



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 October 1983

See Mr.

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Prime Minister
*in view of the number I
have asked for sufficient
data to be put in the
blue book. A.J.C. 22/10*

World Leadership of Soviet Jewry

As requested in Willie Rickett's letter of 23 September
I enclose a brief for the call by a delegation of the World
Leadership of Soviet Jewry on the Prime Minister on 31 October.

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

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CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY A DELEGATION FROM THE WORLD LEADERSHIP OF SOVIET JEWRY, AT 1030 ON 31 OCTOBER

POINTS TO MAKE

HMG's Attitude to Soviet Human Rights Abuses

1. Deplore consistently poor performance of Soviet Union on human rights.
2. Especially concerned about way in which Jews being singled out for specially harsh treatment. Since 1979, drastic cut back in emigration of Soviet Jews. Also notable increase in unfavourable press comment on Jews, establishment of Anti-Zionist Committees.
3. Do World Leadership consider this amounts to serious resurgence of anti-semitism in communist countries?
4. HMG takes active interest in all aspects of abuse of human rights: refusal of exit visas to those (mainly Jews) wishing to emigrate; the repression of religious and cultural freedom of expression; and Soviet action against Helsinki Monitors.
5. Saw Mrs Avital Shcharansky myself in July.
6. HMG continues to direct Western public attention to Soviet human rights record by raising both general principles and individual cases with Soviet authorities.
7. Private pressure groups (eg National Council for Soviet Jews) play vital role in publicising Soviet abuses.

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Achievement of CSCE Review Meeting at Madrid in field of
Human Rights and follow up [If raised]

8. Madrid meeting made small but significant achievements on human rights. Criticisms of Soviet abuses by Western delegations obliged Soviet side to attempt to defend miserable record. West also made private approaches to Russians on number of individual cases.

9. Agreement in Madrid to supplement human contacts section of Helsinki Final Act will, if implemented by Russians, help separated families.

10. Agreement in Madrid to hold human rights experts meeting in Ottawa in May 1985 and human contacts experts meeting in Switzerland in 1986 will provide opportunities to keep up public pressure on Russians.

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ESSENTIAL FACTS

1. The general situation for Soviet Jews appears to be deteriorating. The large scale emigration of a number of ethnic groups, and particularly Soviet Jews, which began in the 1970s has been cut back drastically since 1979 when more than 51,000 Jews left. Since then numbers have slumped: 20,000 in 1980, 9,400 in 1981 and under 2,700 in 1982, the lowest figure since 1970. Currently only about 100 are leaving per month. Recently further administrative obstacles have been placed in the path of potential emigres. There have been reports of them being told that exit visas had been refused for life. In addition some have been told that the requisite invitations from relatives abroad can now only be accepted for one exit visa application. If the application is refused it can only be renewed once a new invitation is received.

2. One disturbing recent innovation which seems intended in part to discourage Jewish emigration was the establishment in April of a Soviet 'Anti-Zionist Committee'. It is likely that this organisation, which includes some of the USSR's 'establishment' Jews, has been formed as an attempt to put further pressure on Soviet Jewry. The Committee's statements, which have contained crude anti-semitic elements, seem designed to spread a feeling of insecurity among the Jewish community in the Soviet Union by characterising the desire to emigrate to Israel and to establish a Jewish identity as politically and morally unacceptable. Recent evidence suggests that serious consideration is being given to the establishment of local branches of the Committee.

3. There has been some particularly unpleasant press comment on the position of Soviet Jewry in the Soviet press recently.

4. Action against Jewish activists and attempts to suppress Jewish cultural and religious freedoms persist. Simon Shirman and Lev Elbert were sentenced earlier this year to 1 and 3 years in camps respectively for alleged offences connected with their call up for military service. On 19 January Boris Kanevsky, a mathematician who had gathered evidence of discrimination against Jewish students, was sentenced to 5 years internal exile for slandering the Soviet system.

5. Iosif Begun: On 14 October Iosif Begun was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment and 5 years internal exile, the maximum under Article 70 of Soviet Criminal Code for Anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. His real crime in the eyes of Soviet authorities was to teach Hebrew.

6. Anatoly Shcharansky: Prime Minister met Mrs Avital Shcharansky again on 15 July and reiterated HMG's concern for Mr Shcharansky's plight.

CSCE

7. The agreement in Madrid to supplement the human contacts section of Helsinki Final Act will, if implemented by the Russians, help separated families by reducing visa costs and time taken processing visa applications. The human rights experts meeting to be held in Ottawa in 1985 and the human contacts experts meeting in Switzerland in 1986 will enable us to subject Soviet practice to renewed public scrutiny.