



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 June 1984

Dear John,

Afghanistan: Soviet Prisoners

My letter of 4 June provided advice on Lord Bethell's request to make public the petitions to the Prime Minister from two Soviet prisoners held by the Afghan resistance, Igor Rykov and Oleg Khlan.

I understand that the Home Secretary has now agreed to admit the two men to the UK on humanitarian grounds. They will be given permission to remain here for an initial period of 12 months under sponsorship arrangements made by Lord Bethell. If they apply to stay at the end of that period, their applications will be sympathetically considered and in the normal course would be granted. In the light of the Home Secretary's decision, this letter sets out the arrangements that are being made to bring the two men to the UK and the line we will take thereafter with the press and with the Russians should they raise the matter with us.

The plan is that the two men should fly to the UK on 14 June. The Pakistan government will arrange for the two men to be transferred from their Afghan resistance captors to the airport, where our Embassy will hand over travel documents and tickets. These arrangements will be handled discreetly, mainly because the Pakistan government are extremely anxious to avoid any knowledge of their involvement leaking out. On the flight, the two Russians are expected to be accompanied by Lady Phillimore, a Russian emigre and personal friend of Lord Bethell, who has nominated her for this role. It is important that her role should not become public as she also works part-time for the BBC External Service.

Once the prisoners are in the UK they will become the responsibility of their principal sponsors, an emigre organisation, the European Liaison Group, and Lord Bethell. The Liaison Group and Lord Bethell have arranged accommodation

/for



for the two men and will provide for any additional needs they may have. The terms on which they are being admitted to the UK will allow them to seek employment and to receive some social security benefits including access to the National Health Service. Both men should be able to find work; Rykov is a trained carpenter and Khlan a garage mechanic.

As I pointed out in my letter of 4 June, once the two Russians have been admitted to the UK, there will be a great deal of publicity, given in particular the involvement of the "Mail on Sunday", which is paying the fares of the two men.

Our concern in responding to press enquiries will be to play down the extent of government involvement while making clear the government's position on Afghanistan and allowing the publicity generated to further our aim of maintaining critical public awareness of the Soviet occupation. In particular we would aim:

- (a) to avoid any damage to our relations with Pakistan which would result from any revelation of their role;
- (b) to avoid any impression that immigration rules had been circumvented at the behest of a newspaper;
- (c) to minimise the possibility of damage to UK/Soviet relations in the run-up to the Foreign Secretary's visit to Moscow by
  - (i) distancing HMG from the detailed arrangements;
  - (ii) in relation to the Soviet Union, to be able to maintain the formal position that the applications have been dealt with under provisions which allow appeals on humanitarian grounds for leave to enter the country.

As I mentioned in my letter of 4 June, the handling of this case will have implications for UK/Soviet relations. In the Foreign Secretary's view this suggests we should maintain great discretion about the government's role in the arrangements. The Russians can be expected to make a formal protest and probably to demand access to the soldiers. This is normal in asylum and similar cases involving Soviet

/citizens





citizens and can be handled so long as we can show that the soldiers came here of their own free will, that they formally applied to do so, and that they do not wish to have any further contacts with the Soviet authorities. But the Soviet reaction might go further than this (with implications for our policy of increasing contacts) if the government were seen to be seeking to take credit for the operation. In responding to any protest from the Russians we shall therefore stick carefully to the public line to be used by the Home Office and reject any suggestions that government involvement went beyond simply granting permission to stay, in accordance with Home Office procedures, to two individuals who have freely applied to do so.

With these objectives in mind we have prepared a detailed press line in collaboration with the Home Office. This is set out in the enclosed telegram to Islamabad.

The Foreign Secretary has considered whether we should alter the date of arrival, at present planned for 14 June, in view of the fact that the European elections are being held on that day. He has concluded that even if the men's arrival on that day became public (which the Mail on Sunday will try hard to avoid, so as to keep the publicity for themselves) this would not affect the elections. Any further slippage in the date of arrival of the two men in this country will increase the risk that the publicity will have an adverse effect on Sir Geoffrey's visit to Moscow, which begins on 2 July.

I am copying this letter to Hugh Taylor (Home Office).

*L. V. Appleyard*

*Peter Ricketts*

*RP* (L V Appleyard)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

OUT TELEGRAM

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CLASS  
CAVEATS  
DESKBY  
FM FCO  
PRE/ADD  
TEL NO

	Classification and Caveats <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	Precedence/Deskby <b>IMMEDIATE</b>
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1 ZCZC  
2 GRS  
3 CONFIDENTIAL  
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6 FM FCO JUNE 84  
7 TO IMMEDIATE ISLAMABAD  
8 TELEGRAM NUMBER  
9 INFO IMMEDIATE KABUL, MOSCOW, WASHINGTON, NEW DELHI, UKMIS NEW  
10 YORK, GENEVA, BERNE, UKDEL NATO, BONN, PARIS  
11 MIPT: AFGHANISTAN SOVIET PRISONERS  
12 1. In reply to any enquiries after the two prisoners have  
13 arrived in UK, Home Office and FCO News Department will take the  
14 following line:  
15 A. Home Office (HO) will reply to the following questions on  
16 asylum, refugee status, general immigration policy and procedures,  
17 sponsorship and resettlement in UK:  
18 (i) What is the position on the 2 Soviet soldiers? Mr Rykov,  
19 aged 21, and Mr Khlan, aged 20, are Soviet soldiers who  
20 deserted from the Russian Army occupying Afghanistan.  
21 They have been admitted to the UK on humanitarian grounds  
22 following their request to come here which was supported  
23 by Lord Bethell. They have been given permission to  
24 come here under sponsorship arrangements made by Lord  
25 Bethell. They have been admitted for an initial period

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File number	Dept Private Office	Distribution Ltd PS/Mr Whitney SAD PS/PUS Soviet D Sir J Bullard UND Sir W Harding Info D Dr Wilson MVD Mr Jenkins WED PUSD News D copies to: Finance D Mr Montgomery- Pott, Home Office PS PS/Lady Young No 10 PS/Mr Rifkind
Drafted by (Block capitals) PETER RICKETTS		
Telephone number		
Authorised for despatch <i>[Signature]</i>		
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1 <<<< they are not judged to meet the criteria for the

2 of 12 months but applications for extensions of stay will be

3 sympathetically considered at the end of that period.

4 (ii) How did the 2 men arrive in UK?

5 Not a matter we are prepared to discuss. Refer further enquiries

6 to FCO.

7 (iii) Was Pakistan Government involved? Not for us to answer

8 on behalf of another Government. Refer to FCO.

9 (iv) What are sponsorship arrangements? The sponsorship

10 arrangements?

11 The sponsorship arrangements provide for the sponsors to finance

12 the men's travel to the UK and arrange reception facilities and

13 accommodation for them for an initial period. In addition,

14 the sponsors will provide practical and financial support for

15 the men. The 2 sponsors are the European Liaison Group which

16 has arranged accommodation for the men and the "Mail on Sunday"

17 which is understood to have paid their fares.

18 (v) Will the men receive Social Security benefits?

19 The men will be eligible for social security benefits on a

20 similar basis to refugees and individuals granted asylum.

21 (vi) Does the HO propose to approve further sponsorship

22 by newspapers?

23 The admission of the men was made subject to the provision of

24 sponsorship to ensure that adequate practical and financial

25 support would be available until the men could stand on their

26 own. The sponsors put forward are able to meet these require-

27 ments and it is not part of the HO's role to deny a

28 humanitarian case for admission simply because one of the sponsors

29 is a newspaper.

30 (vii) Does the UK propose to admit further Soviet soldiers?

31 We have no plans to do so. Any application would be

32 considered on its individual merits and in the light of all the

33 circumstances.

34 (viii) Have men been granted asylum?

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1	No. They are not judged to meet the criteria for the grant of	
2	asylum. They have been admitted for twelve months in the first	
3	instance on humanitarian grounds.	
4	(ix) Were Ministers consulted?	
5	Decision was taken by Home Secretary. Other Ministers have been	
6	informed.	
7	(x) Was the Prime Minister consulted?	
8	Yes. Mr Rykov and Mr Khlan originally wrote to the Prime Minister.	
9	(xi) Where will the soldiers live? How will they support	
10	themselves?	
11	This is a matter for the sponsors.	
12	(xii) Aren't there more deserving cases for humanitarian cases?	
13	Aren't these men deserters/drug addicts?	
14	Any application is judged on its merits in the light of all the	
15	circumstances.	
16	(xiii) Has the Home Office received similar requests in the	
17	past? What response made?	
18	None.	
19		
20	B. The FCO will reply to the following questions:	
21	(i) How many Soviet prisoners are held by the Afghan	
22	Resistance? Precise numbers not known. Believe between 50-200.	
23	(ii) How were Rykov and Khlan selected? They appealed to us	
24	for resettlement in the UK.	
25	(iii) How were the appeals made? Their appeals were forwarded	
26	to the Prime Minister by Lord Bethell.	
27	(iv) Why Lord Bethell? For him to answer. Many governments/	
28	organisations in West are concerned about Soviet prisoners of	
29	Afghan Resistance.	
30	(v) How was appeal dealt with? It was passed to the Home	
31	Office for consideration in the usual way.	
32	(vi) Were Ministers consulted about the decision? Decision	
33	was taken by Home Secretary. Other Ministers have been informed.	
34	(viii) How did they get to the UK then? Not in a position to	
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1 <<<<

2 provide details; the arrangements were made by private  
3 organisations sponsoring them.

4 (ix) Any change to HMG's policy on Afghanistan? None.  
5 Afghanistan issue of utmost concern. Deplore brutal impact  
6 of Soviet military presence. Full and early withdrawal of  
7 Soviet troops essential to any lasting solution. Have made  
8 our view clear in talks with Soviet representatives. Give  
9 full support to successive calls by UN General Assembly for  
10 immediate withdrawal of foreign troops so Afghan people can  
11 decide their own future. Look to Soviet Union to take genuine  
12 steps towards peaceful settlement. Support UN Secretary-General's  
13 efforts towards a settlement based on UN principles. Regret  
14 no sign of Soviet willingness to reach settlement.

15 (x) Are other countries admitting Soviet prisoners? If not,  
16 why not? Were they approached?  
17 Not appropriate to comment on attitude/policy of other countries.

18 (xi) How many Soviet prisoners brought to Switzerland under  
19 ICRC auspices? What arrangements made for their return to  
20 Soviet Union or resettlement in West? Questions shall be  
21 addressed to ICRC and Swiss authorities. Understand 11 prisoners  
22 brought to Switzerland by ICRC, who now hold 7. Believe one  
23 returned to Soviet Union at own choice. One in FRG seeking  
24 asylum. Two seeking asylum in Switzerland.

25 (xii) HMG's policy on future requests from Soviet prisoners?  
26 Would examine each application for resettlement on merits. No  
27 blanket assurances. Admission of foreign nationals to UK a  
28 matter for Home Office.

29 (xiii) Don't Afghan Resistance need more material support?  
30 What we doing to help apart from resettling Soviet prisoners?  
31 Great sympathy for Afghans' remarkable efforts to defend  
32 themselves against foreign invasion. Share widespread and strong  
33 feeling that they should receive every possible support. Clear  
34 from continuing resistance activities in Afghanistan that arms

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2 are getting through. Not helpful to comment in detail.

3 (xiv) Evidence of Soviet use of CW? Gravely concerned by strong

4 indications of CW use in Afghanistan. Deplore increasingly

5 brutal tactics used by Soviet troops eg high-altitude bombing

6 in Panjshir Valley.

7 (xv) Situation in Panjshir?

8 Believe Soviet troops occupy part of Valley. But have failed to

9 defeat resistance or capture leader, Masoud. No substance to

10 Karmal regime claims to have captured Valley or established

11 permanent hold on strategic Valley.

12 (xvi) Have the Russians protested? (If appropriate). Not our

13 practice to comment on details of confidential contacts with

14 other Government.

15 (xvii) Implications for Anglo/Soviet relations? As far as

16 HMG is concerned, this in no way effects our desire to establish

17 better relations with the Soviet Union.

18 (xviii) Does decision to admit two prisoners represent

19 hardening of our attitude towards Soviet Union?

20 Our policy remains unchanged: It is to seek to increase contacts

21 with the Soviet Union at all levels and thereby to improve mutual

22 understanding. While we wish to identify common interests we

23 have made clear that this does not mean any compromise of

24 principles. Important points of disagreement such as Soviet

25 actions in Afghanistan will have to be addressed.

26 (xix) Will the Secretary of State still visit Moscow? Yes <sup>70</sup>

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are getting through. Not helpful to comment in detail.

(xv) Evidence of Soviet use of CW is gravely concerned by strong

indications of CW use in Afghanistan. Before I possibly

initial tactics used by Soviet troops at high-altitude bombing

in Panjshir Valley.

(xv) Situation in Panjshir

Believe Soviet troops occupy part of Valley. But we failed to

defeat resistance to capture leader. No evidence to

Karwal regime claim to have captured by Soviet forces.

(xv) Have the Russians proceeded (if at all) to

graduate to comment on details of confidential contacts with

other government.

(xv) Implications for Anglo-Soviet relations. As far as

we are concerned, this in no way affects our desire to establish

better relations with the Soviet Union.

(xv) Does Britain go about the business of

hardening of our attitude towards Soviet Union?

Our policy remains unchanged. It is to seek to increase contacts

with the Soviet Union as all favors and thereby to improve mutual

understanding. While we wish to identify common interests we

have made clear that this does not mean any compromise of

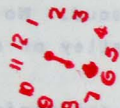
principles. Important points of disagreement such as Soviet

actions in Afghanistan will have to be discussed.

(xv) Will the Secretary of State still visit Moscow - Yes

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

11 June 1984

AFGHANISTAN: SOVIET PRISONERS

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 7 June.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Hugh Taylor (Home Office).

A. J. COLES

Len Appleyard, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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