

FEB 163

ON THE CLOSING OF THE SOVIET CONSULATE

Statement issued by the South African Society for Peace
and Friendship with the Soviet Union

The South African Society for Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union protests sharply against the action of the Government in ordering the closing of the Soviet Consulate-General.

This decision is in the interests neither of the South African people nor of world peace. Coming at a time when the Governments and peoples of peace-loving countries everywhere are seeking to avert the horrors of atomic war, to relax international tension, and to strengthen ties of friendship among the nations, this curt and one-sided rupture of relations can only serve to isolate South Africa and to lower her standing in the eyes of progressive world opinion.

The Consulate-General was opened, in response to the demands of tens of thousands of South Africans, to commemorate the alliance between the two countries which was sealed by blood and sacrifice in the common struggle against the enemy - Nazi Germany. Mr. Eric Louw, the Minister of External Affairs, says that "the situation has now changed" - but the ten years that have passed since the military defeat of Nazism have not served to efface the abiding friendship of our peoples, born in those dark and difficult days.

Mr. Louw claims that "diplomatic, trade and other relations" between the Union and the U. S. S. R. "are not affected". But there can be no doubt that the summary dismissal of the Acting Consul-General and his staff - accompanied by a series of unsubstantiated charges of the most fantastic and unfounded nature - could only be designed to worsen such relations.

It remains our profound belief as South Africans, that the true interests of all sections of our people lie in the extension of mutual trading, cultural, sporting, diplomatic and other relationships with the U. S. S. R. and all other countries. For if there is one overriding lesson which the times we live in have impressed upon us, it should be that all nations, of whatever social and political system and beliefs, must learn to live together in amity and co-operation. The alternative to peaceful co-existence is mutual destruction.

The scandalous action of the Union Government has struck a blow against this concept, against peace, against South Africa.

We call upon all South African men and women of goodwill, all peace-loving and democratic individuals and organisations, to join in the most vigorous condemnation and repudiation of this unfriendly action, and in demanding that direct diplomatic relations be established with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

1st February 1956

(Rev.) D. C. Thompson

Chairman: S.A. Society for Peace
and Friendship with the Soviet Union.

Collection Number: AD1812

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

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