

Scribble



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

ccs of attached
note to NIS +
ROSBIA

H.A.

17 November 1980

Prime Minister

(2)

Hand We will keep this handy with
your PQ material.
Dear Michael, Hand

Repression in the Soviet Union

Thank you for your letter of 5 November. I enclose a short factual note on the present campaign of repression in the Soviet Union for the Prime Minister's use in answering Parliamentary Questions.

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Handwritten mark

Yours etc

Paul

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Private Secretary

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THE PRESENT CAMPAIGN OF REPRESSION IN THE SOVIET UNION

1. The campaign began in early 1979. Since then, at least 300 dissidents of all kinds are known to have been arrested and at least 100 have been tried, making this the most severe purge since dissidence became established in the Soviet Union early in the Brezhnev period and in effect, therefore, since the time of Stalin. Those arrested and tried have included religious activists, members of non-Russian minorities, and human rights activists, including Helsinki monitors and those protesting about the abuse of psychiatry for political purposes. Examples are at Annex A.

2. The purpose of the Soviet authorities in conducting such a rigorous campaign of repression is probably the simple one of trying to bring organised dissent to an end and to minimise the chances of a resurgence at a time when the price of doing so in terms of East-West relations is not high.

3. Arrests have continued to take place since the Olympic Games and the number of trials has increased in this period in spite of the imminence of the Madrid Review Conference of the CSCE. The trials have resulted in sentences in labour camps or internal exile. There have also been cases of harassment and assaults on dissenters, as well as of confinement to mental institutions.

4. There are two notable features of the present campaign:-

a. the use (by no means new) of the officially-controlled Soviet media to attack the foreign contacts of dissidents. The purpose is to discourage Western journalists in particular from publicising the grievances of dissidents and to present dissidents as traitors to the Soviet Union;

b. successful attempts by the KGB to induce some dissidents (for example, the dissident Russian Orthodox Priest, Father Dmitri Dudko) to recant and plead guilty at their trials so as to undermine Western protests about Soviet actions. However, such cases remain rare: the great majority of defendants have refused to plead guilty.

5. The present campaign of repression has had a very severe impact on dissidents, particularly since the number of major activists had already been reduced by earlier arrests and expulsions from the Soviet Union. But new recruits to the various branches of the dissident movement continue to come forward and some dissident causes, particularly nationalism, continue to attract grassroots support in the Soviet Union. Popular discontent was vividly demonstrated in a series of large street demonstrations in Estonia in September/October. Even senior Soviet spokesmen have on occasion accepted in public that dissidence is now a feature of life in the Soviet Union.



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ANNEX A

RECENT EXAMPLES OF SOVIET REPRESSION

1. Among the most notable of recent dissident trials are those of:-

- a. Vasyl Stus, a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group, who was sentenced in October to 10 years labour camp to be followed by 5 years in internal exile. (30 members of Helsinki Monitoring Groups in the five regional centres have now been sentenced since Dr Yuri Orlov established the first group in Moscow in 1976);
- b. Father Gleb Yakunin, a founder member of the Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers Rights in the USSR, who was sentenced on 29 August to five years labour camp plus five years in internal exile for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda;
- c. Tatyana Velikanova, an active human rights campaigner, who was sentenced to 4 years labour camp plus five years in internal exile on the same day and for the same offence as Father Yakunin;
- d. Vyacheslav Bakhmin, founder member of the Working Commission on the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes in the Soviet Union, who was sentenced in September to 3 years labour camp for spreading anti-Soviet fabrications;
- e. Antanas Terletskas, a prominent Lithuanian human rights activist, sentenced in September to three years labour camp plus five years in internal exile for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda;
- f. Nikolai Baturin, a leading reform Baptist who had already served five previous sentences who was given a further sentence of 5 years labour camp and had his property confiscated in August on the same day as four other Baptists were sentenced;
- g. Viktor Abramkin, one of three editors of the samizdat journal Poiski to have been sentenced in October. He was given 3 years in a labour camp.

2. Academician Sakharov remains in Gorky, where he was banished in January. Recent reports suggest that he continues to be harassed.