

Prime Minister

FLASH

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CONFIDENTIAL

FM MOSCOW 080959Z APR 83

TO F L A S H FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 348 OF 8 APR

Hd EEST

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Hd INFO.

Hd DEFENCE D

Hd PLANNING STAFF

PS

PS Mr. RIFKIND

PS PUS

SIR J. BULLARD

MR. COOPERSON

CABINET OFFICE

NO 10/04

(11)

MF

YOUR TEL NO 269 EXPULSION OF SOVIET OFFICIALS

1. SUSLOV, HEAD OF THE SECOND EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT IN THE MFA ASKED ME TO CALL AT 11.30 HOURS (LOCAL) THIS MORNING. I WAS GIVEN A SPEAKING NOTE WHICH WAS READ OUT. (FULL TEXT IN MIFT). THIS PROTESTED STRONGLY THE BRITISH EXPULSION OF IVANOV, PRIMAKOV AND TITOV, DISMISSED THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THEM, AND DESCRIBED AS UNACCEPTABLE THE THREAT OF FURTHER MEASURES AGAINST SOVIET OFFICIALS IN THE UK.

2. THE NOTE WENT ON TO REFER TO THE UNACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES OF "SOME" BRITISH CITIZENS WORKING IN THE SOVIET UNION, IN PARTICULAR MY ASSISTANT AIR ATTACHE, SQN. LDR. DAVID WILLIAMS AND THE FINANCIAL TIMES CORRESPONDENT, ANTHONY ROBINSON. THESE TWO WERE ACCUSED OF SYSTEMATICALLY CONTRAVENING THE NORMS OF CONDUCT FOR FOREIGNERS AND OF ENGAGING IN IMPERMISSIBLE ACTIVITY. THEY WERE ASKED TO LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION WITHIN ONE WEEK.

3. I SAID THAT I REGRETTED THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAD SEEN FIT TO TAKE THIS ACTION. THE EVIDENCE THAT IVANOV, PRIMAKOV AND TITOV HAD ENGAGED IN UNACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES WAS IRREFUTABLE. I REJECTED THE ALLEGATIONS THAT WILLIAMS AND ROBINSON HAD BEEN ENGAGED IN ACTIVITIES INCOMPATIBLE WITH THEIR STATUS, RECALLING WHAT I HAD SAID IN DECEMBER WHEN THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN ACTION AGAINST MY NAVAL ATTACHE (MY TELNO 845, OF 17 DECEMBER 1982 PARA 3). I REGISTERED A VERY STRONG PROTEST AT THE ACTION AGAINST WILLIAMS AND ROBINSON AS QUITE UNJUSTIFIABLE AND INCOMPATIBLE WITH A WISH FOR CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. I RECALLED SIR J BULLARD'S REFERENCE TO FURTHER ACTION IN LONDON IN THE EVENT OF RETALIATION (PARA 9 OF YOUR TELNO 270). IN RESPONSE, SUSLOV SAID THAT THE SOVIET ACTION WAS NOT RETALIATORY BUT FORCED UPON THEM. THERE WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE AGAINST WILLIAMS AND ROBINSON. THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES WOULD HAVE "PREFERRED NOT TO HAVE HAD TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE" WHICH HAD BEEN CREATED BY THE BRITISH SIDE. HE DREW MY ATTENTION IN PARTICULAR TO THE WORDS IN THE SOVIET STATEMENT REGARDING THREATS BY THE BRITISH SIDE. THESE WERE UNACCEPTABLE AND WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER COMPLICATIONS IN OUR RELATIONS.

RELATIONS.

4. I UNDERSTAND THAT ROBINSON IS IN LONDON BUT MAY BE PLANNING TO RETURN TO MOSCOW OVER THE WEEKEND. ONCE THE DEPARTMENT HAS SPOKEN TO THE FINANCIAL TIMES I WOULD PROPOSE TO TELL THE OTHER BRITISH CORRESPONDENTS HERE ON THE RECORD THAT I HAD BEEN CALLED TO THE MFA; THAT WILLIAMS AND ROBINSON HAD BEEN ASKED TO WITHDRAW WITHIN ONE WEEK; AND THAT I HAD PROTESTED STRONGLY AT THIS TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED ACTION. IF ASKED, WE WOULD SAY THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD GIVEN UNACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES AS THE GROUNDS FOR THE EXPULSION, AND THAT THEY HAD REJECTED THE EARLIER EXPULSION OF THE THREE SOVIET OFFICIALS FROM LONDON. WE WOULD DECLINE TO COMMENT FURTHER. GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD CONFIRM BY FLASH TELEGRAM THAT FINANCIAL TIMES HAS BEEN INFORMED AND WHETHER YOU AGREE WITH ACTION PROPOSED WITH THE PRESS.

SUTHERLAND

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