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FILE

Soviet
Union

5 November 1980

Human Rights in the Soviet Union and CSCE

The Prime Minister has seen Michael Arthur's letter to me of 30 October on this subject and is content with the line set out in it. She would be grateful to have for use in Parliamentary Questions a short factual note on the present campaign of repression in the Soviet Union.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Paul Lever, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

This is essentially a background letter but may I take it that you are content with the line the FCO propose to take?

30 October 1980

Dear Michael

Paul 4/1x

Yes mt.

Yes, I have a note of this for use in this memo - in question

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SOVIET UNION AND CSCE

In his letter of 3 June covering a draft letter from the Prime Minister to Professor Leonard Schapiro and Mr Peter Reddaway, George Walden said that the best time to look at the possibility of a public campaign about human rights in the Soviet Union by Western leaders might be nearer to the Madrid Review Conference of the CSCE, which opens on 11 November.

The situation in the Soviet Union has shown no signs of improving since June: arrests of dissidents have continued and, since the Olympic Games, a number have been tried and sentenced. Among the most prominent have been Father Gleb Yakunin, founder member of the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers Rights, sentenced to 5 years labour camp plus 5 years internal exile in August for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda; Tatyana Velikanova, a human rights activist, sentenced to 4 years labour camp plus 5 years internal exile on the same day for the same offence; and Vyacheslav Bakhmin, founder member of the Working Commission on the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes in the Soviet Union, sentenced to 3 years imprisonment for spreading anti-Soviet fabrications. The FCO have issued statements condemning the trials and noting that they cast further doubt on the Soviet Union's commitment to implement the provisions of the CSCE Final Act; and the Prime

/Minister

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street



Minister characterised the Soviet response in her speech at Brighton as a campaign of repression worse than any since Stalin's day. Our best estimate is that there have now been at least 300 arrests of human rights activists in the Soviet Union since the beginning of 1979 and approximately 100 political trials.

In the light of this, our first conclusion is that there should be no reduction in the attention Ministers devote to human rights in the Soviet Union in public speeches in the period immediately before and during the Madrid meeting following the direction set by the Prime Minister and Lord Carrington at Brighton; and that we should react strongly to any major new developments. The immediate forum will be at Madrid; the opening British statement (by Mr Blaker on present plans) will be a forthright expression of our point of view - on human rights and on Afghanistan, and our line throughout the Review Conference will be a robust one. It may well be helpful as the Conference proceeds for the delegation's line to be supported by appropriate references in Ministerial speeches, and this is a question which we shall be keeping under review.

Our aim will be to bring the maximum of effective pressure to bear on the Soviet Union at Madrid, and this will require a concerted effort on the part of the Western participants with as much support as possible from neutrals such as Switzerland and Sweden who share our basic concern about human rights. We shall have to do what we can to keep our partners and allies up to the mark, and this in turn means that we shall have to take into account their views of the tactics most likely to succeed. We shall not hesitate to take the lead when it seems desirable, but it would not help to get so far out in front that our advice in the Western group is discounted;

/and

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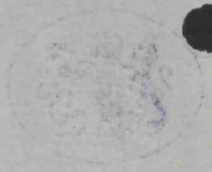
and the right balance of public statement and pressure behind the scenes will have to be considered case-by-case as the Conference proceeds.

Yours ever

Michael Arthur

M A Arthur

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31 OCT 1980

