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PM/85/33

PRIME MINISTER

*Prime Minister
The Foreign Secretary discussed
this with you this evening.
We shall have to move
quickly: The Daily Express have
telephoned Bernard to ask if it is
true that expulsions are imminent.*

Proposed Expulsion of Soviet Intelligence Officers

Agree to these recommendations?

1. You will wish to be aware of a serious problem that has arisen with the Russians, which could well be taken by them as a set back in our recent efforts to achieve a more worthwhile relationship. *C.D.P. 17/6.*

2. A number of present and former members of the Soviet Military Intelligence Service, the GRU, serving in London have been identified as having engaged in varying degrees in unacceptable intelligence activities in the UK, sufficient to amount in the Security Service's view to a powerful case for taking action against an unusually large number simultaneously. I would not dissent from that view. Nevertheless, while doing what is necessary to protect our national security, I think we must seek to handle this in a way which makes it clear to the Russians that our commitment to a political dialogue on important international questions remains strong.

3. I therefore propose that the following action be taken:

- (a) that we expel an Assistant Naval Attache (LOS) and the Charter Manager of Aeroflot (GRIGOROV) with publicity and reduce the ceilings by two;
- (b) that we require the Soviet Ambassador to withdraw within six weeks two other Assistant Service Attaches (ZAIKIN and CHERKASOV) and a Third Secretary (BELAVENTSEV), without publicity or the reduction of ceilings (unless the Russians retaliate in Moscow);
- (c) that we inform the Soviet Ambassador that had the three former Service Attaches still been en poste we would have taken similar action against them.

/ We would ...



We would do this without publicity, though we would inform our allies that we would not be permitting the three to return to the UK.

4. I intend that the Soviet Ambassador should be told that, provided the three at (b) are withdrawn discreetly, we will not initiate any publicity about them (though if we were asked a direct question or it became public knowledge in some other way we would have to confirm that we had asked for them to be withdrawn). However, if the Russians retaliate over the expulsion of LOS and GRIGOROV, this would be met by the immediate expulsion of the three still en poste (if they are still in the UK), publicity, and a further reduction of the ceilings (ie a total of five public expulsions and ceilings reduced correspondingly).

5. In taking this action, we would make it clear to the Russians that these activities are quite unacceptable and that our genuine desire for a better political relationship with the Soviet Union must not be taken as an indication that we are prepared to be lenient on security matters.

6. The evidence against those concerned is summarised in the annexe to this minute. It is clear from this that these GRU officers have been in varying degrees engaged in covert intelligence-gathering activities involving the clandestine running of agents, and the offer of personal inducements to obtain material which would not be available to the Soviet authorities by overt means. The Security Service have also reported evidence of increasingly aggressive behaviour by GRU officers operating in the UK. They believe that the picture is now clear enough for the present proposals to be fully justified. They have explained that the coincidence of so many cases is fortuitous: although some of the evidence has been accumulated for a number of years (since 1977 in one case) some significant evidence against those currently serving here has built up over the last few months. The Security Service

/ are particularly ..



are particularly concerned about the apparent close interest of GRU officers in our racial minorities in their search for spies to recruit. The Security Service have asked for early action in order that they can release their manpower resources from monitoring the individuals proposed for expulsion. In a couple of cases, they are also anticipating difficulty in maintaining their existing control of events.

7. I have considered whether we should expel all five intelligence officers with reduction of the ceilings and publicity; it is arguable that this could be justified on security grounds in isolation. But since the expulsion of the '105' in 1971, we have expelled more than one Russian at a time on only one occasion; three in March 1983. Five expulsions now, and the associated measures, would send what would risk being interpreted as a strong political signal to the Russians. We need not be unduly defensive: they are the ones who have misbehaved. But we have to recognise that there is likely to be a penalty to pay - in political terms and operational consequences for HM Embassy in Moscow - and I believe it would be higher if we proceeded immediately to maximalist action.

8. I have therefore concluded that the best means of meeting the twin objectives of protecting national security and minimising the damage to Anglo-Soviet relations would be to proceed as outlined in paragraphs 3 and 4 above. We would make clear to the Russians that we are suggesting a course designed to avoid a major public confrontation and that we hope the Soviet authorities will take careful note of this. But at the same time we would also make clear that we will always be ready to take such action as may be necessary to protect our national security. Such a modulated response would also stand the best chance of deterring the Russians from counter-retaliation against our Embassy in Moscow. I judge

/ it unlikely ...



it unlikely that we will in fact get away without retaliation, but the modulated approach suggested would still communicate a political message. It would not be my intention to threaten or carry out a third round of expulsions even if the Russians responded twice.

9. The timing of such action is always difficult. Soon after Gorbachev's assumption of power, your meeting with him and in the midst of wider efforts we are making to improve Anglo-Soviet relations, the timing is far from ideal. I have considered whether there would be merit in postponing action for some months. However, now that we know that Gromyko will not be coming here in May, and that the Foreign Affairs Committee will not be visiting Moscow until June or July at the earliest, I believe that the balance of advantage is to proceed without delay. I have also looked at the possibility of spacing out action against those concerned, but I think this would simply create a running sore over several months, which would be just as damaging.

10. I have also considered two subsidiary points:

- (a) Should we give publicity to the fact that we would not allow the three former Military Attaches to return either at the initial stage, or the second stage, if at all? On balance, I think it best to give no publicity. We should achieve our aim of 'blackballing' them from allied countries as well as from the UK by telling those countries confidentially what we have done; publicity would make the Russians more likely to retaliate (or re-retaliate) and could give rise to questions here as to why we had not expelled the Attaches while they were en poste (the reason is that the Security Service wished to develop the case in which all three were involved, but we would not wish to reveal this).

/ (b) ...



(b) If we are obliged, because of Soviet retaliation, to make all five expulsions public, how would we explain why we had not done this in the first place? I think we should say that we always take the steps that are necessary to protect national security, but the way in which this is done varies from case to case. In this instance we wished to minimise the risk of retaliation against the British community in Moscow and to make clear our continuing interest in constructing a more businesslike relationship with the Soviet Union while ensuring that those engaged in unacceptable activities no longer remained in the UK.

11. I am sending copies of this minute to Michael Heseltine, whose officials accept, I understand, the risk of retaliation and consequent damage to the Defence Attache's section in HM Embassy in Moscow; Leon Brittan, who is responsible for (and has, I understand, agreed to) the proposed action against the non-diplomat GRIGOROV, and to Sir Robert Armstrong and to Sir Antony Duff. Subject to any views you may have on these proposals, I would envisage that the Soviet Ambassador should be summoned by my officials as soon as possible. The reasons for acting as quickly as this, once we have decided on the action and its timing, are reinforced by the fact of a telephone call this morning from the BBC to my News Department that news of what we intend to do is beginning to get out.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
17 April 1985



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