

Russian Cleared Of Spying in U.K.

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LONDON — A Russian woman who had an affair with a British member of parliament has won her fight to stay in Britain after an immigration tribunal dismissed accusations that she was a spy.

☒ Katia Zatuliveter, 26, worked as a parliamentary aide and had an affair with her boss, Mike Hancock, 65, a lawmaker from the junior governing Liberal Democrats who served on the defense select committee.

☒ British authorities had sought to expel her, accusing her of using her access to parliament to spy for Moscow. Her deportation was overruled at a hearing behind closed doors by the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) on Tuesday.

The tribunal concluded that she was a young woman who was in love with a far older man who she believed might help her forge a new life in the West. The panel was swayed in part by her diary, which described her infatuation with Hancock, who is in his 60s, and her belief that if she had sex with him, he would help her complete her education and move from Russia to Europe.

✘The Home Office, which had ordered her expulsion, said it was disappointed by the ruling.

✘"It was an absolutely horrifying experience, and I've simply lost a year of my life. I couldn't do anything — lots of people believed I was a spy simply because the British government said so," Zatuliveter told BBC television on Tuesday. "If you're a Russian in this country you're a spy."

✘The allegations against Zatuliveter were made just months after 10 Russian "sleeper agents" were expelled from the United States, ramping up political tensions between Western powers and the former Soviet Union. ✘Hancock represents the southern English port city of Portsmouth where there is a large naval base. He has denied that his research assistant did anything wrong but resigned his post on the defense committee.

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