

~~ADVANCE COPY~~

CONFIDENTIAL
FM MOSCOW
TO DESKBY 210700Z FCO
TELNO 835
OF 210655Z MAY 89

YOUR TELEGRAM 651: EXPULSIONS

IN CIRCUMSTANCES OUR NEXT STEPS, INCLUDING PRESS HANDLING AND ANY FURTHER ACTION, WE NEED TO KEEP OUR BASIC OBJECTIVES AND TACTICS FIRMLY IN MIND. THESE WERE CLEARLY INDICATED IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO GORBACHEV:

A) TO DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST UNACCEPTABLE SOVIET INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES:

B TO ENCOURAGE A CHANGE IN SOVIET POLICY SO THAT IN FUTURE SOVIET OFFICIALS IN BRITAIN ENGAGE EXTENSIVELY AND OPENLY IN THE PROMOTION OF LEGITIMATE BUSINESS

C) SO TO HANDLE THE PRESENT AFFAIR, AS TO FORWARD BOTH OF THOSE OBJECTIVES. HENCE THE PERSONAL APPROACH TO GORBACHEV HIMSELF AND THE INTENTION, STATED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, TO LIMIT PUBLICITY.

2. NOTHING THAT THE RUSSIANS HAVE YET DONE WAS SURPRISING OR UNFORESEEABLE. THERE WAS NEVER MUCH CHANCE THAT THEY WOULD NOT RETALIATE, AND NO CHANCE THAT THEY COULD AVOID HITTING INNOCENT PEOPLE. IT WAS ALWAYS LIKELY, AS WE KNEW, THAT THEY WOULD CORRECT THE ANOMALY, AS THEY SAW IT, WHEREBY WE IMPOSED A CEILING AND THEY DID NOT. THAT IS WHAT THEY DID WITH THE AMERICANS, JAPANESE AND CANADIANS. WE KNOW AND DISCOUNTED THESE RISKS IN ESTABLISHING OUR THREE POLICY OBJECTIVES AND IN TAKING THE ACTION WE HAD TO TAKE.

3. CHERNYAYEV'S INITIAL REACTION TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE MAY INDICATE THAT GORBACHEV'S CLOSE ADVISERS, AT ANY RATE, ARE OPEN TO NEW THINKING. IT MAY BE THAT GORBACHEV HIMSELF WILL NOW FEEL THAT HE HAS SO FAR DEVOTED INSUFFICIENT PERSONAL ATTENTION TO AN ISSUE, THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF WHICH FOR THE ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP AND FOR THE SOVIET IMAGE IN THE WEST HE MAY NOT HAVE APPRECIATED. BUT HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CHANGE QUICKLY THE INGRAINED ATTITUDES OF THE KGB, AND IT IS CERTAINLY TOO SOON FOR US TO EXPECT TO SEE THE RESULTS. THE LEAVEN WILL WORK SLOWLY, IF AT ALL.

4. IN GOING FOR RAPID, MIRROR-IMAGE RETALIATION, THE RUSSIANS ARE FOLLOWING THEIR OWN RECENT PRECEDENT. THIS IS WHY THEY HAVE INCLUDED THREE BRITISH JOURNALISTS AND SO GREATLY COMPLICATED OUR ABILITY TO LIMIT PUBLICITY. BUT OUR POLICY REASONS FOR GOING FOR THE LOWEST POSSIBLE LEVEL OF PUBLICITY, AND ESPECIALLY OF OFFICIAL COMMENT, REMAIN VALID. BY THROWING OUR JOURNALISTS RATHER THAN SAY, AN EMBASSY INFORMATION OFFICER) THEY HAVE IN FACT MADE A POLITICAL

MISTAKE.

5. WE ARE ENTITLED TO FEEL A STRONG AND NATURAL RESENTMENT AT THE RUSSIANS' BASIC INTELLIGENCE POLICIES, AND AT THEIR REACTIONS TO THE JUSTIFIED STEP WE HAVE TAKEN. BUT BOTH OUR SECURITY OBJECTIVES, AND OUR WIDER POLITICAL OBJECTIVES, ARE BEST FURTHERED IF GORBACHEV WERE TO CONCLUDE THAT SOVIET INTELLIGENCE POLICIES SHOULD BE MODIFIED. HE WILL FIND IT HARDER TO DO SO, OR TO CONVINCE THE SOVIET INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES OF THE DESIRABILITY OF SOME CHANGE, IF BRITISH OFFICIAL COMMENT IS UNRESTRAINED, AND IF WE NOW TAKE FURTHER ACTION AGAINST SOVIET INTEREST, OR IF WE MAKE POLITICAL GESTURES, SUCH AS CANCELLING VISITS. THIS WOULD PROVOKE COUNTER-RETALIATION, AND NOT PROMOTE THE OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN PARAGRAPH 1 ABOVE.

6. I WOULD WELCOME A FURTHER OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO CHERNYAYEV. BUT I WOULD NEED A GOOD REASON: EG TO DELIVER ANOTHER MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER, FOR WHICH AT PRESENT I SEE NO JUSTIFICATION.

7. I WILL SEND SEPARATELY SOME IDEAS ON THE IMPLICATIONS FOR US OF THE NEW CEILING. YOU WILL GATHER FROM THE FOREGOING THAT I AM NOT IN FAVOUR OF ANY FURTHER RACHETING DOWN OF THE RUSSIANS, UNLESS THEY ENGAGE IN SOME NEW PROVOCATION. A WAR OF CEILINGS OR VISAS WOULD NOT SERVE OUR OBJECTIVES. WE MUST WAIT TO SEE HOW THE SOVIET CEILING IS APPLIED. WE MAY BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH A DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY IF WE DO NOT REACT NOW ON A WORST CASE ASSUMPTION.

RESIDENT CLERK PLEASE INFORM PRIVATE SECRETARY, HEMANS (SOVIET DEPARTMENT), BURNS (NEW DEPARTMENT) AND POWELL (NO 10).

BRAITHWAITE

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CONFIDENTIAL
FM MOSCOW
TO FLASH FCO
TELNO 836
OF 210939Z MAY 89

YOUR TELNO 651 AND MY TELNO 835:

EXPULSIONS: PRESS BRIEFING

1. I BRIEFED THE 3 EXPELLED JOURNALISTS AT 210700Z AND 5 OTHER BRITISH CORRESPONDENTS (FINANCIAL TIMES, INDEPENDENT, OBSERVER, REUTER, LBC) AT 0800Z.

ON THE RECORD

2. I TOLD THE SECOND GROUP ON THE RECORD THAT I WAS CALLED IN AT 10.15 LAST NIGHT BY FIRST DEPUTY MINISTER KOVALEV TO BE TOLD THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE EXPELLING 11 MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH COMMUNITY, INCLUDING 3 JOURNALISTS, AND DECLARING 3 FORMER MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY PNG. I GAVE THE NAMES AND RANK, SAVE THAT I IDENTIFIED THE PNG LIST ONLY BY RANK AND DESIGNATION. THE EXPELLEES HAD TWO WEEKS IN WHICH TO LEAVE.

3. I SAID THAT THIS WAS MIRROR-IMAGE RETALIATION WITH NO OBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION. IT FOLLOWED ACTION TAKEN IN LONDON ON THE PREVIOUS DAY. THE SOVIET ACTION WAS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WAS DEVELOPING. WE HAD NO DESIRE THAT THE WIDER POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE AFFECTED.

4. I EXPLAINED THAT A GLOBAL CEILING HAD BEEN IMPOSED, ALSO AS A MIRROR IMAGE. I DECLINED TO GIVE NUMBERS OR TO SPECULATE HOW IT WOULD OPERATE.

EXPELLEES

5. I HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN OVER THE SAME GROUND WITH THE EXPELLEES, COMBINED WITH A LONG DISCUSSION OF THEIR PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES. I EXPRESSED SYMPATHY AND OFFERED LOGISTICAL AND OTHER ASSISTANCE. FOR THEIR PERSONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION ONLY I READ THE TERMS OF THE SOVIET ACCUSATION AGAINST BRITISH EXPELLEES IN MY TELNO 831 (NB I DID NOT/NOT READ THIS TO THE SECOND GROUP). I SAID THE RUSSIANS HAD MADE NO/NO SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ANY INDIVIDUAL.

6. THE 3 ASKED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS WHICH I REFERRBD TO YOU. I EMPHASISED THAT OUR INTENTION WAS TO TRY TO CARRY ON BUSINESS AS USUAL. THAT WAS THEIR WISH TOO, PERSONALLY OVER THE NEXT FORTNIGHT AND WITH REGARD TO THEIR OFFICES. THEY WERE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR REPLACEMENT THAN PERSONALLY TO USE THE SCOOP.

7. ROXBURGH IS IN A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT POSITION, AS HE WAS IN

THE THROES OF RESIGNING FORM THE SUNDAY TIMES AND SEEKING ACCREDITATION FROM SEPTEMBER AS THE CORRESPONDENT OF THE NEW 'SUNDAY CORRESPONDENT.' HE TOOK THE NEWS VERY HARD, THOUGH IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES ALL THREE ACCEPTED IT AS WELL AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.

MFA

8. I WARNED THE HEAD OF SECOND EUROPEAN DEPT OF THE LINE I WAS ABOUT TO TAKE WITH THE PRESS. USPENSKY AFFECTED SURPRISE, AND IMPLIED THAT I WAS NOT ACTING IN TERMS OF THE CONVERSATION WITH KOVALEV. HE SAID THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN LONDON HAD SAT ON THE NEWS. I REMINDED HIM THAT I HAD TOLD KOVALEV THAT THE NEWS WAS BOUND TO LEAK ONCE PEOPLE BEGAN TO MOVE, AND THAT I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TELL THE THREE BRITISH JOURNALISTS IMMEDIATELY THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD CHOSEN TO EXPEL THEM. THERAFTER WE HAD LITTLE CONTROL OVER THE STORY, BUT WE DID NOT INTEND TO MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL OVER THIS STORY.

9. THERE IS AN OBVIOUS CONTRAST BETWEEN USPENSKY'S OLD-FASHIONED LINE AND CHERNYAYEV'S, SENSIBLE COMMENT TO ME THAT THE STORY WOULD INEVITABLY COME OUT.

BRAITHWAITE

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NO 10 DOWNING ST

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