SITUATION:

The passport question is of paramount importance in the field of international crime.

Indeed, this document affords the international criminal a two-fold advantage. Firstly, it enables him to move more freely from one country to another, thus covering his tracks. Secondly, it allows him to seek out a place of refuge where he can evade police investigations.

The passport question has therefore been considered very attentively at the various sessions of the I.C.P.C., particularly with a view to the adoption of preventive measures against forgers and more severe penalties. The problem was studied from a twofold standpoint and action to deal with possible forgers was proposed. It was accordingly recommended that certain classes of offenders should be refused passports.

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The Commission likewise contemplated measures relating to the passport itself and, in this connection, certain manufacturing processes and various technical methods calculated to make counterfeiting and forgery almost impossible, were suggested. The adoption of a standard type of passport was also proposed.

Lastly, certain suggestions were put forward to enable frontier officials to detect forgeries more easily.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

The problem was first discussed at the 12th Session of the I.C.P.C. which was held in Belgrade in 1936, when Resolution VI was adopted. This Resolution provided for an exhaustive enquiry into passport forgeries with the object of devising a standard type of passport which forgers would be unable to imitate.

Mr. LOUWAGE, Chairman of the I.C.P.C., then permanent Rapporteur-General, was asked to draft a report. This was submitted as document No.15 to the 13th Session held in London in 1937. It was based on the expert reports presented by Mr. SODERMAN, Director of the STOCKHOLM Scientific Police Institute and permanent Rapporteur of the I.C.P.C., Mr. ADLER, technical expert at THE HAGUE, Head of the Counterfeiting and Forgery Department and Mr. DIMITRESCU, former Head of the General Directorate of Police in RUMANIA.

As the outcome of this proposal and Mr. LOUWAGE'S statement a resolution was adopted inviting the Members of the I.C.P.C., in the light of the findings of Mr. LOUWAGE'S report, to examine the question, if necessary in collaboration with the passport offices or any other authorities, and in agreement with their respective Governments.

The Members were requested to undertake this study along the lines followed by Mr. LOUWAGE. A preliminary report was submitted to the 14th Session of the I.C.P.C. in BUCHAREST in 1938, but as replies had not been received from all the Members and the latter had, moreover, considered it necessary to consult the authorities in their respective countries (1), it was decided to prolong the study for another year so as to enable all the Members to state their views and ascertain the opinions of the authorities consulted.

A final Resolution was accordingly adopted requesting the Members to continue the proposed enquiries and recommending them to bear in mind "when suggesting measures for the prevention of counterfeiting and forgery, the expenditure involved and the practical facilities for their adoption" (11).

The final report could not be submitted at the 1939 session, owing to the war.

Nevertheless, the data had been collected in the report which Mr. LOUWAGE was to have submitted.

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- (1) See report No. 4 by Mr. LOUWAGE to the 14th Session of the I.C.P.C. in Bucharest (1938).
- (11) See letter dated 1 September 1938, KRI.POLICE 106/38, from Mr. DRESSLER.

STATEMENT.

In drawing up this statement we have based our conclusions on reports of the above-mentioned experts and on the various replies sent in by the Members of the I.C.P.C. We shall examine, on the one hand, measures affecting passport holders, and on the other the changes or innovations required in the actual passport in order to prevent counterfeiting and forgery. Lastly, we shall study proposals concerning frontier control officials.

A - Measures proposed with regard to INTERNATIONAL CRIMINALS.

It seems particularly dangerous to provide international criminals with a passport.

In discussing this problem, it was held that the passport entitles the holder to the protection of the authorities of the country of destination, and that the issue of such a document even constitutes an unfriendly act towards any country of destination when the holder comes under the classification of an international criminal.

Taking a similar view, another rapporteur on the question (1) drew the following conclusions :

Passports should not be issued to persons who have been convicted of serious offences if their character and habitual conduct are such as to make it likely that they will engage in criminal activities abroad.

(1) See report No. 4, by Dr. Bruno SCHULTZ (13th Session).

The same applies to persons who have not been convicted but who, it is strongly suspected, may perpetrate criminal offences abroad.

These suggestions met with two serious objections: one based on the freedom of the individual, the other pleading, on behalf of the applicant, exceptional circumstances, such as the safeguarding of material or moral interests.

The first objection, however, did not deter the Members of the I.C.P.C. from carrying out their intention to propose restrictive measures with regard to forgers, because the final Resolution of this Session proposed that passports should not be granted to the two categories of persons mentioned above and that they should even be withdrawn from persons subsequently included in these categories.

A reservation was made in respect of persons pleading juridical or humanitarian reasons (I).

In such cases, the restrictions would take the form of warnings transmitted to the countries of destination and, should a passport be granted in exceptional circumstances, it would bear a mark previously agreed upon, so as to draw the attention of the country of destination to the holder and ensure effective surveillance.

(I) See report No. 4 by Mr. Schultz submitted at the 13th Session of the I.C.P.C., page 8.

In the final report drawn up by Mr. LOUWAGE for the 1939 Session, the opinions of the various States on this question may be summarized as follows:

The whole question gave rise to a great deal of controversy, although a clear majority were in favour of security measures against persons suspected of criminal activities. The delegates accordingly agreed to submit a Resolution to this effect to their respective Governments. Some of them pointed out that such action had already been taken with regard to certain dangerous criminals.

The importance of preventive action at the present time can hardly be over-stressed. Indeed, the conclusion of the peace treaties will lead to a greater freedom of movement among the nations; the development of aviation and of human intercourse in all fields is likely to facilitate the criminal activities of certain offenders, particularly those engaged in international crime, and of habitual offenders whose fraudulent proclivities may constitute a danger as they move about from one country to another.

The proposed security measures might be waived to some extent in the exceptional cases examined above.

But the individual Governments would retain the right to determine the categories of persons affected by these passport restrictions.

B. Measures relating to the PASSPORT itself.

These measures relate either to counterfeiting, that is to say, the complete reproduction of an authentic passport, or to forgery, i.e. partial alterations affecting certain details of the passport, such as the text, photograph, date, etc.

They also concern either the presentation and make-up of the document itself or its component parts: photograph, official stamps, signature, visas, fingerprints, etc.

With regard to the presentation and make-up of the document, the experts and the members of the I.C.P.C. recommended devices to prevent the counterfeiting of the whole document or its forgery by changing, omitting or substituting pages.

Binding. The means employed to prevent counterfeiting and forgery are: a special binding and the indication of the number of pages.

As regards the putting together of the pages, the majority of the persons consulted considered that the system of assembling the pages "concertina-wise" had its advantages. This is a system of folding done in a single sheet, the first and last pages being glued to the cover. Although not all the delegates considered this system indispensable, it was deemed to possess undeniable advantages from the point of view of the substitution of pages.

The kind of cover gave rise to discussion; the majority of the members expressed their preference for a semi-stiff strong cover, which, in the opinion of several, should bear an official seal.

To prevent counterfeiting, it was suggested that passports should be made out of what is known as safety paper, that special ink should be used, that the watermark should be incorporated in relief and that the paper should be printed with a guilloche-pattern.

The object of these devices is to prevent washing off and mechanical scraping.

The most commonly adopted method of preventing scraping consists in a delicate overprinting comprising numerous details. One expert, Mr. ADLER, suggested that the guilloche background should be of various colours and surrounded with a border of a different colour from that of the background, with a chequered pattern for added security, which would render the forger's task much more difficult.

Guilloche. The members of the I.C.P.C. who were consulted on this method were unanimously in favour of adopting the guilloche.

Watermark. The same unanimity was shown in regard to the watermark, which is equally useful in preventing the washing of the paper. According to the expert SODERMAN, this method is of capital importance, because if it is carried out in double relief, under a light and dark tint, it is very difficult to imitate.

Safety
Paper
and
Ink

Safety paper and ink were also recommended against forgery, complete or partial.

The general use of these two methods was recommended by the Members of the I.C.P.C. on account of the effective safeguards they afford against chemical and mechanical tampering.

Moreover, safety paper has the additional advantage of being damp- and perspiration-proof.

The use of this ink was strongly recommended by Members, although the majority considered that its distribution might give rise to difficulties; in any case, however, the ink used should soak thoroughly into the paper, as this makes it more difficult to scrape or wash.

Numbering
of
pages

All the members advised numbering the pages as an additional precaution but opinions differed as to the way in which this should be done. Some members advocated the use of printed numerals, others the insertion of the numeral in the guilloche, while others considered that the numbering should be shown by means of perforations.

Neither the experts nor the members supported the suggestion that each country should number the pages in a distinctive way, since this was neither indispensable nor effective and appeared to be an unnecessary complication.

It was thought on the other hand that each country might usefully employ a distinctive mark on each page of the passport. For instance the date might be shown by means of perforations. It is most unlikely that a conventional sign of this sort would coincide with that on a forged passport.

The other measures advocated by the experts and members of the I.C.P.C. relate in particular to photographs, finger-prints and official stamps.

The
Photograph

The most common type of forgery is the substitution of one photograph for another. It is frequently the only method of forgery employed, since the description of the holder generally escapes the attention of the police because of its vagueness and the stamp can fairly easily be counterfeited when moistened.

It was therefore necessary to devise some means of fixing the photograph with the maximum of security or of rendering its replacement extremely difficult.

Consideration was given to a number of methods - securing the photograph by metal staples, rivets or metal eyelets, printing the photograph direct on to a sensitized page of the passport, securing it with liquid glue or by warmed adhesive paper or the so-called "window" or "shutter" system.

(a) Use of
Metal
Clips

The suggestion that the photograph should be attached to the cover or to an inside page by means of metal clips was not supported by the two experts, Mr. ADLER and Mr. SODERMAN or by the members of the I.C.P.C.

The method did not seem to afford any absolute guarantee since the metal clips can be removed and replaced by others with the aid of special tools. Some clips, such as staples, can be removed with an ordinary pen-knife.

(b) Direct
printing
of the
photo-
graph

The suggestion that the photograph should be printed on a sensitized page of the passport is an attractive one and was advocated by Mr. ADLER. The process is carried out in two stages. A photograph of the passport holder is first taken and the negative is then printed on to the sensitized page of the document. It was claimed that satisfactory results had been obtained experimentally at a very low cost.

This method was criticised unfavourably, particularly by Mr. BIANU, then Director-General of Police in Bucarest. The fact that the features of the Rumanian passport were similar to those advocated by the two chief experts, Mr. ADLER and Mr. SODERMAN gave added weight to his criticism.

In Mr. BIANU's opinion, the adoption of the method would give rise to considerable difficulties. It would involve the employment, in Passport Offices, Embassies and Consulates abroad, of specialists and special laboratories, difficult to obtain and very expensive.

In view of the difficulties and expenditure involved Mr. BIANU's view was adopted by all the members of the I.C.P.C.

(c) The so-called "shutter" or "window" system

One of the best methods of ensuring that one photograph cannot be replaced by another is the so-called "shutter" or "window" system in which the photograph is placed in a frame cut in a page of the passport.

This method was favourably received by Mr. ADLER (although he personally preferred direct printing on to a sensitized page). The method is based on the fact that any attempt to replace the photograph would tear the paper. It has, moreover, the two following advantages: replacement is made more difficult and the back of the photograph can be used for the signature, comparison of which is another aid to identification.

The opinion of members of the I.C.P.C. was divided on this point. Neither method received the support of a majority.

One of the experts (Mr. SODERMAN) preferred fixing the photograph on modern safety paper, using glue of good quality, with the name of the passport holder perforated on the photograph by means of a TODD Machine.

The majority of the members of the I.C.P.C. opposed the adoption of this method in view of the difficulty of making its use general. Some went so far as to claim that it offered an insufficient guarantee against substitution of the photograph.

With regard to the photograph, the use of a good liquid glue, water and heat-proof was advocated, with metal rivets as an additional means of attachment.

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Since the photograph is one of the essential, if not the most important, means of identification, the angle from which the individual should be photographed was discussed.

The majority of the delegates recommended a three-quarter view, bare-headed, with one ear showing clearly. One of the experts (Mr. ADLER) was of the opinion that it would be preferable to have two photographs, full-face and profile, in order that the features of the individual should be clearly shown, including the ear, one of the principal means of identification, but he considered it difficult to obtain photographs for identification purposes from private photographers.

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A cognate question - the description of the holder - was also discussed. The experts ADLER and SODERMAN considered that the descriptions given in passports were generally open to criticism on the grounds of vagueness.

While the majority of delegates expressed no opinion on this point, their views probably coincided with those of the experts who also proposed that all peculiarities and details should be carefully noted in the description, a suggestion which can be wholeheartedly endorsed.

Finger-
prints

As regards finger-prints, three points call for consideration: the use of this means of identification, the position of the prints in the document and the choice of the finger from which the impression should be taken.

It was generally agreed that the finger-print provided an excellent means of identification and Mr. SODERMAN hoped that its adoption might become compulsory.

In the opinion of Mr. ADLER, however, it does not appear to provide an effective safeguard against counterfeiting or forgery. The finger-print would have to appear on the passport, as many members recommended, and also on the photograph, for purposes of comparison. The finger-print on the photograph would, however, be faulty because the glossy paper which is normally used is unsuitable for the reproduction of papillary impressions. Moreover, it normally takes several days for the ink to become indelible. It would therefore be preferable for the print to be placed on the back instead of on the front of the

photograph, but even so the fact that the frontier control officials are not usually competent to detect a replaced photograph would have to be taken into consideration, since the forger would do his best to obtain a finger-print very similar to the one impressed on the passport for purposes of comparison.

While a single print would be sufficient for identification purposes, a second copy would be needed for the files of the passport office.

As can be seen, the use of finger-prints would give rise to a series of difficulties on account of the expensive equipment and the personnel required, who, if not specialists should at least have an adequate training in finger-print identification.

It is none the less true that the use of the finger-print would place a further obstacle in the way of the forger.

The majority of the delegates agreed with Mr. SODERMAN that the right index finger should be used for the impression, which should be made not on the photograph but on the document itself.

In this connection mention should be made of a recommendation put forward at the Seventh International Conference for the Unification of Criminal Law held at CAIRO in January 1938, advocating the use of technical processes calculated to prevent the manufacture of false passports, and drawing particular attention to the advisability of using finger-prints, whenever possible.

Official
Stamp.

A further feature which presents serious difficulties for forgers is the official stamp. Passports are usually marked either with a wet or a dry stamp.

Most of the members favoured the dry stamp while the remainder recommended the use of indelible ink.

The position of the signature and its possible use in duplicate was also considered by the delegates of the I.C.P.C. They were opposed to the signature being placed on the photograph, which might thus be damaged, and in any case they considered this unlikely to constitute an adequate safeguard. They recommended, however, that the signature should be placed under and at the side of the photograph.

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C. PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE PERSONNEL
OF THE FRONTIER POLICE SERVICES

Suggestions were also made on the subject of the frontier control services with a view to enabling them to detect fraud.

Special
Training.

In the first place, appropriate training, covering the technical points connected with the manufacture of passports, elementary methods of counterfeiting and forging and the basic principles of finger-print identification should be provided.

This proposal met with the unanimous approval of the members of the I.C.P.C. The delegate for Turkey suggested the publication of a practical guide for the use of the frontier control officials.

Mr. ADLER, Head of the Counterfeiting and Forgery Department of the I.C.P.C., strongly supported the proposal that frontier guards should be given this training.

* * *

Collection
of Specimen
Passports.

As a further precaution against forgery it was suggested that these officials should be provided with a collection of specimen passports.

When consulted on this point, the members of the I.C.P.C., while not denying the usefulness of such a measure, considered that its application would encounter serious difficulties.

In practice it would be necessary to provide the frontier control officials with a collection of specimens of the passports in use in the different countries, the possession of which would authorize the holders to cross the frontier. This collection would be sent to the Central Offices of each State. Failing this, a collection of photographs of the various passports in current use might be provided.

However, to assemble such collections of specimen genuine passports or of photograph would require a considerable number of examples of the various types, in view of the multiplicity of frontier stations in all countries and the frequent changes to which these documents are subject.

In these circumstances members of the I.C.P.C. abandoned the proposal.

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Visas

The stamping on passports gave rise to a live discussion as to the order in which visas and seals should be stamped. It resulted in unanimous agreement by the delegates to the I.C.P.C. that they should be entered in the passport in order of date of issue and stamp. They pointed out that unless this chronological order was observed, control personnel wasted time examining documents and made mistakes as to journeys made.

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Duration of Validity of Passports.

The question of duration of validity of passports has been examined by an expert (Dr. DIMITRESCU), who felt that if duration were limited passports would have less attraction for international criminals. He gave it as his opinion that duration should be limited to a maximum of 1 year.

Renewal of a passport, in that it obliged the applicant to comply with fresh formalities, gave the authorities a second opportunity to detect fraud.

The other experts and members of the I.C.P.C. expressed no opinion on this point.

D. Preparation of a STANDARD PASSPORT.

These discussions of passport formalities and necessary safeguards against fraud, led the experts and delegates to consider the preparation of a standard passport.

The definition they arrived at would include the majority of the safety precautionary measures we have mentioned.

Having regard, then, to the opinions expressed by the experts and delegates, to the technical or practical difficulties, and to the cost of producing an ideal passport, we now give the following list of essential features, which together would constitute a valuable safeguard against counterfeiting and forgery,

First of all, in the preventive field, there was unanimous agreement on the following two points:-

- (1) Any criminal convicted of a crime either of international character or with international ramifications should be excluded from holding a passport. Anyone in this category with urgent reasons for going abroad would be exempted from this security measure, but in such case the purpose and duration of the applicant's stay would be subject to supervision. The attention of the police of his country of destination would be drawn to the applicant and to his activities,
- (2) It would be desirable to give frontier personnel suitable instruction in passport technique, counterfeiting and forgery in so far as this

might help in detecting fraud, also a thorough training in finger-print identification.

With regard to the make-up of the passport and of the various elements composing it, all that can be done is to give a list of those points on which general agreement was reached and which therefore include the maximum number of desirable safeguards,

These are:-

- (1) Passports should be made up concertina-wise, the first and last pages glued to the cover, which should be semi-stiff.
- (2) Passports should have a distinctive perforation (name of country, holder, or date of issue).
- (3) A special mark should be imprinted, or better perforated, in guilloche pattern.
- (4) Safety paper.
- (5) Safety ink, soaking thoroughly into the paper.
- (6) Water-marks, in double relief, and in two colours.
- (7) Guilloches, possibly multi-coloured, including the page number.
- (8) Photograph, three-quarter face, head bare, one ear showing clearly, attached to the paper by water- and heat-proof liquid glue, and clipped on by metal rivets.
- (9) An embossed stamp on one corner of the photograph and possibly a seal on the cover of the passport.
- (10) Signature below and not on the photograph.
- (11) Finger-print of the right index finger.
- (12) Details of description to be recorded carefully.

* * *

In conclusion, the I.C.P.C. feels that the above measures are calculated to prevent to the maximum extent the counterfeiting and forgery of passports.