

NO 10 (VIA TUBE)

ADVANCED COPY

GRS 500

CONFIDENTIAL

IMMEDIATE

CONFIDENTIAL

FM MOSCOW

TO PRIORITY F C O

TELNO 009

OF 051430Z JANUARY 87

INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, UKDEL VIENNA, UKDEL NATO

CALL ON SAKHAROV AND MRS BONNER

1. I CALLED PRIVATELY ON DR. SAKHAROV AND MRS BONNER ON 5 JANUARY, AT THEIR MOSCOW FLAT FOR 35 MINUTES. THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT, FOR WHICH LORD BETHELL HAD KINDLY PAVED THE WAY, WAS SIMPLY TO ESTABLISH INITIAL CONTACT, AND TO OFFER MY PERSONAL GOOD WISHES AND CONGRATULATIONS ON THE SAKHAROV'S RETURN TO MOSCOW: I SAID THAT I WAS SURE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER AND YOU WOULD WISH ME TO DO THE SAME ON HER AND YOUR BEHALF. OUR CONVERSATION NEVERTHELESS RANGED WIDELY: THE FOLLOWING WERE THE MAIN POINTS. (FULL RECORD FOLLOWS BY BAG).
2. NOT SURPRISINGLY, SAKHAROV LOOKED FRAIL AND TIRED, BUT BOTH HE AND MRS BONNER SEEMED IN GOOD SPIRITS. THEY WERE DUE TO LEAVE MOSCOW FOR A HOLIDAY 'SOMEWHERE WARMER!' VERY SHORTLY, FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS.
3. SAKHAROV TOOK A CAUTIOUSLY POSITIVE VIEW OF THE DECISION TO ALLOW HIM TO RETURN. THINGS WERE BEGINNING TO CHANGE FOR THE BETTER, THOUGH LITTLE HAD SO FAR BEEN ACHIEVED. A MORE OPEN SOCIETY WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS NOT ONLY OF THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF BUT OF THE WORLD AS A WHOLE. HE AGREED THAT GORBACHEV'S PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALL TO HIM HAD BEEN A BOLD STEP, NOT WITHOUT POLITICAL RISK. IT WAS TOO EARLY TO KNOW HOW MUCH IMPORTANCE TO ATTACH TO THE CURRENT RUMOURS ABOUT AN AMNESTY FOR PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE.
4. THE FACT THAT GORBACHEV TELEPHONED SAKHAROV PERSONALLY HAS NOT SO FAR BEEN REVEALED TO THE SOVIET PUBLIC BY THE MEDIA, BUT SAKHAROV TOLD ME THAT HE HAS GIVEN AN INTERVIEW TO LITERATURNAYA GAZETA, WHICH WILL INCLUDE A REFERENCE TO GORBACHEV'S ROLE. THE INTERVIEW, EVIDENTLY THE ONLY ONE SO FAR SOUGHT BY OR GIVEN TO THE SOVIET MEDIA SINCE SAKHAROV'S RETURN, WAS GIVEN ON THE BASIS OF AN AGREEMENT (ADMITTEDLY ONLY ORAL) THAT SAKHAROV WOULD BE ABLE TO VET THE PROPOSED ARTICLE FOR OMISSIONS OR DISTORTIONS. HE HAD KEPT HIS OWN VERBATIM RECORD. THE INTERVIEW MAY BE PUBLISHED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. ONCE AGAIN, SAKHAROV INCLINED TO THE POSITIVE VIEW THAT THE INTERVIEW WOULD PROBABLY APPEAR SUBSTANTIALLY AS GIVEN, THOUGH THEY WERE PREPARED FOR A POSSIBLY MORE HOSTILE OUTCOME.

CONFIDENTIAL

15.

CONFIDENTIAL

5. THE SAKHAROV^S WERE ALREADY AWARE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S FORTHCOMING VISIT, WHICH I HINTED WAS LIKELY TO TAKE PLACE DURING THE PERIOD END MARCH EARLY APRIL. I SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S PROGRAMME MIGHT POSSIBLY INCLUDE A VISIT TO THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES. SAKHAROV WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF MEETING HER ON THAT OR SOME OTHER OCCASION. MRS BONNER REMINISCED WITH OBVIOUS PLEASURE ABOUT HER OWN CALL AT 10, DOWNING STREET LAST MAY.

6. THE ALMA ATA RIOTS CAME UP IN THE CONTEXT OF A DISCUSSION OF 'GLASNOST'. MRS BONNER SAID THAT ACCORDING TO HER INFORMATION THE HOSPITALS THERE WERE FULL OF WOUNDED. MOST OF THE CASUALTIES HAD BEEN SUSTAINED BY THE MILITIA WHO (CONTRARY TO OTHER REPORTS - MY TELNO 1551) HAD BEEN FORBIDDEN TO USE FIREARMS: AS A RESULT SEVERAL OF THEM HAD BEEN BEATEN TO DEATH BY THE MOB AND MANY MORE SERIOUSLY INJURED. SAKHAROV CONDEMNED THE DEMONSTRATORS FOR 'MINDLESS NATIONALISM'.

7. AT THE END OF OUR TALK I SAID THAT I HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE A FURTHER AND MORE SUBSTANTIAL TALK AFTER THE SAKHAROV^S RETURN FROM HOLIDAY, TO WHICH THEY READILY AGREED.

8. I AM SAYING NOTHING ABOUT THE CALL TO LOCAL UK CORRESPONDENTS HERE AND SHOULD GREATLY PREFER IT TO REMAIN PRIVATE.

CARTLEDGE

YYYY

MXHPAN 7179

LIMITED

SOV D

PS

PS/MR RENTON

MR THOMAS

MR RATFORD

CONFIDENTIAL