

my question directly, whether the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State for External Affairs personally would be prepared to underline that commitment to the case and cause of Mr. Shcharansky by arranging a personal meeting. Perhaps that matter could be taken as notice and answered later.

I should now like to address a question to the Prime Minister in relation to the motion which was moved by my hon. friend from Edmonton-Strathcona, in which the House of Commons indicated its view that the government should request from the Soviet government permission to appoint an official observer at the trial of Mr. Shcharansky. Since reports indicate that the trial is imminent—indeed, that it could start this week—can the Prime Minister tell us when the government of Canada intends to act on the instruction from the House of Commons and make that application to ensure as far as possible that there is a Canadian lawyer or Canadian presence involved in the trial, without any delay?

Mr. Trudeau: The Leader of the Opposition must understand that the case of Mr. Shcharansky has been dealt with by Mrs. Shcharansky, by other relatives of that gentleman and by the minister responsible for multiculturalism in discussion with other ministers. There have been meetings on the matter. Frankly, I do not recall that there has been a request for a meeting with me. I do not know whether there has been a meeting with the Secretary of State for External Affairs. On this side, ministers who meet on behalf of the government are all equal.

I would want Mrs. Shcharansky to understand that the meetings she sought with members of the government and with members of the Liberal caucus have been effective in ensuring that the government takes whatever action it considers best to ensure the eventual safe future of Mr. Shcharansky. The details would be much better given by the Secretary of State for External Affairs or by the Minister of State for Multiculturalism. I shall, of course, take the hon. gentleman's question as an indication of further interest by the opposition in this case and make sure that the government continues to deal with the matter expeditiously.

Mr. Clark: So that the Prime Minister might understand the urgency of this matter—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark:—may I point out that it is entirely likely that at the trial of Mr. Shcharansky, as nearly as we can determine, his only lawyer will be one appointed by the KGB, and that the trial could begin today. This adds an element of real urgency to the motion which was endorsed so enthusiastically today by the House of Commons. The point is this: there has been a request for a meeting with the Secretary of State for External Affairs. There was a meeting, apparently, between that minister and the Soviet ambassador on December 12. Mrs. Shcharansky and her advisers have heard nothing from the government in the interim. Can the Prime Minister, or some other government spokesman, tell the House what did transpire at the meeting on December 12 between the Secretary of

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State for External Affairs and the Soviet ambassador, what action will ensue, and specifically what has been the response of the Soviet authorities to the offer of the Canadian government of landed immigrant status in Canada for Mr. Shcharansky?

Mr. Trudeau: The Leader of the Opposition indicates by his question that he knows of the effort which has already been made by the Canadian government in its acceptance, in advance, of Mr. Shcharansky. He also knows, as his question indicates, that meetings have taken place between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Soviet ambassador. If he wishes to know anything further about this matter, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, his parliamentary secretary or the minister for multiculturalism would be prepared to deal further with the matter.

I doubt whether Mrs. Shcharansky is interested in getting anything more than results from this process. I doubt whether it is necessarily productive of results that the Leader of the Opposition should ask the question in this way at this time. If that is his opinion, or if that is the opinion of Mrs. Shcharansky, they are of course perfectly free to follow it. But she knows, and the Leader of the Opposition knows, that ministers of the government have been acting as quickly as they can in this matter to get results for the benefit of Mr. Shcharansky; and this continues to be our course.

An hon. Member: Nobody has heard anything.

Mr. Clark: I very much regret that the Prime Minister would treat a very serious question of human rights in this way. The fact is that the family has not been advised of the result of that meeting between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Soviet ambassador.

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If there is a minister in the House—and I am looking at the Minister of State for Multiculturalism who is pointing to himself—who has some information on that question, I hope he will take this opportunity to convey to the House of Commons and to Mr. Shcharansky the concrete results of the meeting between the minister and the Soviet ambassador, and make specific reference to the response of the offer by Canada to extend landed immigrant status.

Hon. Norman A. Cafik (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that Mrs. Avital Shcharansky, long before today and this question being raised in the House, was quite aware of the actions which were taken by myself, by other members of the government and the caucus.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cafik: I have met with Mr. Shcharansky and I have met with members of the Shcharansky family. It was at our initiative that the offer of landed immigrant status was made for Anatoly Shcharansky to come to Canada. They have been kept posted on all developments which I have considered to be