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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 May 1989

See Charles,

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Ric Anstr
CDP
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Soviet Expulsions

As agreed, Sir John Fretwell summoned the Soviet Ambassador this afternoon and spoke to the attached note. In conclusion he handed Mr Zamyatin a copy of the letter from the Prime Minister to Mr Gorbachev, explaining that Sir Rodric Braithwaite was delivering the original of this letter in Moscow.

Zamyatin replied in predictable terms. He denied that his staff had been involved in intelligence activities, adding that they, like our Embassy staff in Moscow, acted strictly in accordance with their obligations under the Vienna Convention. His own aim and that of his Embassy had been solely to work for the improvement of UK/Soviet relations, an improvement which had been illustrated by recent meetings at the highest level. He then argued that the action against his staff indicated that this progress had evidently been viewed with displeasure by certain circles within the Government, who were intent on seeking issues which would darken the bilateral relationship. He added that it was significant that the action had been taken immediately before the NATO Summit. He said that the Soviet leadership would no doubt respond to HMG's action by adopting "adequate measures".

In concluding the meeting, Sir John Fretwell reiterated that the Government had no intention or desire to damage UK/Soviet relations. On the contrary, our decision was designed to stop activities which were incompatible with, and harmful to, the improvement of the relationship.

Zamyatin appeared to be taken aback when the purpose of the summons became clear. The fact that he was accompanied by a private secretary rather than a more senior member of his staff also tends to confirm that he had no inkling of what the meeting would be about. Our impression was that he was less vehement than might have been expected. But his comments did not provide any significant indication as to whether or how the Soviet leadership may decide to retaliate.

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

Jans
John Wall
(J S Wall)

Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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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

Attache

formerly at the Soviet Trade

Delegation

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

/You

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

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shall not be deflected from similar action against unacceptable activities in the future if this becomes necessary. 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.

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

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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.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London

19 May 1989