

④
PRIME MINISTER

VISIT TO MOSCOW

The Chief Rabbi has asked to call on you before your visit to Moscow to discuss how you would deal with the question of Soviet Jewry.

I expect that you will wish to see him. My concern is that a number of other Jewish organisations will seek separate meetings, which will become very time-consuming.

If you agree I would like to reply to the Chief Rabbi that you would be happy to see him, and that you hope that he will come on behalf of all Jewish organisations in the United Kingdom, if necessary supported by representatives from the main ones, to discuss these issues. That way we can deal with it in one go.
Agree?

CD? MB
Charles Powell

21 January 1987

JALBEX

Rabbi JAKOBOVITS

FILE
My
etc



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

22 January 1987

From the Private Secretary

Yes - but
have this in
in doing
etc
Charles?
Any news.
JP 11/2

Dear Sir Immanuel,

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 20 January asking whether you might have a brief meeting with her before her visit to the Soviet Union, which will take place towards the end of March. The Prime Minister would of course be delighted to see you and suggests Monday 9 March at 1530.

It occurs to the Prime Minister that a number of Jewish organisations in this country will want to put forward views in relation to her visit. She wonders whether you could arrange matters so that you spoke on behalf of all of them; or alternatively be accompanied by one or two representatives from them, since it is unlikely that she will be able to fit in separate meetings with all those who ask for them. Could I ask you to reflect on this and let me know how you feel?

Yours sincerely,
Charles Powell

Charles Powell

Rabbi Sir Immanuel Jakobovits

de

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF RABBI

TELEPHONE:

01-387 1088

CABLES:

CHIRABINAT LONDON WC1

ADLER HOUSE,

TAVISTOCK SQUARE,

LONDON, WC1H 9HN

20th January 1987

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP
 Prime Minister
 10 Downing Street
 SW1

R

M

My dear Prime Minister,

In anticipation of your planned visit to the Soviet Union in March, I would deeply appreciate it if you could most kindly afford me an opportunity for a brief meeting at your convenience, mainly in relation to Soviet Jewry.

As I intimated when we last met at the Remembrance Day reception, I have had a prolonged correspondence, following an extensive meeting, with Ambassador Zamyatin of the Soviet Union in an attempt to prepare a visit of a small delegation of the Conference of European Rabbis of which I am President.

I enclose copies of some of this correspondence which may be of interest and significance, including my proposed agenda for specific proposals to be discussed, particularly on matters of religious freedom. The response so far has been distinctly unsatisfactory.

If time permits, I would also like to make one or two points regarding the present Government campaign on AIDS. Secretary of State Fowler had asked to meet me, but this was postponed due to the emergency debate in Parliament on the weather crisis and his subsequent visit to the United States.

Should the suggestion of a short call on you prove acceptable, perhaps your office could be in touch with mine to arrange for a suitable time, presumably towards the end of February.

With warm personal greetings,

Most sincerely yours,

Isaac Jacobowitz

Enclosures



ПОСОЛЬСТВО
СОЮЗА СОВЕТСКИХ
СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКИХ РЕСПУБЛИК

"// " August, 1986

Dear Sir Immanuel,

Thank you for your letter of 5 August, 1986.

I would like to inform you that its content has been transmitted to Moscow.

As to the situation of Jews you must know that recently there has been a considerable increase of anti-semitism in Britain. Do you remember that for example at Edwinton Cemetery in North London 120 Jewish tombstones were wreched leaving a large area in ruins? Are you aware of the facts that in many universities Jewish societies have been threatened or banned, Jewish students have been abused, physically attacked and humilated, Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and schools attacked? How can you, being chief rabbi of this country, ignore these facts? Don't you think you'd better look closer at the developments in your own country?

Yours sincerely,

L. Zamyatin
Ambassador of the USSR

Sir Immanuel Jakobovits
Chief Rabbi
Office of the Chief Rabbi
Adler House,
Tavistock Square,
London WC1H 9HN

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF RABBI

TELEPHONE:

01-387 1088

CABLES:

CHIRABINAT LONDON WC1

ADLER HOUSE,

TAVISTOCK SQUARE,

LONDON, WC1H 9HN

24th November 1986

H E The Ambassador of the USSR
Mr Leonid Zamyatin
The Soviet Embassy
18 Kensington Palace Gardens
W8

Your Excellency

Further to my letter of 12th September in response to the communication from your Embassy dated 5th September indicating that the Council for Religious Affairs of the USSR is prepared to receive a delegation of the Conference of European Rabbis in order to discuss matters affecting Soviet Jewry, I have now had an opportunity to consult with my colleagues at a meeting of some leading European Rabbis held recently in London.

At this meeting I was authorised to inform you that we would gladly receive an invitation to visit Moscow for this purpose, provided we can reach some understanding beforehand on the items to be discussed.

The delegation would consist of three or four members of our Praesidium, including the Chief Rabbi of France and myself. We would wish to be assured that we can meet with Ministers and others responsible for making decisions in the areas under discussion, as listed on the attached agenda. Clearly this agenda extends beyond the provenance of the Council for Religious Affairs. In view of the high priority given to the plight of Soviet Jewry at international conferences and even at summit meetings in recent years, not to mention our profound concern for the fate and welfare of two-thirds of Europe's Jews, we would be particularly gratified by an opportunity to be received by Party Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev in an effort to ameliorate the situation by direct talks at the highest level.

In order to render the contemplated visit meaningful we also seek some assurance that we could anticipate an affirmative response to, at least, several of the requests to be submitted as detailed on the agenda.

If our suggestions are acceptable, we have in mind a visit of three to four days, one of which we would wish to spend with various leaders and members of Moscow's Jewish community, young and old.

Once the agenda is agreed and the visit confirmed on both sides, we leave it to the discretion of yourself and your Government to determine whether any advance publicity is desired, but in any case we assume there will be no objection to reporting publicly on the substance of our discussions after they have taken place, having regard to the widespread interest the proposed visit will no doubt evoke.

For our part, we would wish to do whatever we can to use such a visit and the easing of restrictions resulting from it in order to promote goodwill and better understanding between East and West and thus to advance international peace and trust.

Should you deem a further personal meeting between us advisable us to pursue or clarify the points raised in this letter in anticipation of the proposed visit, such a meeting can readily be arranged. Otherwise I look forward with much appreciation to your reply in writing.

Very sincerely yours

Sir Immanuel Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth
President, Conference of European Rabbis

Proposed Agenda

The delegation of European Rabbis seeks to discuss, and reach agreement on, the following requests for facilities at present not available to Jews in the Soviet Union:

1. Opportunities for Jewish education with parental approval, either within existing synagogue organisations or any other suitable framework, such education to include elementary instruction in the Holy Tongue (Classical Hebrew) leading to knowledge of the Jewish alphabet, the prayer book, the Bible and other traditional religious texts.
2. The availability of religious text-books and elementary instruction on the ancient Hebrew language, as well as cultural programmes on the Jewish tradition and its history, for adults requesting such facilities.
3. The right to produce and distribute elementary source books with modern Russian translation.
4. The publication of a religious journal on contemporary Judaism and Jewish life, parallel to the monthly magazine published and distributed by the Russian Orthodox Church.
5. Opportunities for rabbis and other religious functionaries from the West to serve Jewish communities in the Soviet Union for a period of one or two years where such officials are currently not available, and/or opportunities for training such personnel at seminaries in West European or American communities, with free scholarships to be awarded to suitable applicants from the Soviet Union, on the with an undertaking that they will return for an agreed period of service.
6. The availability of kosher food provisions, both at designated shops and restaurants open to Soviet-Jewish citizens and to foreign tourists alike (many of the required kosher food items, including matzah for Passover and wine, can be imported from Hungary or elsewhere, some possibly with subsidies from the West).
7. Amenities for promoting traditional Jewish music and songs - by choirs, youth orchestras, occasional concerts, all within the framework of synagogues and other institutions under communal sponsorship.
8. The provision of Jewish old-age homes for elderly members of the Jewish faith seeking to spend their declining years in a Jewish environment.
9. The allocation of designated ground for Jewish cemeteries distinctly marked off from general burial grounds.
10. Opportunities to observe traditional customs and practices in the uninhibited exercise of religious freedom.

11. We also seek the freedom of Soviet Jews to emigrate without hindrance after registering their desire to do so (and in the case of security considerations after a maximum of five years), especially on religious grounds for settlement in Israel, preferably to be transported by direct flights.
12. Most anxiously, we seek the release of Jewish prisoners and internal exiles on humanitarian grounds, particularly when the sentence arose from a charge involving the pursuit of Jewish culture and Hebrew studies, and pending their release religious amenities (such as prayer articles, kosher food and rabbinical visits) are to be made available to them.

N.B. None of the above requests conflict with Soviet law; many of them are indeed rights to which Soviet Jews are entitled by the Constitution of the Soviet Union and by international accords on human rights to which the Soviet Union has subscribed.



ПОСОЛЬСТВО
СОЮЗА СОВЕТСКИХ
СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКИХ РЕСПУБЛИК

" 2 " December, 1986

Dear Sir Immanuel,

I would like to inform you that the Council for the religious affairs of the USSR is ready to receive your delegation on a religious visit. The Chief Rabbi of the Moscow Synagogue A. Shayevich will send you official invitation when he receives your application for the visit.

Other questions which you mentioned in your recent letter can not be discussed with you because they have nothing to do with the religious aims of your visit. Please continue your correspondence on these matters directly with the Council for the religious affairs of the USSR.

I am still expecting your answer to my question on the situation of Jews in Britain.

Yours sincerely,

L. Zamyatin

Ambassador of the USSR

Sir Immanuel Jakobovits,
Chief Rabbi
Office of the Chief Rabbi
Adler House,
Tavistock Square,
London WC1H 9HN

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF RABBI

TELEPHONE:
01-387 1066
CABLES:
CHIRABINAT LONDON WC1

ADLER HOUSE,
TAVISTOCK SQUARE,
LONDON, WC1H 9HN

15th December 1986

His Excellency Leonid Zamyatin
Ambassador of the USSR
18 Kensington Palace Gardens
W8

Your Excellency

Your letter of December 2nd seems to have raised more questions than it has answered.


I am glad to have your confirmation that the Council for Religious Affairs of the USSR is prepared to receive our delegation. While we will be happy and keen during our visit to meet Chief Rabbi A Shayevich of the Moscow Synagogue as well as other Jewish leaders and groups, it has never previously been suggested in our discussion or correspondence that he would be our host and that our visit would be in response to an invitation from him.

More important for the success of our visit is that some agreement on the agenda should be reached beforehand. For this purpose, I sent you a list of twelve specific items we wish to discuss. These are all of Jewish religious concern to us as rabbis. I therefore fail to understand your statement that "other questions which you mentioned in your recent letter cannot be discussed with you because they have nothing to do with the religious aims of your visit". Studying religious texts in their original language (Hebrew), lectures on our religious heritage and culture, restaurants serving food required by our religious laws, training and providing religious personnel, publishing a religious journal and other literature, caring for Jewish aged in a Jewish environment, providing Jewish prisoners with religious necessities, and enabling those who have prayed for two thousand years to return to their spiritual home to do so - all these are, surely, purely religious matters and must feature in any meaningful discussions between rabbis and the Soviet leadership.

You ask me to continue corresponding on the proposed visit directly with the Council for Religious Affairs of the USSR. I will readily do so if you let me have the name and address of the person to whom I should write (presumably the Chairman of the Council). I will of course assume that he is familiar with our exchanges to date, and that he will confirm the items to be discussed in response to our requests. I also assume that he will let me know with whom we are to meet on matters outside the competence of the Religious Affairs Council, as indicated in Mr Shilov's letter to Mr Cohen dated September 5th and in my reply to you dated September 12th.

Let me reiterate that we, representing Europe's leading rabbis, offer to visit the Soviet Union and to meet its leadership in good faith as a genuine attempt to help improve international relations by promoting religious freedom and by removing the plight of millions of our co-religionists as a major obstacle to better understanding and goodwill. We sincerely trust that an affirmative response by the Soviet authorities consistent with the new climate of hope will justify our expectations.

Sincerely yours


Sir Immanuel Jakobovits
Chief Rabbi

p.s. I am replying to your enquiry on the situation of Jews in Britain in a separate letter enclosed herewith.

Enclosure

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF RABBI

TELEPHONE:

01-387 1088

CABLES:

CHIRABINAT LONDON WC1

ADLER HOUSE.

TAVISTOCK SQUARE.

LONDON. WC1H 9HN

15th December 1986

His Excellency Leonid Zamyatin
Ambassador of the USSR
18 Kensington Palace Gardens
W8

Your Excellency

Since your further enquiry about the condition of Jews in this country is entirely unrelated to our correspondence on the subject of Soviet Jewry, I am writing to you separately in reply to your question.

You will recall that your previous question on British Jews, dated August 11th, reached my office in my absence on holidays, and was therefore answered by my Executive Officer on August 15th. That letter had my full authority, having been checked with me over the telephone. Let me now add the following.

You had referred to "a considerable increase of antisemitism in Britain". I see no evidence for such a generalised statement. I receive monthly reports of all antisemitic incidents throughout the country as registered with our own monitoring organisations. These incidents are all not only recorded but further pursued. In many cases they turn out to be sheer vandalism or hooliganism. Sometimes a clearly antisemitic or anti-Zionist motive is established, and such cases are obviously of concern to us. Wherever appropriate I will also be called in as Chief Rabbi for consultations on, or the fight against, such outbreaks of racism. For instance, from time to time I would visit student campuses, or publicly denounce neo-Fascist campaigns, or meet with Jewish and national agencies (such as the Council of Christians and Jews on which the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Hume and I are among the Joint Presidents) concerned with the eradication of antisemitism.

But none of these activities constitute a significant increase in antisemitism. There are still isolated fringe manifestations. They are certainly not Government-sponsored; on the contrary, the official authorities give us every help in fighting every form of racial discrimination, whether against religious or ethnic minorities.

What we complain about in the treatment of Soviet Jews, inspired or tolerated by the Soviet Government, simply does not exist here.

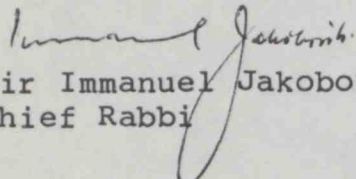
Although the size of Anglo-Jewry is only a little more than one-tenth of Soviet Jewry, we have many hundreds of synagogues, most of them served by fully qualified rabbis, and filled with thousands of worshippers every week; we have over fifty religious Jewish day schools and numerous Hebrew classes for young and old; we have scores of homes for the Jewish aged, the blind and others requiring care; we have many kosher hotels and restaurants - in short we have everything required by a vibrant and free community to sustain Jewish religious and cultural life.

British Jews are at liberty to settle in Israel whenever they wish (over one thousand of them do every year, which is more than the total number of Soviet Jews allowed to emigrate last year); and Jews here suffer no discrimination or harassment for being Jews, or Zionists, or Hebrew teachers, as they do in the Soviet Union.

These are not propaganda statements, and if you find it difficult to accept these facts, I invite you to visit any of the Jewish religious, communal, cultural or social centres I have mentioned to convince yourself that Jews here live in complete freedom, hardly compromised by the occasional antisemitic daubing of walls or turning over of some tombstones in Jewish cemeteries.

Antisemitism is bad enough when it is real; it does not have to be invented where it does not exist!

Believe me to be, Your Excellency
Yours sincerely


Sir Immanuel Jakobovits
Chief Rabbi