

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS: 18 APRIL

SOVIET EXPULSIONS
LINE TO TAKE

Our policy is consistent and clear, and was reiterated to the Soviet Ambassador this morning: we wish to improve our bilateral relations, to expand trade and to increase contacts with the Soviet Union. This remains our firm intention. We shall remain serious and realistic, but vigilant, in our search for greater mutual security and confidence. But this does not mean any relaxation of our policy on the sort of activities for which we have had to request the removal of two Soviet officials today.

[On the record press statement and supplementaries attached]

EXPULSIONS: ON THE RECORD STATEMENT

- I. The Soviet Ambassador was asked to call at the FCO earlier today. He was informed that Captain O A Los, Assistant Naval Attaché, had been found to have engaged in activities incompatible with his status. Mr Popov was told that Captain Los should leave the country within seven days.

2. The Ambassador was further informed that Mr V A Grigorov, a member of the London staff of the Soviet airline Aeroflot, had also been found to have engaged in unacceptable activities and that if he was still in this country in seven days' time, appropriate measures would be taken against him.

3. The Ambassador was also told that, as the Foreign Secretary has made clear, we wished to improve our bilateral relations and expand contacts with the Soviet Union. Our policy is and remains serious and realistic but vigilant in the search for greater mutual security and confidence. The implication of this is clearly that while we wish to see an improvement in our relations this does not mean any relaxation of our policy on the sort of activities in which Captain Los and Mr Grigorov have engaged.

NOTE FOR SUPPLEMENTARIES (ON THE RECORD) [FOLLOWING STAGE 1]

Who saw the Soviet Ambassador?

1. Mr Derek Thomas, Political Director
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Are any further expulsions planned?

2. Our policy is that if Soviet officials engage in inadmissible activities appropriate action will be taken.

Do these expulsions result from identification by defectors?

3. We cannot comment on such matters.

What exactly did they do?

4. Regret cannot give further details.

What damage have they done to national security?

5. Cannot comment.

Does this affect the ceiling on the number of Soviet officials in the United Kingdom?

6. Yes. The permitted level for diplomatic staff at the Soviet Embassy will be reduced by one to 42, and that for

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Soviet ancillary organisations, which includes Aeroflot, by one, to 104.

What status does Grigorov have?

7. As a member of the London staff of Aeroflot, he has no special status in law.

Why is Grigorov not being subjected to the normal process of law?

8. The Government must decide how to deal with each case of this kind as it arises, bearing in mind the needs of our own security. In this case the decision taken was that our objectives were best served by requiring the immediate withdrawal of the person concerned and by lowering the ceiling.

What measures will be taken if Grigorov does not leave within seven days?

9. Hypothetical, but that would be a matter for the Home Office. We expect that he will leave before then.

Do you expect retaliation?

10. Any such action by the Soviet authorities would be entirely without justification. The Soviet authorities know that Her Majesty's Government would take an extremely serious view of any attempt to retaliate.

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Does this action reflect wider policy towards the Soviet Union?

11. No. Our policy is that if a Soviet official is detected in improper activities, we must ask for him to go. The consequences are of the Soviet authorities own making.

Wrong signal at sensitive moment for East/West relations?

12. The activities of these two had nothing to do with normal bilateral or international relations. Such activities are a source of friction and concern. The removal of those engaged in unacceptable activity should help, not hinder. It is the Soviet Union, not HMG, which is responsible for our having to take action at this time.

Personal details of those expelled?

13. Captain Oleg Alexandrovich LOS, Assistant Naval Attache.
Married. In UK since November 1982.

Vyacheslav Anatolyevich GRIGOROV, Charter Manager,
Aeroflot office, London. Married. In UK since May 1982.

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