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Afghanistan

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 November 1981

Dear Mr. Bukovsky

Thank you for your letter of 15 October about Afghanistan and for the interesting memorandum which you enclosed.

We are determined that the problems caused by Soviet military intervention shall not be forgotten by world opinion. Any solution is unacceptable which does not involve Soviet military withdrawal, freedom for the Afghan people to determine their future and satisfactory arrangements for the return of the refugees, whose plight I saw at first hand on my visit to Pakistan last month.

You draw my attention in particular to the question of Soviet defectors who are in the hands of the Resistance inside Afghanistan. I note that you have had contacts with the Red Cross about their fate. Questions of political asylum necessarily require very careful consideration. If we were approached by the Red Cross about these cases we would naturally be willing to look into the facts and decide whether we could help, although I cannot commit HMG in advance to the granting of political asylum.

I wish you and your organisation all success in your efforts to promote the human rights of the Afghan people.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Mr. Vladimir Bukovsky

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Type for PM's signature

12 November 1981

RMJ

Dear Michael,

Afghanistan: Soviet Army Defectors

Your letter of 29 October enclosed a copy of a letter from Mr Vladimir Bukovsky to the Prime Minister.

He describes various measures which his Human Rights Committee is undertaking to mobilise opinion against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and, in particular, asks that the United Kingdom should grant political asylum to about ten Soviet army defectors now in the hands of the Afghan Resistance.

Without a good deal more knowledge of the facts, we think it would be unwise to make any commitment. In addition to the complexities which often surround political asylum cases, you will note from Mr Bukovsky's letter that the Pakistan Government, in their delicate situation vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, have so far been unwilling to cooperate in allowing Soviet defectors to pass through Pakistan. We shall examine the matter further in cooperation with the several Whitehall Departments concerned, but meanwhile recommend that a reply be sent to Mr Bukovsky on the lines of the enclosed draft.

Yours etc
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT: ~~none~~/letter/telegram/despatch/other

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

TO:

Mr Vladimir Bukovsky
145 Gilbert Road
CAMBRIDGE CB4 3PA

Your Reference

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

SUBJECT:

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Enclosures—flag(s).....

/I wish

I wish you and your organisation all success in your efforts to promote the human rights of the Afghan people.

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Mr. Bukovsky

12/11

29 October 1981

I enclose, together with its attachments, a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from Mr. Vladimir Bukovsky. I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply which the Prime Minister might send to Mr. Bukovsky. It would be helpful if your draft could reach me by Thursday 12 November.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Francis Richards, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

1/10

29 October 1981

I am replying on the Prime Minister's behalf to your letter to her of 15 October. This is receiving attention and a reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Mr. V.K. Bukovsky

LB

10. 12.
Michael Alexander

1. Herewith original letter dated 15th October from Vladimir Bukovsky.
2. This letter was handed to me by John Stanley, now Minister for Housing, and formerly the Prime Minister's PPS.
3. Could as sympathetic a reply as possible, please, be sent to Mr Bukovsky? The Prime Minister herself should sign the reply.



Ian Gow
27/10/81

Vladimir K. Bukovsky

145, Gilbert Road, Cambridge CB4 3PA.

Telephone: Cambridge 356486

15th October, 1981

Dear Prime Minister,

Enclosed is a copy of my memo describing a project we are working on at the moment.

Briefly speaking the main idea is to reach the Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan through broadcasting and to encourage them to defect. In our judgement the response could be very high and even could help to solve the problem of Soviet involvement in the area, let alone any further advances they might plan. It could also make the Soviet occupation of Poland more difficult.

Before the project was started a couple of months ago there were many cases of Soviet defectors trying to cross the border with Pakistan. However, they were intercepted by Pakistani security forces, and returned to Soviet command. Currently there are about ten Soviet soldiers and officers kept by Afghani guerrillas inside of Afghanistan, awaiting safe-conduct to be arranged. The United States through its Ambassador to the U.N. is making separate efforts to persuade the Pakistan Government to change its attitude to the problem.

The top Red Cross officials approached by us on this subject, have expressed their willingness to take responsibility for these prisoners provided a government of a third country confirms in writing that it will allow these people into their territory. We hope that you will appreciate the importance and urgency of the situation.

Should you decide to help an official letter should be sent to the President of the INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, Mr. Alexandre Hay, or to Mr. Jean-Pierre Hocke, the Director of Operations. The address is: c/o Comite International de la Croix-Rouge, 17 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 GENEVA, Switzerland.

I would also appreciate it if a copy of such a letter could be sent to our Human Rights Committee at 152 Rue du Chateau, 75014 PARIS, France.

Needless to say, unless some arrangements can be made, the people in question will be killed either by the Soviets or by the guerrillas who are unable to keep them forever. It has taken us a great deal of time to persuade the guerrillas not to kill these prisoners who include politically motivated defectors.

I hope very much that these humanitarian considerations provide grounds for your Government to co-operate with the Red Cross in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

V. Bukovsky

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.
10, Downing Street.

July, 1981

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Vladimir Bukovsky

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979-80 created a new political situation in the world. There are at least four aspects of the problem which should be taken into consideration: the USSR, Afghanistan, Western Europe, and the United States.

I. The USSR.

The intrusion of Soviet troops into Afghanistan is an extremely unpopular venture among the ordinary people in the Soviet Union. According to our information received from inside the Soviet Union, the objectives of this war are not accepted nor understood by the population, and the sacrifices are not felt to be justified.

Apart from critical statements made by Soviet intellectuals (such as Dr. Andrei Sakharov), members of Soviet Helsinki monitoring groups, feminist groups in Leningrad and Moscow, representatives of the Initiative Group for the Defense of the Rights of Invalids, and an endless number of individual Soviet citizens have expressed protests against the invasion of Afghanistan.

According to information made available to us, the number of conscientious objectors among national and religious minorities in the USSR has grown. Also, in accordance to Agence France Presse and other sources, there have been a number of unconfirmed cases of mutinies among the Soviet troops stationed in Afghanistan and refusals on the part of Soviet soldiers to shoot at the civilian populace. Those who refused to shoot were executed on the spot, but the refusals have not stopped. In general, it is well known that the morale of Soviet occupation troops everywhere is rather low; in East Germany, for instance, the rate of attempted defections is as high as approximately 30 per day.

Until the end of last year, the arrival of zinc coffins containing the remains of Soviet soldiers killed in Afghanistan had provoked a number of spontaneous political manifestations in Kazakhstan and other areas of the Soviet Union. By the beginning of this year the practice of sending zinc coffins to the Soviet Union had been abandoned, which shows the degree of anxiety felt by the Soviet leadership. (Soviet soldiers killed in Afghanistan are now buried there.)

The morale of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan and the number of casualties are monitored by our friends inside the Soviet Union and a continuous flow of information is maintained. Up to now, more than 20,000 Soviet soldiers are reported to have been killed in Afghanistan.

The economic difficulties aggravated by this unpopular war have given rise to an additional source of discontent among the industrial workers of the Soviet Union. At this point it should perhaps also be pointed out that historically, socio-political changes in Russia have usually occurred after military defeats in local wars, i.e., in 1856, 1905, and in 1914.

II. Afghanistan.

Despite the well-publicized quarrels among the various groups of the Afghan resistance, we have found it to be quite easy to cooperate with most of the factions. Last year Russian-language leaflets were distributed by members of the Afghan resistance movement. An agreement had been reached between Soviet dissidents and the majority of resistance groups in Afghanistan to cooperate in their efforts.

In January of 1980 an alliance was formed by six principal Afghan resistance groups in Peshawar. (At this point I will not delve into the various groups, their leaders, and the interrelationships between them.) However, the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan /NIFA/ under the leadership of Sayed Ahmad Gailani seems to be the majority force among the resistance movement. We have been in touch with this group since 1979. In sum total, approximately 90 per cent of Afghanistan is under control of the resistance.

However, a main base of Afghan resistance is situated in Pakistan, where the government is hostile to the idea of Soviet prisoners of war being kept on its territory. In four known cases of defections to Pakistan, all of the Soviet soldiers were extradited back to the Soviet command. Pakistani authorities claim that they are not sufficiently safeguarded against possible Soviet retaliations, some of which have already taken place (such as violation of Pakistani air space.) The presence of Soviet prisoners of war on Pakistan territory could indeed exacerbate the relationship between the two countries in question.

III. Western Europe.

As we know from the past, the worsening of relations between East and West usually leads to a drastic increase in Soviet investments in so-called "peace movements." There is unconfirmed information that the Soviet Union has spent about \$700 million on the campaign against the placement of American missiles in West Germany, Belgium, Holland, and England. So far, this challenge has not been counteracted by the West.

Accordingly, in Great Britain the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) enjoys the unchallenged privilege of influencing public opinion. The main opposition party in England, the Labor Party, has accepted the position of unilateral disarmament.

In Holland army spokesmen have expressed their support of the same idea. In West Germany the same kind of tendencies have prevailed in the ruling Social Democratic Party (through the influence of their youth organizations). Because of this, there are rumors that Chancellor Schmidt may be replaced by Willy Brandt by the end of this year.

In France the victory of the Socialists in the recent election and the inclusion of four members of the Communist Party in the Cabinet have cast a dubious light on France's role in the Nato Alliance, and may have dangerous repercussions on Italy and Spain. In the three above-mentioned countries pacifist tendencies are very strong.

IV. The United States.

Apart from certain powerful internal forces in the United States which are working against the foreign policy of the present administration, the

situation in Europe, as it was described here, makes it nearly impossible for the United States to maintain a strong posture against the Soviet Union.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Organize safe escape routes for Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan who either wish to defect or are willing to be taken as prisoners of war.
2. Organize a massive European campaign against Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, utilizing Soviet defectors from the Afghan occupation army.
3. Intensify efforts to transmit information about all such campaigns into the Soviet Union.
4. Organize the beaming of information into Afghanistan in both native languages and in Russian. In addition to the use of portable transmitters (a campaign already launched in Paris in July of this year under the title "Radio Free Kabul") the existing United States Navy transmitting facilities which are currently dormant in Oman should be activated for the same purpose.
5. Place greater diplomatic focus on the internal national problems in the USSR, particularly on the Muslim minorities.

OBJECTIVES:

I. The Soviet Union.

Strong Western public support of the current anti-Afghan war tendencies inside the Soviet Union could encourage these tendencies by raising the number of conscientious objectors in the USSR and instances of public protests. The growth of such a protest movement can endanger the very basis of Soviet power in the Soviet Union. Should that occur, further Soviet advances in Asia as well as Soviet intervention in Poland will become increasingly difficult. Together with the growing economic difficulties which are predicted to be at their worst at the end of the 1980's, the development of such a public movement and the influence of the Polish example will certainly boost the already existing nationalistic tendencies among the various different nations within the USSR, i.e., in the Baltic states, the Caucasus, the Ukraine, and particularly in Central Asia located close to the border of Afghanistan.

In view of this danger, the most probable Soviet official reaction will be that of internal reforms, after easily predictable initial attempts to crush the wave of protests.

II. Afghanistan.

The suggested public campaign (see Suggestions, cited above), will certainly be encouraging to Afghan freedom fighters and it will make it politically easier for Western countries to help them openly with arms supplies, which in turn will lead to an intensification of the popular resistance to the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan.

In addition, the possibility for Soviet soldiers to defect or to surrender will further undermine the morale of the Soviet occupation army. The intensification of radio propaganda (including appeals broadcast by those who have already defected) beamed on frequencies used for communication between tanks, armored cars, and helicopters will further increase the rate of defection. The unreliability of Soviet troops may force the Soviet leadership to reconsider their presence in Afghanistan.

III. Western Europe.

The suggested campaign may effectively counteract the pro-Soviet and pacifist tendencies previously described. As the majority of those who are involved in anti-missile or unilateral disarmament movements are simply naive and confused individuals acting with good intentions, they could be easily attracted to a more reasonable anti-war campaign. The small politically motivated groups that control the peace movement at the moment can hardly find convincing arguments against supporting genuine fighters for peace who are imprisoned for their activities in the USSR. A steady flow of defecting Soviet soldiers from Afghanistan telling stories of atrocities committed in that country (gas, napalm, extermination of the civilian population) will serve as fuel for the public campaign.

Besides, the obvious parallel with the anti-war campaign in the 1960's and 70's makes it very difficult even for politically motivated groups to argue against the campaign on Afghanistan.

The above-cited line of argumentation has already been tried in private talks and in public discussions, and it proved to be successful. A well organized, wide-scale campaign on Afghanistan can change the current public mood in Europe for the better. The recent successful launching in Paris of the "Radio Free Kabul" project has elicited a considerable degree of public interest and support.

IV. Who Are Our Allies?

The recent 1978-80 campaign against the Moscow Olympics has helped us to develop a good working relationship with public and political forces across the world. Knowing their attitude to Soviet expansionism in general, and the occupation of Afghanistan in particular, we can count on their support.

Apart from a world-wide network of human-rights committees and East European Solidarity groups in different countries, Amnesty chapters which have adopted conscientious objectors imprisoned in the USSR, and numerous groups of refugees from Communist countries with whom good relations have been established, the following public forces in various countries can be utilized:

1. Great Britain:

An all-party parliamentary group ("Hands Off Afghanistan") organized by Raymond Whitney, M.P.; organizations of Young Conservatives and Young Liberals; Confederation of Conservative Students; the European Liaison Group (an organization of refugees from East European countries representing more than 250,000 people); also, three out of the four major political parties have indicated their sympathy on the Afghan question on numerous occasions.

2. France:

The number of organized refugees from Communist countries is especially large in this country (there are up to 1 million of them.) Recently their different organizations have discussed the possibility of creating a kind of International Committee, and in principle, they have agreed to do so.

The problem of Afghanistan is one of the key points in such a union.

The atmosphere in France is particularly favorable for such a campaign, since the Afghanistan issue played a prominent role in the recent elections. A bi-rally on human rights scheduled to take place on October 21st could be the starting point of the suggested plan.

3. West Germany:

Out of all the political parties, so far we can count only on the support of the Christian Democrats and their youth organizations. The various human-rights committees and refugee organizations could also be relied upon.

4. Italy:

The Christian Democrats and the mass youth organization "Movimento Popolare"; Socialist, Liberal and even Radical parties have already expressed their support for public action in behalf of Afghanistan.

5. Belgium:

The two wings of the Belgian Liberal Party.

6. Norway:

The Conservative and Social Democratic parties; human-rights groups such as the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

7. Sweden:

OESK and FMSF will provide the nucleus for the campaign.

8. Holland:

The Liberal, Christian Democratic and partly the Social Democratic Party have been active in the campaign against the Moscow Olympics.

9. India:

Good working relations have been established with the influential newspaper "Himmat," edited by the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi.

For activating this potential force an International Committee as well as national committees in different countries should be created with the objective of coordinating the public campaign. A substantial number of prominent public figures have already indicated their consent to be included in such committees.

PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL ESTIMATES

- a. To complete the "Radio Free Kabul" project we need about \$250,000.
- b. Should the transmitting facilities in Oman be activated, the cost of operation and staff will need to be covered. At this stage it is impossible to give an accurate estimate.
- c. To handle the defectors and P.O.W.'s, initially at least five operatives in the field should be maintained, with an estimated annual expense budget of \$95,000.

d. The cost of the European campaign is very difficult to estimate. At least one part-time coordinator in each of the countries mentioned should be kept, costing about \$70,000 per year.

The cost of publishing printed materials should be estimated separately, as well as the cost of individual actions, which could be quite substantial. Roughly speaking, if we had at our disposal at least 1 per cent of what the Soviets had spent on their "peace movement," the entire plan may be implemented, provided that political assistance be given by the Pakistani authorities to solve the problem of safe conduct through Pakistan territory.

In summation, the current internal situation in the USSR, its involvement in Afghanistan, and developments in Poland have placed the USSR in a uniquely vulnerable position. It would be an unforgivable mistake not to make use of the possibilities described.

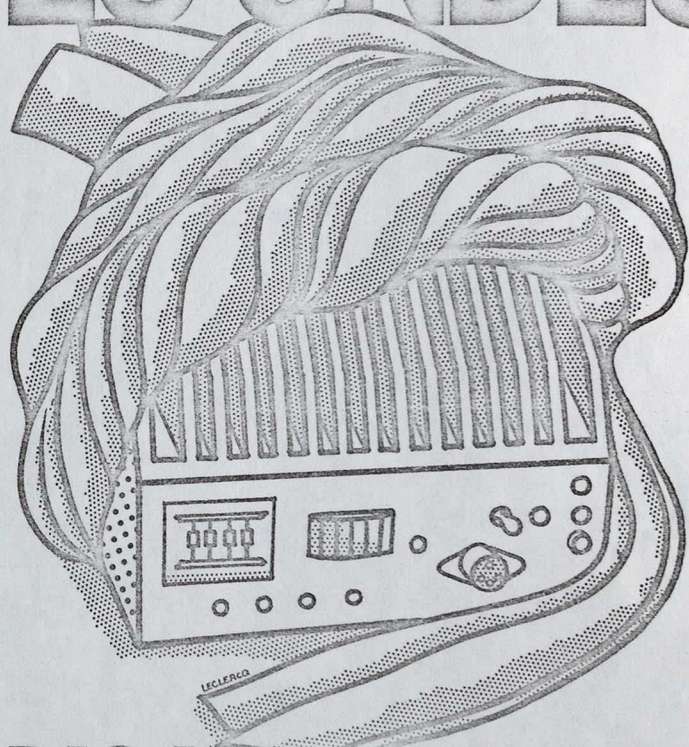
Contributions to the project may be sent to:

Droits de N'Homme
Radio Kabul Libre
Credit Lyonnais
Agence AH
18 Rue de Rivolea
75004 Paris
France

Konto No. 58656 J

Le Monde, Oct. 9, 1981, reduced from full page.

L'ARMÉE DES ONDES.



RADIO KABOUL LIBRE

Radio Kaboul Libre est opérationnelle. A la suite de notre premier appel, 3 émetteurs ont rejoint déjà les zones libérées de l'intérieur de l'Afghanistan.

Mais pour accroître son efficacité, pour qu'elle diffuse l'espoir dans l'ensemble du pays, il lui faut encore 30 émetteurs.

Cette radio de la liberté, permettez-lui d'émettre dans tout l'Afghanistan en répondant à l'appel lancé au nom du

Comité "Droits de l'Homme" par Marek Halter, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Vladimir Boukovski, Vladimir Jankevitch, Alfred Kastler, Edgar Morin, Renzo Rossellini.

M.

Adresse _____

vous adresse sa participation par chèque bancaire ou chèque C.C.P. à l'ordre de :

Comité "DROITS DE L'HOMME", 152, rue du Château, 75014 PARIS - C.C.P. 11 009 89 H Paris.

ENVOYEZ VOS DONS POUR QUE LES AFGHANS PARLENT AUX AFGHANS