

SECRET



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From the Private Secretary

16 May 1989

SOVIET EXPULSIONS

Thank you for your letter of 15 May about the proposed expulsion of members of the Soviet Embassy which is to take place on 19 May.

The Prime Minister has studied the papers carefully. She is generally content with the speaking note, although she points out that the passage at the top of page 5 starting "We hope" is inconsistent with our no publicity approach. She does, however, have more problems with the proposed press line. Even if news of the expulsions does begin to leak out, either because of the disappearance of members of the Soviet community here or as a result of retaliatory action by the Russians, she would much prefer not to go into the degree of detail proposed in your draft press line. At least at the first stage, her preference would be to do no more than confirm that a number of members of the Soviet community in London have been asked to leave because of activities incompatible with their status, that we had expressed the hope that such unacceptable activities would now cease, and that we would continue to work hard for further improvement in Anglo/Soviet and East/West relations while remaining vigilant about our security interests. This would avoid going into detail about names and be easier to reconcile with the Prime Minister's note to Mr. Gorbachev that we should do everything possible to avoid publicity.

I should be grateful if you would give urgent consideration to this and let me see a revised press line.

Once the news has broken - as we must assume it will - I do not think the Prime Minister would object to a confidential briefing of our allies in the margins of the NATO Summit.

I am copying this letter to Colin Walters (Home Office) and to the Director General of the Security Service.

CHARLES POWELL

Stephen Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET

13(A-K)



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

This is the proposed speaking note for use with the Soviet Ambassadors, & the press line for use if - and only if - news leaks from Moscow. See Charles, get the expulsions context?

15 May 1989

Soviet Expulsions

As promised in my letter of 5 May, I now attach the speaking note which we would propose to use with the Soviet Ambassador on 19 May, together with defensive press lines. We have it in mind that, to reduce the risk of publicity, Sir John Fretwell, rather than Sir Patrick Wright, should summon Zamyatin. This will also reduce the amount of warning the Russians will have that something is up.

Context also that we brief NATO Allies at the summit, if the news has broken?

On the press line, your letter of 10 May recognises that it would be difficult to honour the Prime Minister's undertaking once news of the expulsions leaks and we are directly challenged. The attached press line covers the line to take before and after a decision to confirm the expulsions is taken. The problem will be with the timing of any such decision. Given her undertaking to Mr Gorbachev, the Prime Minister will no doubt wish to be consulted. We shall, therefore, contact you immediately if our News Department come under pressure from the press to confirm our action.

CRP 15/1

On a point of detail, you will see that the press line declines to confirm that the Prime Minister has sent a personal message to Mr Gorbachev. If we confirm that the Prime Minister has written to Mr Gorbachev, and the Russians subsequently retaliate, the press may portray the message as having failed to avoid retaliation.

Finally, the Foreign Secretary sees a possibility, in the event of Soviet retaliation and the expulsions consequently becoming public, that the media, either in this country or abroad, may seek to misrepresent the reasons for our action. For example, the expulsions might easily be portrayed as a political manoeuvre to influence public opinion in the run-up to the NATO Summit. He therefore thinks there may be advantage in briefing our Allies in the margins of the NATO Summit about the real reasons which lie behind our decision. We would, of course, only do this if news had broken. If the Prime Minister agrees, we will ensure that appropriate briefing is included in the material that is being prepared for the Summit.

I am copying this letter to Colin Walters (Home Office) and the Director General of the Security Service.

John Stephen Wall

(J S Wall)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

SPEAKING NOTE

The British and Soviet Governments agree that Anglo-Soviet relations are better than they have ever been. This has been an important factor in the highly welcome improvement in East-West relations over the last two or three years. As you know, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary attach the highest importance to improving this more fruitful and constructive relationship and continuing the valuable political dialogue which has been established.

It is therefore a source of deep dismay that the one area which has regularly cast serious clouds over our relations, Soviet intelligence activities in Britain, has obliged me to speak to you today. I shall give you a copy of my speaking note.

The Government have incontrovertible evidence that the following eleven Soviet citizens resident in Britain have been engaged in unacceptable intelligence activities:

/A A Bagin

Embassy Driver

Air Attache

Soviet Trade Delegation

Novosti Press Agency

Third Secretary, Soviet Embassy

Attache, Soviet Embassy

TASS

Komsomolskaya Pravda

Assistant Air Attache

Third Secretary, Soviet Embassy

Assistant Naval Attache

I must therefore ask you to arrange for these officers to leave the United Kingdom within 14 days, that is, not later than 2 June.

The following three Soviet citizens, who have also been engaged in unacceptable activities and have now left the country, are also declared persona non grata:

former Military Attache

former Assistant Military

formerly at the Soviet Trade

/You

speaking note attached

You will understand that this is a decision which we would much rather not have had to take. But we have no hesitation in acting as we have.

We have made clear to the Soviet authorities in every possible way over the years that we will not tolerate the kind of large scale subversive and hostile intelligence activities which the Soviet intelligence agencies have continued to carry out. Although there have been no expulsions since 1985, we have been obliged to refuse a succession of visa applications from Soviet citizens whom we know to be intelligence officers. We have repeatedly invited the Soviet Union to change its policy and remove the source of this obstacle to even better relations. We much regret that your authorities have chosen to disregard these warnings. These activities are particularly inappropriate at a time when there is an unprecedented degree of contact between our two countries and so much information is so freely available. It is also entirely out of keeping with the new policies and attitudes which the Soviet leadership have proclaimed on many occasions.

The British government will not be deflected by this incident from the search for good

/Anglo-Soviet

Anglo-Soviet and East-West relations, we welcome representatives of your growing political, commercial, cultural and press interests in Britain. Their presence here is important to an expanding relationship. For this reason, the British Government have exceptionally decided on this occasion not to reduce the number of Soviet personnel permitted to live in Britain. This will remain for the present at 205.

We expect that these posts vacated by the departing intelligence personnel will in future be occupied by Soviet officials engaged in the promotion of legitimate business. This decision should be seen as evidence of our wish not to sour our otherwise good relations nor to make the otherwise legitimate work of the Soviet community more difficult. In this same spirit we shall not be initiating publicity for these decisions. Naturally, we shall not be able to avoid confirming the expulsions if news of them becomes public from other sources.

The British Government will, however, be watching very closely how the Soviet Union make use of this concession. On this will depend our attitude to the appropriate size of the Soviet community. We

/shall

shall not be deflected from similar action against unacceptable activities in the future if this becomes necessary. [We hope the Soviet authorities will also reflect seriously on the implications of the activities of their intelligence agencies for the perception of the Soviet Union by Western governments and Western public opinion.] Those in the Soviet Union who have the interests of Anglo-Soviet relations and Soviet diplomacy at heart have a particular responsibility to act to prevent such incidents in future.

*This is
in line with
the
"no publicity
approach"*

Any retaliatory action by the Soviet side will be viewed most seriously as a signal of Soviet readiness to inflict further deliberate damage on Anglo-Soviet relations. Retaliation would also be completely unjustified. It would amount to action against innocent people, which would damage the activities in which British citizens in the Soviet Union are engaged, promoting greater contacts and closer relations in accordance with the wishes of both governments.

You should know that Sir Rodric Braithwaite is due to deliver today a message from the Prime Minister to the Soviet General Secretary about this

/matter

matter. I will give you a copy of that message with
with this speaking note. I should be grateful if you
would report all I have said to your authorities.

For our part we are ready to put this
incident behind us in the hope that there will be no
need for it to be repeated in the future, as it has
been so many times in the past. But I have to say
that there are other members of the Soviet community
whose activities give us cause for concern. Your
authorities will be aware of them.

PRESS LINE

[Until we decide to confirm]

It is true that a number of Soviet diplomats have been expelled?

- I am afraid I cannot help you.

[In the event that we decide to confirm]

- I can confirm that the Soviet Ambassador was asked to call on Sir J Fretwell at _____ on Friday 19 May. He was informed that 11 present members of the Soviet community in London, and a further 3 who have recently departed on transfer, had been carrying out activities incompatible with their status. Sir John asked Mr Zamyatin to arrange for the withdrawal within 14 days of the 11 present members of the Soviet community in London. He said that we were also declaring the Soviet officials who had recently left persona non grata.

Do we need to go into such detail. It looks as if I am going back - we will no publicise incidents. Do we have to give names? (see overpage)

- Sir John made clear to the Ambassador that such activities were particularly regrettable at a moment when Anglo-Soviet relations were better than at any time in the past. He also made clear the British Government's strong hope that the unacceptable activities which had given rise to this action and similar actions in the past would now cease. For its part the British Government would continue to work hard for further improvement in Anglo-Soviet and East-West relations while remaining vigilant about its own security interests.

/(Following

(Following to be volunteered in anticipation of inevitable questions):

- Those concerned were:

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RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

In addition the following three have been PNG'd retroactively:

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RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

former Military Attache

Age: 48, married, left UK December 1988

former Assistant Military Attache

Age: 38, married, left UK October 1987

formerly at the Soviet Trade

Delegation

Age: 38, married, left UK May 1989

- In accordance with our invariable practice, unable to give any details of activities involved.
- Sir John made clear to the Soviet Ambassador that we would take the most serious view of any retaliation, which would be totally unjustified.
- Have made clear to the Russians our wish for improved UK-Soviet and East-West relations. No doubt those in the Soviet Union working for better relations will be asking those responsible for these unacceptable activities why those activities are continuing.

Why did you not announce the expulsions in the first place?

- We look at these issues on a case-by-case basis and, on this occasion, decided not to initiate publicity.

But why not?

- It is not our policy to comment on individual cases.

[Unattributably] The expulsions will have left the Russians in no doubt of our determination to deal with unacceptable

/activities

activities. On this occasion, we saw no advantage in initiating publicity at a time of considerable promise in East-West relations.

Has the ceiling been lowered?

- No, it remains at 205, with a sub-ceiling of 46 for the diplomatic community.

Why has it not been lowered?

- We regard the present level as appropriate for legitimate activities. In the hope that these will prosper, we decided to make an exception on this occasion and not lower the ceiling.

Was there any contact between the Prime Minister and Mr Gorbachev?

- Our communications with the Soviet authorities must remain confidential

[In the event of Soviet retaliation]

- This is entirely unjustified and a deliberate attempt to damage Anglo-Soviet relations by taking action against innocent people engaged in promoting contacts and exchanges in keeping with the otherwise improved climate of our relations.

What will you now do?

- We have expelled those whose activities we found unacceptable. We have made our views on the Soviet retaliation clear to the Soviet authorities. We are prepared to go on working for improved relations. We have made plain to the Russians what this entails on their side.

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