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SECURITY:  
Leak about Expulsion  
of Soviet officials  
April 85

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From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

EXPULSION OF SOVIET INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS

The Prime Minister has noted your minute of 18 April. She agrees that the leak is very damaging particularly in the light of the reactions of the Soviet Ambassador when summoned to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She would like to be kept informed of the progress of investigations into it.

I am copying this minute to Mr. Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

CHARLES POWELL

18 April 1985

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Ref. A085/1124

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister

no  
C.D.P. 10/74

Proposed Expulsion of Soviet Intelligence Officers

You asked me to discuss with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary yesterday evening the expulsions proposed in his minute of 17 April.

2. As I was able to tell you orally shortly after that discussion, I was able to make inquiries that persuaded me that there were well-based operational reasons why the matter had not reached a point of decision until recently, and why it was desirable and sensible to proceed with the two immediate expulsions and the slower-time withdrawals proposed. Apart from these operational reasons, there are good resource reasons for bringing these activities to an end: the surveillance of those concerned represents a considerable call on Security Service resources.

3. You asked whether the time limit for the proposed withdrawals need be as long as six weeks. That is a maximum, and the main reason for the length of period proposed is political. I doubt whether this will impose significant operational penalties: the capacity of those concerned to continue damaging activities is much reduced once they have been identified and the Russians know that we know.

4. There remain two causes for concern: the way in which this came up for decision at short notice, and the apparent leak to the BBC referred to in the last paragraph of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute.

5. On the first point, it is clearly important not to prejudice counter-espionage operations by requiring premature disclosure beyond those with a strict operational need to know. Nevertheless I think that it should be possible to devise some arrangement

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whereby the Secretary of the Cabinet and the Permanent Under Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are kept generally informed about current anti-Soviet/<sup>counter-</sup>espionage activities and operations, so as to be able to relate them as necessary to wider political considerations. I shall discuss this further with Sir Antony Acland and Sir Antony Duff.

6. The leak to the BBC was said to have come "from the British side". This is clearly a matter for concern, particularly given the small circle of people to whom the proposal was known. I shall discuss further with Sir Antony Duff how to investigate this.

7. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

18 April 1985

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