

Soviet Union



Submit with Mr Forbes
ditto *Am*

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

(2)

Prime Minister

19 January 1981

The FCO seem to be keeping
up the pressure adequately.

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Dear Michael,

Am 20/1

*Can we let -
Bryan Forbes have
some of
this
information.
It also
shows
what we
are doing.*

Thank you for your letter of 5 January enclosing
correspondence between the Prime Minister and Mr Bryan
Forbes about repression in the Soviet Union.

There has certainly been evidence of intensified
oppression and harassment by the Soviet authorities of
all who seek greater respect for human rights. More
than 300 have been arrested since early 1979, and many
have received harsh prison sentences. The Helsinki
Monitoring Groups have been decimated, and persecution
of religious dissidents and representatives of national
minorities has been stepped up. Among these, the Jews
have fared particularly badly. Jewish emigration has
been drastically reduced; we expect the figure for 1980
to be only 20,500 compared with some 50,000 in 1979.
In addition, intensified Soviet action against Jews who
have been refused permission to leave has been amply
demonstrated. The arrest in November of Dr Brailovsky,
a prominent 'refusenik' who held a series of science
seminars in Moscow, and the proscription of other
gatherings of Jewish intellectuals, have exemplified
the harsh conditions which Soviet Jews now face.

You asked for background on the closure of a
kindergarten attended by the children of Jewish
dissidents. We know that a number of informally
organised classes for Jewish children are held in
Moscow and other major Soviet cities. Tuition is
provided in Hebrew and in Jewish culture and civilisation.
We have no independent reports of a single kindergarten
in Moscow, but have received news that some of these
informal classes in the capital have recently been
stopped by the Soviet authorities. As far as we know,
however, there have been no arrests in this connection.

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We continue to take every appropriate occasion to draw public attention to the position of human rights campaigners in the Soviet Union through replies to MPs letters and Parliamentary Questions, FCO News Department statements and replies to letters from the public. The Madrid meeting has provided a natural opportunity and, as you know, the UK delegation there has played a leading role in exposing the Soviet record of implementation of the provisions in the Helsinki Final Act concerning human rights. Of some 200 MPs' letters received over the past four months on Soviet and CSCE subjects, more than a third have related to the human rights situation in the Soviet Union - as have more than half of the many letters which we received from members of the public.

You asked for some recent examples of statements on Soviet repression. I enclose:

- (a) Hansard extract for 3 December 1980;
- (b) Mr Blaker's letter to the Reverend Robert Bradford MP of 7 January, which is typical of Ministers' replies on Jewish 'refusenik' cases;
- (c) Mr Blaker's speech at Madrid on 13 November, and a selection of press coverage of it;
- (d) Mr Blaker's message to the National Council for Soviet Jewry, issued as an FCO News Department statement of 8 November following his pre-Madrid meeting with non-governmental organisations;
- (f) FCO News Department statement of 29 August 1980 on the sentencing of Vyacheslay Bakhmin.

We shall expect to keep up the pressure when the Madrid meeting reconvenes on 27 January. In addition, the next six monthly report to Parliament on CSCE implementation will appear in Hansard very soon. When it does, Mr Blaker intends to write to the Chairman of the National Council for Soviet Jewry, which has been especially active in seeking the Government's support, drawing his attention to the report and recording again

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the Government's deep concern about harassment of Soviet Jews and the persecution of dissidents generally, and our determination to press for an improvement in emigration and in general conditions of life for Jews in the USSR. This letter will be released to the press. Mr Blaker will also give radio interviews just before the meeting resumes in Madrid, and the leader of the UK delegation will give a background briefing to the press on 21 January.

Groups in the UK which campaign on behalf of Soviet dissidents have welcomed the Government's actions and statements. The Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry have, for example, told us of the favourable reports they have received of the strenuous efforts made by Mr Blaker and our delegation in Madrid.

With the Reagan Administration about to take office, and the imminent re-convening of the Madrid meeting, it may be best to wait a while before suggesting a suitable occasion to reinforce our message. Perhaps we can be in contact about this again in two or three weeks time?

Yours ever,

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing St

Mr. Shelton: Will my hon. Friend accept my warm congratulations on his determination, which, I understand, ensured the review of the Russian implementation or lack of implementation of the Helsinki agreement? Does he agree that Russian military intervention in Poland would be another clear and decisive breach of the Helsinki agreement, which would have serious repercussions in Madrid?

Mr. Blaker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. The co-operation between the NATO countries when trying to resolve problems of procedure was remarkable and solid. There is no doubt that foreign interference in the internal affairs of Poland would be a flagrant breach of the Helsinki Final Act. It is difficult to see how the conference could survive in such circumstances.

Mr. Hooley: When the self-righteous barrage of criticism of the Soviet Union comes to an end, what positive proposals to carry forward the process of detente in Europe will be made by the United Kingdom?

Mr. Blaker: I do not accept the description of the conference implied in the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. One interesting thing about the conference is that it has been conducting a serious and practical review of what has happened since the previous conference at Belgrade. United Kingdom initiatives are the subject of the next question.

Mr. Cormack: I thank my hon. Friend for what he said a moment ago, but could he be a little more robust? Will the Western Powers make it plain that there can be no question of continuing the conference for a minute if the Soviet Union invades Poland?

Mr. Blaker: I do not need to add to what I have just said. I made that clear. The Soviet Union is in no doubt that interference in the internal affairs of Poland would be a flagrant breach of the Helsinki Final Act. If it appears to be necessary during the conference, we shall remind the Soviet Union of that.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister accept that on Poland one should speak with clean hands? Is he aware that there is no justification for Soviet intervention in

Poland, and that those who have consistently campaigned against aggression, unlike a number of Conservative Members, would condemn any Russian aggression against Poland?

Mr. Blaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming our views.

7. **Mr. Frank Allaun** asked the Lord Privy Seal what initiative the Government will take at Madrid towards East-West detente; and if he will make a statement on the conference.

Mr. Gordon Blaker: The Government's first objective at Madrid is to have a thorough and frank review of the implementation of the Final Act by all signatory States. We shall be ready at the appropriate stage to put forward with our partners new proposals intended to achieve a substantial improvement in implementation of the Final Act, with particular reference to human rights, security, freedom of movement and freedom of information.

Mr. Allaun: Will the Minister accept that, whatever our views about Russia, we have to live with her or die with her? Does he therefore agree that hostility to infringement of civil liberties in Russia must not be allowed to damage co-existence or detente, since war will help no one?

Mr. Blaker: I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of avoiding war. However, one has to remember that the Soviet Union freely agreed at Helsinki in 1975 to all the clauses of the Final Act and to the fact that review conferences should take place every few years, during which we would consider to what extent the undertaking signed at Helsinki had been observed. That is what we are doing. There is no acrimony about the procedure? It is a practical review.

Mr. Lawrence: In the context of human rights, can my hon. Friend assure the House that the deplorable position of the 2½ million Jews in Soviet Russia is being raised by our representatives at Madrid, particularly the breaches of international obligations that the Soviets are pursuing in suppressing cultural, religious and emigration rights?

Mr. Blaker : I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We have already raised the question of the many forms of blatant discrimination by the Soviet Union against Jews. We shall continue to do so as long as we consider it necessary. We have also referred to discrimination by the Soviet Union against other minorities.

Mr. Edward Lyons : Will the Minister arrange for our representatives at Madrid to remind the Soviet Union of the terrible fate of Professor Orlov and other members of the committee in the Soviet Union that was monitoring the Soviet Union's failure to observe its undertaking at Helsinki? Will they further remind the Soviet Union that, if it wishes to have detente, the release of these people will be a great step forward.

Mr. Blaker : We have already specifically taken up the case of Dr. Orlov and the fate of the people who have been trying to monitor the performance of the Soviet Government's obligations under the Helsinki agreement. We may well have proposals to put forward later.

Mr. Amery : Does my hon. Friend agree that, while we are all primarily concerned with averting a Soviet invasion of Poland, the sabre-rattling and the barrage of propaganda already undertaken by the Soviet Union is reminiscent of the Nazi propaganda that preceded the Munich agreement? Does he agree that that is totally contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of the Helsinki Agreement?

Mr. Blaker : I entirely agree.

Mr. Shore : Is the Minister aware that there are two matters in addition to our concern about human rights that we should pursue most vigorously? First, can he assure us that the first part of the Helsinki Final Act will be discussed and reviewed, and, above all, that the guiding and dominating principle that all the participating States will refrain from the use and threat of force in their relations with each other and with countries outside Europe will be emphasised? Secondly, in the general discussions of confidence building and East-West military ease-ment, does he consider the Madrid conference an appropriate forum to take up the tremendously important question of the SS20 and other Soviet weapons being introduced into Eastern Europe?

Mr. Blaker : As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there are other forums in which the question of the SS20 is being taken up. It would be a departure from the Helsinki process to discuss that aspect of disarmament and arms control in Madrid, although we shall have proposals to put forward at the appropriate time about confidence building measures. We have already vigorously made the point that the right hon. Gentleman first referred to. We have gone through the 10 principles in the first part of the Helsinki Final Act and made the point that it was expressly agreed at Helsinki that the signatory countries, in their relations with all States, not only the States of Europe, would observe the principles in the Final Act.

Afghanistan

8. Mr. Renton asked the Lord Privy Seal what new initiatives he is considering in order to facilitate the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan.

Mr. Hurd : The Government supported the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November which called upon the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative with a view to promoting a political settlement. The Government believe that a settlement must involve the withdrawal of Russian troops and the freedom of Afghanistan to live under a Government of its choice.

Mr. Renton : Does my hon. Friend recall that Christmas Day marks the anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan, an anniversary which may now be celebrated by a Russian invasion of Poland? Does he think that all the talk about detente and the United Nations resolutions of the past 12 months have had any effect on Russia whatsoever? Does he agree that the West must take much more concerted action about export credits and bans on high technology and on grain sales if it is to have any influence over Russia?

Mr. Hurd : I agree with the spirit of what my hon. Friend said. As he knows, certain measures have been taken in the economic sphere. As he also knows, we would have wished these measures to have been more vigorous in some respects.

Mr. Deakins the Foreign Secretary neutral non-aligned

Mr. Hurd : taken up not only but in a slight Islamic Congress represents a whole of the matter continue to be in direction can be found.

Mr. Witney : consider consumer national comm seeking what type solution we can have House talks, elections and Afghanistan freedom of expression the people of

Mr. Hurd : proposals must be by the United stand taken by Afghan satellite May this year.

Iran

9. Mr. Peter Privy Seal made to the Government continuing detente and other British against them.

Mr. Hurd : the reply given the Prime Minister for 27 November. hon. and noble with an Iranian which was visited the authorities future of the possible.

Mr. Fraser : various efforts on behalf of my British prisoners confirm that it the Iranian Government's Govern.