



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

26 November 1981

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Dear Michael,

Human Rights in the Soviet Union:
Possible Action at the European Council

We were informed late on 25 November that President Mitterrand was sending a message to President Brezhnev on behalf of Dr and Mrs Sakharov who have begun a hunger strike in the Soviet Union in protest against the repeated refusal of the Soviet authorities to allow Lisa Alexeyeva, the wife of Mrs Sakharov's son by an earlier marriage, to join her husband in the United States.

The French Embassy have indicated that President Mitterrand would like this to be discussed at the European Council and mentioned in the Communique or Presidency Conclusions at the end of the meeting.

I enclose a brief.

Yours ever,

F N Richards

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

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EUROPEAN COUNCIL: 26/27 NOVEMBER 1981

POLITICAL COOPERATION

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SOVIET UNION

POINTS TO MAKE

1. Understand President Mitterrand wishes to raise issue of Dr and Mrs Sakharov.
2. Interested in views of Chancellor Schmidt. Noted that joint press communique following Mr Brezhnev's visit referred to exchange of views on humanitarian questions.
3. Three possible courses:
 - a. Public reference to this by the Council: statement or mention in communique/Presidency conclusions;
 - b. confidential démarche to President Brezhnev by Presidency on behalf of the Ten;
 - c. individual messages by Ten drawing on a number of common points.
4. Also disturbing reports about Anatoly Shcharansky. Might therefore be appropriate to include reference to him.

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BACKGROUND

1. Dr Andrei Sakharov has been in exile, virtually in isolation, in Gorky since 1978 for his human rights activities. There have recently been reports that Dr Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner, began a hunger strike on 22 November in protest at the refusal by the Soviet authorities to grant an exit visa to Lisa Alexeyeva to enable her to join her husband-by-proxy under US law (Mrs Bonner's son by a previous marriage) in the United States.
2. President Mitterrand has indicated that he will be sending a message to Brezhnev informing him of public interest in France and asking him to grant Sakharov's request so that he can terminate his hunger strike.
3. There have also been reports that Anatoly Shcharansky has been given an additional sentence of three years in prison, and returned from his labour camp to the closed prison at Chistopol.
4. Mr Shcharansky, a "refusenik" since 1973, was sentenced in 1978, accused of treason. The ill-treatment he has received in prison is reported to have seriously damaged his health.
5. The Prime Minister saw Mrs Avital Shcharansky in April this year during the latter's tour of Western capitals to seek support for her husband's case. She was also seen by Mr Blaker, who subsequently issued a statement condemning Soviet treatment of Shcharansky. Lord Trefgarne raised Shcharansky and Sakharov's cases with the Soviet Ambassador when the latter called on 23 November.
6. The joint press communique issued at the end of Brezhnev's visit to Bonn stated that 'Both sides had an exchange of views on humanitarian questions and declared their intention of resolving these in a spirit of good will.'

/7. Possible

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7. Possible elements of a statement by the European Council, or of message(s) to Brezhnev, are attached.

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ELEMENTS OF A POSSIBLE STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, OR
OF A MESSAGE(S) TO PRESIDENT BREZHNEV

1. Reports that Dr and Mrs Sakharov have begun a hunger strike have been received with great ^{It appears that} concern. They have been brought to take this desperate action by the refusal of the Soviet authorities to allow Dr Sakharov's step daughter-in-law, Lisa Alexeyeva, to emigrate and join her husband in the United States.
2. There are also reports that Anatoly Shcharansky has been given an additional three year sentence and, despite his , failing health, sent back from labour camp to prison.
3. Appeal to Soviet Government to demonstrate humanity in these two cases, in the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. This would help create the confidence which is so important for better East-West relations.