

GRS 760

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SOVIET UNION

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FM MOSCOW 231221Z

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 69 OF 23 JAN

AND RPTD INFO TO UKDEL NATO, WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN AND ROME

Read in full

mt

YOUR TELNO 45 AND TELECON OF 22 JANUARY (WOOD/BAND): SAKHAROV.

1. SAKHAROV'S EXILE TO GORKY WAS NOT SO FAR AS I CAN TELL PROVOKED BY ANY NEW RECENT ACTION ON HIS PART, FOR INSTANCE OVER AFGHANISTAN. THE CLOSEST THE RUSSIANS HAVE COME TO A PUBLIC EXPLANATION IS THE TASS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SAKHAROV WAS STRIPPED OF HIS SOVIET HONOURS AND AWARDS FOR FAILING TO HEED WARNINGS TO DESIST FROM SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY AND, MORE RECENTLY, CALLING FOR IMPERIALIST INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL SOVIET AFFAIRS. HE HAS AS YET NOT LOST HIS STATUS AS AN ACADEMICIAN, A MOVE WHICH CAN ONLY BE MADE BY THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES IN A SECRET VOTE.

2. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT KIRILLIN'S DEPARTURE (MY TELNO 68) MAY BE RELEVANT. KIRILLIN COULD WELL HAVE PROTECTED SAKHAROV AND GIVEN THE UNWELCOME ADVICE THAT ACTION AGAINST HIM WOULD PREJUDICE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL CONTACTS WITH THE WEST. IF THIS ADVICE FORMERLY CARRIED WEIGHT, MUCH OF IT HAS NOW BEEN LOST BY WESTERN RESTRICTIONS ON SUCH CONTACTS SINCE THE AFGHANISTAN INVASION.

3. THE OBVIOUS PURPOSE OF THE KGB'S ACTION IS TO SILENCE THE BEST KNOWN FIGURE OF THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT STILL LIVING IN THE USSR AND TO CUT AN IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN THE MOVEMENT AND THE WEST. THEY DOUBTLESS FELT FREER TO ACT NOW BECAUSE RELATIONS WITH THE WEST ARE ALREADY SO POOR. THE TIMING NONETHELESS IS ODD. THEY COULD HAVE EXILED SAKHAROV AT ANY TIME OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. IT IS ALL VERY WELL TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENT CLIMATE OF EAST WEST RELATIONS TO DO SO NOW, BUT BREZHNEV'S ANSWERS TO PRAVDA (MY TELNO 43) WERE COUCHED IN LANGUAGE CLEARLY INTENDED TO STRIKE A CONCILIATORY NOTE AS FAR AS WESTERN EUROPE IS CONCERNED, AND THIS GRATUITOUSLY PROVOCATIVE ACTION WILL HAVE MADE SUCH TACTICS MORE DIFFICULT TO PURSUE. ONE IMMEDIATE AND INDICATIVE RESULT HAS BEEN THE DECISION BY CHABAN-DELMAS TO CURTAIL HIS CURRENT VISIT.

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4. WE CAN TAKE IS AS CERTAIN, I THINK, THAT THE DECISION TO EXILE SAKHAROV WAS NOT TAKEN WITHOUT CLEARANCE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL. THE LEADERSHIP MAY CORRECTLY HAVE JUDGED THAT THERE MAY NOT BE A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE OF PUBLIC SYMPATHY IN THE SOVIET UNION FOR SAKHAROV, BUT PERHAPS FAILED OBJECTIVELY TO ANALYSE THE FULL EFFECT OF THEIR DECISION. EVEN SO, THEY CANNOT HAVE IGNORED THE IMPACT ON THE OLYMPIC DEBATE. THE FACT THAT THEY PROCEEDED AGAINST SAKHAROV DESPITE THAT PROVIDED FRESH EVIDENCE OF THE TOUGH MOOD PREVAILING IN THE POLITBURO (MY TELNO 28) AND OF A CONTINUING INCLINATION IN MOSCOW ALMOST BRAZENLY TO DEFY WESTERN OPINION.

KEEBLE

FCO/WH DISTN  
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