

CONFIDENTIAL

Soviet Union
Contacts with
Soviet Ambassador
Sept 79



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Princ Austin

(2)

5 March 1981

You will want to be
aware of this,

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Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 13 February recording the Chancellor of the Duchy's meeting that day with the Soviet Ambassador.

We have taken the view since the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan that the traditional exchanges of Parliamentary visits should be avoided. The Russians almost invariably blow them up into major manifestations of goodwill, and Lord Carrington agrees with the Chief Whip (Murdo MacLean's letter of 16 February) that we should not be seen to be giving a green light to events of this kind.

There is, however, another side to the coin. Although there have been no official Parliamentary exchanges since Mr Cledwyn Hughes MP and a small Parliamentary group visited the Soviet Union in April 1977, visits not arranged through Parliamentary channels and involving less representative Members of Parliament can give the Russians a propaganda field day. The Soviet presentation of the visit by Mr Norman Atkinson MP and Mr James Lamond MP last September is a case in point. There is something to be said for exposing the Russians to a more representative sample of British political opinion, if this can be done in a suitably low key.

The answer may be to have at the appropriate time an informal visit to Moscow by a small but representative group of experienced Members of Parliament. Lord Carrington understands that Mr John Osborn MP, the Chairman of the Anglo-Soviet Parliamentary Group, has been giving some thought to the possibility of such a visit to Moscow and that the GB/USSR Association might be involved in the arrangements. He would have no objection to such a development, though the timing would obviously have to be considered with the situation in Poland in mind.

Scientific, educational and other exchanges with the Soviet Union have continued at a working level since Afghanistan. This is a wide field. The principal activities take place under inter-governmental agreements, but others are arranged privately. While the Soviet Ambassador's proposal lacks any sort of definition, his emphasis on science and research reflects a traditional Soviet concern to 'share experience' on a basis which the British participants have not always found well-balanced.

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The subject is one which the Soviet Embassy might reasonably be invited to take up with the FCO if they have new ideas to put forward.

Finally, Lord Carrington agrees with the Chief Whip that the Soviet Ambassador should regard the Anglo-Soviet Parliamentary Group as his base for contacts with prominent Conservative Members of Parliament. I am enclosing a list of members of the group.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'F N Richards', written in a cursive style.

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

D C R Heyhoe Esq
PS/Chancellor of the Duchy of
Lancaster
Privy Council Office
Whitehall
London SW1

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LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE ANGLO-SOVIET PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

John Osborn, M.P.

Chairman

Member of Parliament for Sheffield Hallam (Con) since 1959. Steel Works Director. Member of Anglo-Soviet Parliamentary Group since 1972. Member European Parliament 1975-79. Member Council of Europe since 1979

Julius Silverman

Vice Chairman

Member of Parliament for Birmingham Erdington (Lab) since 1974. Barrister (Gray's Inn 1931) Member Commons Expenditure Committee.

Renee Short

Joint Secretary.

Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton North East (Lab) since 1964. Freelance Journalist. Vice Chairman Parliamentary East-West Trade Group. Chairman Anglo-G.D.R. Parliamentary Group. Member Labour National Executive Committee Sponsored by T.G.W.O. N.U.T.

Kenneth Warren

Joint Secretary.

Member of Parliament for Hastings (Con) since 1970. Aeronautical Engineer and Management Consultant. Parliamentary Private Secretary to Sir Keith Joseph (Secretary of State for Industry).

David Atkinson

Treasurer

Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East (Con.) since 1977. Managing Director of a printing and marketing company. Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State for the Civil Service Department, The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, M.P., Member of the Council of Europe since 1979.

Frank Allaun

Member of Parliament for Salford East (Lab) since 1955. Engineer, Shop Assistant, Lecturer, Accountant and Journalist. Former Chairman of the Labour Party.

William Benyon

Member of Parliament for Buckingham (Con) since 1970. Farmer. Governor Dominion Students' Hall Turst.

Lord Bethell

4th Baron of Romford (Nicholas). Member European Parliament since 1975. Elected London North West 1979. Freelance writer.

Eric Cockerham

Member of Parliament for Ludlow (Con) since May 1979. Chairman Menswear Business. Former Governor of the Board of United Liverpool Hospitals.

Michael English.

Member of Parliament for Nottingham East (Lab) since 1964. Sponsored by N.U.G.M.W. Member of Council of Get Britain out (of EEC) Campaign 1975.

Raymond Fletcher

Member of Parliament for Ilkeston (Lab) since 1964. Journalist and author. Labour Friends of Israel. UK representative North Atlantic Assembly. Sponsored by T.G.W.U.

Alistair Goodlad

Member of Parliament for Northwich (Con) since 1974. Director Bowater Overseas Holdings Limited.

Grenville Janner

Member of Parliament for Leicester West (Lab) since 1970. Writer and Lecturer. Member All Party Committee for the release of Soviet Jewry.

James Lamond

Member of Parliament for Oldham East (Lab) since 1970. Design Engineer. Sponsored by A.U.E.W.-T.A.S.S. Ex-Vice President World Peace Council.

Kenneth Lewis Member of Parliament for Rutland and Stamford (Con) since 1959. Director Business and Holiday Travel Limited.

David Lombie Member of Parliament for Ayrshire Central (Lab) since 1970. Former Teacher. Member Select Committee on Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

John Loveridge Member of Parliament for Havering, Upminster (Con) since 1954. Principal St. Godric's College London and Farmer. Member Select Committee on Expenditure.

John Page Member of Parliament for Harrow West (Con) since 1960. Chairman Council for Independent Education since 1974. Chairman 1970-74 Conservative Parliamentary Labour Affairs Committ. Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Clive Soley Member of Parliament for Hammersmith (Lab) since 1979. Probation Officer. Hammersmith Councillor 1974-78. G.M.W.U.

Lord Taylor of Gryfe (Thomas) Member Scottish Economic Council 1971-74. Chairman Economic Forestry Group since 1976. Director Scottish Civic Trust.

William Wilson Member of Parliament for Coventry South East (Lab) since 1974. Senior Partner of firm of Solicitors. Member Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration.

Alec Woodall Member of Parliament for Hemsworth (Lab) since 1974. Colliery surface foreman. Sponsored by N.U.M.