

PS/PUS

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FM MOSCOW TO FCOLN
191721Z MAY
GRS 1100

PS / Mr. Wainwright
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PS / Sir J. Fretwell
HD / SOV D
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DHD / PUS
MR. RATTEN

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FM MOSCOW
TO FLASH FCU
TELNO 826
OF 191721Z MAY 89

FCU TELNO 633: EXPULSIONS

SUMMARY

1. GORBACHEV'S ADVISER TAKES THE NEWS CALMLY, ENGAGES IN RATIONAL DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT, ACKNOWLEDGES THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSIBLE APPROACH, AND THANKS ME FOR DELIVERING THE MESSAGE DIRECTLY TO HIM.

DETAIL

2. I SAW CHERNYAYEV AT 1700 LOCAL TIME FOR HALF AN HOUR. HE WAS RELAXED AND ALONE.
3. I EXPLAINED THAT I HAD CALLED ON CHERNYAYEV BECAUSE THE PRIME MINISTER WISHED HER PERSONAL MESSAGE TO BE CONVEYED DIRECTLY TO GORBACHEV, AND BECAUSE IT CONCERNED ORGANS OF STATE OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN HANDING OVER THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER, I EMPHASISED THAT THIS MATTER CONCERNED ONE NARROW - BUT VERY IMPORTANT - ASPECT OF A RELATIONSHIP WHICH IN OTHER RESPECTS HAD DEVELOPED VERY WELL OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS. I DREW ATTENTION TO WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD SAID ABOUT THE CEILING AND ABOUT NOT INITIATING PUBLICITY. CHERNYAYEV COMMENTED THAT THE STORY WOULD EVENTUALLY GET INTO THE PRESS. I AGREED THAT THE DEPARTURES WOULD BE NOTICED, BUT STRESSED THAT WE OURSELVES WERE NOT MAKING AN ANNOUNCEMENT OR GENERATING COMMENT. OUR FIRM DETERMINATIONS TO PROTECT OUR SECURITY WOULD NOT CHANGE. BUT WE WISHED THE PRESENT AFFAIR TO BE PLAYED IN THE LOWEST POLITICAL KEY POSSIBLE.
4. HAVING READ THE LETTER AND SIR J FRETWELL'S SPEAKING NOTES, CHERNYAYEV SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW THE PEOPLE NAMED AND KNEW NOTHING OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MATTER. HE WAS THEREFORE IN NO POSITION TO COMMENT. I SAID THAT I HAD NOT EXPECTED HIM TO COMMENT AT THIS STAGE. BUT, AS YOU HAD SAID TO SHEVARDNADZE DURING THE MEETINGS IN APRIL THIS SERIOUS IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS A HANDOVER FROM THE PAST AND SHOULD BE CHANGED. WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN HER LETTER SHOULD BE TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY.
5. DESPITE HIS PREVIOUS DISCLAIMER, CHERNYAYEV THEN QUESTIONED ME IN SOME DETAIL ABOUT THE EXPULSIONS. HE AGREED THAT THE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP WAS DEVELOPING WELL. THE FRANKNESS WITH WHICH THE TWO GOVERNMENTS NOW EXCHANGED VIEWS WAS WELCOME; IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE AS IN OTHERS. HE APPRECIATED THE MANNER IN WHICH WE HAD CHOSEN TO HANDLE IT, INCLUDING THE DECISION NOT TO REDUCE THE CEILING. THERE

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6. I SAID THAT I DID NOT KNOW THE DETAILS OF THE CASE AGAINST THE EXPELLEES, AS HE WOULD APPRECIATE. HOWEVER, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD NOT TAKEN HER DECISION LIGHTLY. THE MATTER HAD BEEN CONSIDERED VERY THOROUGHLY. WE HAD BEEN PLACED IN A SITUATION IN WHICH WE WERE OBLIGED TO ACT. THERE WAS AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE GATHERING OF INFORMATION OPENLY, AND ACTIVITIES WHICH WERE COVERT OR DID NOT RESPECT THE LAW. CHERNYAYEV AGREED THAT LAWS HAD TO BE OBSERVED.

7. CHERNYAYEV TOOK THIS IN GOOD PART. HE SAID EMPHATICALLY THAT THE RUSSIANS THOROUGHLY APPRECIATED THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSIBLE APPROACH TO MATTERS OF STATE; HE WAS SURE HER APPROACH WOULD HAVE BEEN EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE IN THIS INSTANCE. IT WAS INDEED A QUESTION OF METHODS; AND IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DEVELOP TRUST. I AGREED; WE WERE TRYING TO DEVELOP CONTACTS AND RELATIONS IN DIFFERENT AREAS. WITH THE EXPANSION IN THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, BOTH THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN MOSCOW AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN LONDON HAD INCREASING ROLES TO PLAY. THAT WAS WHY WE HAD DECIDED NOT TO LOWER THE CEILING; THERE WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH LEGITIMATE WORK FOR OFFICIALS OF BOTH COUNTRIES.

8. CHERNYAYEV WONDERED WHETHER WE WERE PENALISING PEOPLE WHO HAD GOT ON TO A BLACKLIST BECAUSE OF PAST INTELLIGENCE CONNECTIONS - EG WORKING FOR THE KGB(SIC) - WHICH WERE NOW DISCONTINUED. I SAID THAT I COULD SEE THAT THE RUSSIANS MIGHT HAVE A PROBLEM HERE. CHERNYAYEV MENTIONED CHETVERIKOV (THE HEAD OF COPYRIGHT AGENCY VAAP, TO WHOM WE REFUSED A VISA IN APRIL) AS AN EXAMPLE; CHETVERIKOV HAD BEEN THROWN OUT OF FRANCE BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO AND HE WAS NOW ACCEPTED BOTH IN FRANCE AND IN THE UNITED STATES. I SAID THAT WE NEVERTHELESS HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER PEOPLE IN THIS CATEGORY HAD ABANDONED THEIR PREVIOUS AFFILIATIONS. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY THAT WE DID NOT AT ALL APPRECIATE THE WAY IN WHICH THE RUSSIANS TRIED TO FORCE US TO GIVE VISAS TO KNOWN INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS FOR POSTS IN LONDON BY WITHOLDING VISAS FOR BRITISH OFFICIALS POSTED TO MOSCOW WHOM THEY KNEW TO BE INNOCENT. THIS DID NOT AND WOULD NOT AFFECT OUR DETERMINATION TO KEEP THEIR INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE OUT. IT MERELY COMPLICATED THE CONDUCT OF LEGITIMATE BUSINESS.

9. CHERNYAYEV THEN ASKED POINT BLANK WHETHER OUR CASE AGAINST THE EXPELLEES WAS BASED ON "CONCRETE ACTIVITIES IN THE PRESENT TIME." I SAID THAT IT WAS INDEED. CHERNYAYEV REPLIED: "SO YOU ARE SURE OF THESE CASES?" I SAID THAT WE WERE.

10. CHERNYAYEV SAID THAT GORBACHEV WAS NOT IN HIS OFFICE, BUT WAS PREPARING FOR THE PLENUM ON MONDAY. HE WOULD REPORT TO GORBACHEV WITH A TRANSLATION OF THE LETTER AND WOULD TELEPHONE HIM TONIGHT. CHERNYAYEV ASKED IF I WOULD BE ACTING ALSO WITH THE MFA, AND SAID THAT I HAD BEEN RIGHT TO COME DIRECTLY TO HIM FIRST. IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE OUR EXPLANATION AND TO CONVEY IT STRAIGHT TO GORBACHEV. THIS AS A "NORMAL" WAY OF DOING BUSINESS.

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COMMENT

11. CHERNYAYEV'S REACTION WAS REMARKABLY RELAXED. HE UTTERED NOT A SINGLE CROSS WORD. AS THE MEETING WENT ON HE BECAME MORE AND MORE JOGULAR. FAR FROM TREATING THIS AS A SLAP IN THE FACE OR A DELIBERATE DISPLAY OF BRITISH TOUGHNESS, ACCEPTED WITHOUT QUESTION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD TAKEN THE DECISION RELUCTANTLY AND THAT THERE WAS A GENUINE ISSUE AT STAKE ON WHICH OUR ATTITUDE WAS NOT SELF-EVIDENTLY UNREASONABLE. HE ALSO SEEMED GLAD TO RECEIVE THE MESSAGE WITHOUT AN MFA SPIN ON IT. HE DID NOT, OF COURSE, OFFER ANY INDICATION THAT THE RUSSIANS WILL DRAW THE RIGHT CONCLUSION FOR THE FUTURE.

12. THE DEFINITIVE SOVIET RESPONSE IS MOST UNLIKELY TO BE AS CALM AS THIS. STRONG ARGUMENTS FOR RETALIATION WILL BE MADE, AND WILL DOUBTLESS PREVAIL. NOR IS THERE ANY INDICATION HERE THAT FUNDAMENTAL SOVIET INTELLIGENCE PRACTICES AND POLICIES WILL BE AFFECTED. BUT IT IS ENCOURAGING THAT CHERNYAYEV DID NOT DRAW ANY NEGATIVE CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE WIDER POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP. HOW THE STORY EVENTUALLY PLAYS IN THE BRITISH PRESS WILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE ON GORBACHEV AND THE RUSSIAN REACTION IN GENERAL; THE LOW KEY APPROACH IS CLEARLY RIGHT.

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BRAITHWAITE

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PS (Mr Waldgrave)
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PS/SIR J FRETWELL
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