

Viscount Long: My Lords, I do not have those figures. They disappeared into the unknown before I got them.

Lord Strabolgi: My Lords, may I ask the noble Viscount whether the present Government adhere to the view of the previous Government which I put forward when I replied to the debate three years ago in your Lordships' House, that most of these so-called sightings can be accounted for as natural phenomena?

Viscount Long: Yes, my Lords, they can be. Many of them are accounted for in one way or another, but nobody has got a really constructive answer for all of them.

Lord Hill-Norton: My Lords, may I ask the noble Viscount whether or not it is true that all the sighting reports received by the Ministry of Defence before 1962 were destroyed because they were deemed "to be of no interest"? And if it is true, who was it who decided that they were of no interest?

Viscount Long: My Lords, my reply to the noble and gallant Lord—I was wondering whether he was going to say that the Royal Navy had many times seen the Loch Ness monster—is that since 1967 all UFO reports have been preserved. Before that time, they were generally destroyed after five years.

Lord Paget of Northampton: My Lords, can the noble Viscount tell us whether, out of these thousands of sightings which he has mentioned, there has been a single one which suggested any menace to our defences? In the circumstances, is not an awful lot of time being wasted on this nonsense?

Viscount Long: My Lords, I think Her Majesty's Government are waiting for an invitation from them to discuss these problems.

### Mr. Anatoly Shecharansky: Representations

3.9 p.m.

Lord Renton: My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question which stands in my name on the Order Paper.

The Question was as follows:

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are aware that Anatoly Shecharansky has for the past 15 months been undernourished, tortured and frequently placed in punishment cells, and in October 1981 had his prison sentence increased by 3 years for his refusal to plead guilty to a charge of which he has always maintained his innocence; and whether they will request the Soviet Government to state whether they intend to keep him in those uncivilised conditions until he relents or dies.

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, Her Majesty's Government remain gravely concerned about the plight of Anatoly Shecharansky and are disturbed by recent reports of his ill-treatment. We have raised this case with the Soviet authorities on many occasions, both

in direct bilateral contact and at the Madrid Review meeting. We shall continue to take a close interest in Mr. Shecharansky's case, and to make representations as suitable opportunities arise.

Lord Renton: My Lords, may I thank my noble friend not only for that Answer but for the action which he and the Foreign Office have been and are taking with regard to Shecharansky's plight? May I ask my noble friend whether or not the Soviet Government's failure, as shown by the treatment of Shecharansky and others, to honour their Helsinki undertakings diminishes their credibility in relation to all other matters in which they say they are seeking agreement and on which they would like to be believed?

Lord Trefgarne: If I may say so, my Lords, my noble friend has put his finger on the nub of the problem. How can we believe what they say in negotiations such as the IMF negotiations, the MBFR negotiations as they are called in Vienna, or in any other forum for that matter, when they do not do what they said they would do at Helsinki in 1976?

Lord Shinwell: My Lords, in view of the rumours, which are probably well founded, that Mr. Brezhnev is about to retire, could a message from your Lordships' House be sent to him through the Soviet Embassy wishing him for the remainder of his life—and we hope he has many years left yet—peace and contentment and asking whether, as a gracious act upon his retirement, he will ensure that Mr. Shecharansky is treated as a civilised person?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, I would certainly be willing to send another message to the Soviet Union about Mr. Shecharansky if I thought it would have any effect. As to the future of Mr. Brezhnev, I believe that that is a matter for them to decide for themselves.

Viscount Mountgarret: My Lords, would it not help if the western nations ceased providing wheat to the Soviet Union, at a time when they are finding themselves short, until they cease to carry out such inhuman activities against individuals and sovereign States?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, the failure of the Soviet agricultural industry is now plain for all to see, but I am not sure that the interests of the West are served by starving them out.

Lord Elwyn-Jones: My Lords, in view of the fact that the treatment of Shecharansky seems to be a serious violation of human rights, has the matter been raised before the sub-commission on human rights at the United Nations?

Lord Trefgarne: My Lords, I am not certain that the matter has been raised before that particular body but certainly it has been raised before all the others I mentioned. There could be a good opportunity for doing as the noble and learned Lord suggests.

Lord Avebury: My Lords, is the Minister aware that Mr. Shecharansky is a very distinguished computer scientist? Will he therefore consider a reduction in