

ce PC¹

FCS/84/202

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

Prime Minister

Yes - but we
cannot let
them be
returned to
the
USSR

Agree with FCS and HS
that we should try to
get other countries to
accept some Soviet prisoners,
rather than take more
ourselves at this stage?

CJD
16/7.

Soviet Prisoners of the Afghan Resistance

1. Thank you for your letter of 25 June about the admission of the Soviet soldiers, Igor Rykov and Oleg Khlan, and the further informal approach you have received on behalf of Vladimir Naumov and Nikolai Chukin.
2. I was very grateful for your help with the resettlement of Rykov and Khlan. The decision taken in their case raised difficult issues and I think is important we do not treat it as a precedent for the future. As you say, we do not wish to be regarded as the primary country of resettlement for Soviet prisoners of the Afghan resistance. Apart from the other groups for whom we might be held to be more directly responsible, we must, as you point out, bear in mind the Pakistan Government's sensitivities and the need to avoid damage to Anglo-Soviet relations.
3. The Pakistan Government remain concerned that the extraction of Soviet soldiers from Afghanistan through their country could provoke embarrassing publicity and Soviet retaliation. We cannot therefore assume that they would be willing to help with future cases, as they did with Rykov and Khlan.



4. As you may know, the Soviet authorities made a formal protest to our Ambassador in Moscow on 27 June. The matter was not raised during my subsequent visit to the Soviet Union. But the issue remains a potential source of friction and I would not wish it to impede our policy of pursuing a broad dialogue with the Soviet Union.

5. A decision to admit further applicants hard on the heels of the admission of Rykov and Khlan would almost certainly invite a succession of further appeals from Soviet soldiers for resettlement here. Apart from the political considerations, there might be practical advantage in postponing a decision on further cases until we have seen how Rykov and Khlan settle down and until we have had an opportunity to make a considered assessment of the public and parliamentary reaction to their presence here.

6. I was therefore encouraged to hear that you do not intend to take an immediate decision on Naumov and Chukin. I understand that George Miller's approach was informal and that you have not yet received a formal application on behalf of the two men. In these circumstances, I see merit in your suggesting informally to Miller, who has extensive contacts in West Germany, France and Switzerland, that he investigate the possibility of resettlement in other Western countries. As he is aware that we have already taken in Rykov and Khlan, you might explain to him that any decision on further resettlement cases would need to take account of two factors. The first would be the willingness of our allies and partners to share with us some of the burden of accepting Soviet prisoners from Afghanistan. The second would be our assessment of Rykov and Khlan's ability to settle down in the UK, a process which might take some time.



7. For our part, we intend to take up your suggestion that we make a further attempt to coordinate with our friends and allies. This will build on the discussions we have already had with our EC partners and with the Americans. We intend to remind them of the advantages of a joint approach to the problem. We shall make it clear that we do not wish to consider further requests until we have seen how Rykov and Khlan settle down in the UK. And we will seek an indication of our partners' readiness to consider applications for resettlement referred to them. I shall let you know the result of these approaches and, in particular, if there is any indication that another government might be willing to consider taking in cases referred to them. In that event, we shall need to consider whether to give our EC partners and other allies details of the Naumov and Chukin cases.

8. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister and Sir Robert Armstrong.

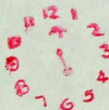
(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
16 July 1984

Afghanistan Pt 6

Int Sit

16 JUL 1984



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10 DOWNING STREET

17 July 1984

From the Private Secretary

SOVIET PRISONERS OF THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE

The Prime Minister has considered the Home Secretary's letter of 25 June to the Foreign Secretary and the latter's minute of 16 July about Soviet prisoners of the Afghan Resistance.

The Prime Minister agrees that we should try to get other friendly countries to share the burden of accepting some Soviet prisoners rather than take more ourselves at this stage. But she has commented that on no account can we let such prisoners be returned to the Soviet Union. You will wish to bear this in mind in considering any future cases in which it appears that no other friendly country is prepared to accept such prisoners and there is a serious risk that they might find themselves in consequence returned to the USSR.

I am sending copies of this letter to Colin Budd (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

C.D. POWELL

Hugh Taylor, Esq.,
Home Office

SM