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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 April, 1985

Prime Minister

CDP
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NBPM
in light of
subsequent
developments
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Dear Charles,

Expulsion of Soviet Officials

In your letter of 17 April you gave the Prime Minister's agreement to the action proposed by the Foreign Secretary over the expulsion of certain Soviet officials. Action was duly taken on 18 April with the Soviet Ambassador. I enclose a copy of FCO telno 383 which gives an account of that meeting.

Popov's reaction was predictable but vigorous. What he said was followed up by a statement issued by the Soviet Embassy later in the day denying the charges and accusing the British Government of taking an action "of political character" which was "completely unjustified". Popov argued that, as a result of an article in the Daily Express on 18 April, the Soviet Embassy had already received a number of press enquiries about the expulsions before being informed officially.

Although the expulsions have received wide publicity in the British press the reports have generally been accurate rather than sensational. The majority have reflected the point in our On The Record Statement that we wished to improve our bilateral relations and expand contacts with the Soviet Union: but that improving our relations did not mean any relaxation of our policy on intelligence and security questions. At his meeting with Popov, Thomas stressed our strong commitment to the development of Anglo/Soviet relations and our wish that this incident should not hinder this.

The present position is therefore that we await a considered Soviet response. If the Russians decide to retaliate in Moscow, and we think that the premature leak of the news of the expulsion here will have probably increased the chances of this, then they are likely on past form to take action within the next two weeks. There has already been one indication of their dissatisfaction. A group of Soviet officials who were due to arrive for talks on 22 April with FCO and MOD

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officials on arms control questions have just cancelled their visit. It remains to be seen whether other visits including that of Mr Listov, the Soviet Minister for the Chemical Industry, who is due here next week for discussions with Mr Channon and companies who are bidding for major contracts (ICI, John Brown, etc) will also be cancelled.

I am sending copies of this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD), Hugh Taylor (Home Office) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

L V Appleyard

(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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