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cc 60

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

23 December 1982

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 16 December about the Aldridge case.

On the point in your second paragraph, in both the Prime and Aldridge cases the view was taken that the person charged with an offence should not be interrogated for the purpose of the Security Commission's investigation until criminal proceedings were complete. In Prime's case, the information available virtually all derived from Prime's confession to the police, and it would have made little sense for the Security Commission to start an investigation until there had been some interrogation of Prime. In Aldridge's case, enough information is available to enable a useful start to be made with the investigation without having to wait for further interrogation of Aldridge.

I am accordingly proceeding with the reference of the Aldridge case to the Security Commission; but, as I told you in my earlier letter, I shall not announce the reference until the criminal proceedings are complete.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The Rt. Hon. Michael Foot, M.P.

114

Ref. A082/0607

MR BUTLER

Top Copy on Security,

Nov '82, Case of

Intelligence Corps Lance
Corporal Aldridge passing
secret information to the Soviets.

Prime Minister

Two letters attached for

Signature, please.

FERB

22.12.

Security Commission: Miss Rhona Ritchie and
Lance Corporal Aldridge

--- The Prime Minister wrote to the Leader of the Opposition on
15th December proposing that the Aldridge case should be referred
to the Security Commission and Mr Foot replied on 16th December
agreeing to the reference.

2. The way is now clear for the Prime Minister formally to
refer both the Ritchie case (as has already been announced to
Parliament) and the Aldridge case to the Commission. A draft letter
for the Prime Minister to send to Lord Bridge for this purpose
--- is attached.

--- 3. In his letter of 16th December Mr Foot also asked for an
explanation of why it is possible to refer the Aldridge case to
the Security Commission before criminal proceedings are completed
--- when it was not possible to do so in the Prime case. I attach
a self-explanatory draft of a letter which the Prime Minister might
send in reply.



ROBERT ARMSTRONG

21st December 1982



Security
2.6 AH

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

SECURITY COMMISSION : MISS RHONA RITCHIE
AND LANCE CORPORAL ALDRIDGE

Thank you for your minute of 21 December
(A082/0607).

The Prime Minister has signed letters to
Lord Bridge and Mr Foot in the terms
which you suggested, and I attach copies
of them.

F.R.B

23 December 1982

AH

DRAFT LETTER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO

The Rt Hon the Lord Bridge of Harwich
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

SECURITY COMMISSION: MISS RHONA RITCHIE AND LANCE CORPORAL
ALDRIDGE

In the light of your advice and after consulting the Leader of the Opposition, I have decided, in accordance with the arrangements announced in 1969, formally to ask the Security Commission to investigate and report upon the cases of Rhona Jane Ritchie and Lance Corporal P L Aldridge. The terms of reference are:

"To investigate the circumstances in which breaches of security have, or may have, occurred arising out of the case of Rhona Jane Ritchie, who was convicted on 29th November 1982 of an offence under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911; and to advise in the light of that investigation whether any change in security arrangements is necessary or desirable."

and

"To investigate the circumstances in which breaches of security have or may have, occurred arising out of the case of Lance Corporal P L Aldridge who has been charged with an offence under section 7 of the Official Secrets Act 1920; and to advise in the light of the investigation whether any change in security arrange

ments is necessary or desirable."

It will be for the Commission to decide whether the issues raised in these cases overlap with your current investigation into the case of Geoffrey Arthur Prime and whether to report on the three together or separately. However, until the pending criminal proceedings on the Aldridge case have been completed it will not be possible to interrogate Aldridge himself or to make any public announcement about this reference.

DRAFT LETTER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO

The Rt Hon Michael Foot, MP

Thank you for your letter of 16th December about the Aldridge case.

On the point in your second paragraph, in both the Prime and the Aldridge cases the view was taken that the person charged with an offence should not be interrogated for the purpose of the Security Commission's investigation until criminal proceedings were complete. In Prime's case, the information available virtually all derived from Prime's confession to the police, and it would have made little sense for the Security Commission to start an investigation until there had been some interrogation of Prime. In Aldridge's case, enough information is available to enable a useful start to be made with the investigation without having to wait for further interrogation of Aldridge.

I am accordingly proceeding with the reference of the Aldridge case to the Security Commission; but, as I told you in my earlier letter, I shall not announce the reference until the criminal proceedings are complete.

Security (Positive Vetting)

Q61. Sir David Price asked the Prime Minister whether she is satisfied that the current techniques of positive vetting achieve their declared purpose.

The Prime Minister: The adequacy of the positive vetting process and the scope for improving it will clearly be considered again by the Security Commission in the course of its current inquiries. In the meantime I have nothing to add to what I said in answer to questions in the House on my statement on 11 November 1982.

Merseyside

Q66. Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Prime Minister if she will visit Merseyside.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Bermondsey

Q76. Mr. Renton asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Bermondsey.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Welsh Water Authority

Q77. Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination that exists between the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment, in relation to those aspects of the charging policies of the Welsh Water Authority that fall within the responsibilities of central Government.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Central Policy Review Staff

Mr. Arnold asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove on 7 December, *Official Report*, c. 437, if she will specify the job description of each of the posts which have been established in the unit supporting the chief scientist, Central Policy Review Staff.

The Prime Minister: The holders of these posts will assist the chief scientist, Central Policy Review Staff, in discharging his functions, which were set out in annex A to the Government's response to the first report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology in Session 1981-82 (Cmnd. 8591). Three posts—including the two transferred from within the Cabinet Secretariat—will be concerned primarily with support for the Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development, a fourth with the annual review of Government research and development in the context of the public expenditure survey, and the two others with co-ordination in areas—such as space and biotechnology—affecting a number of departments, and with international collaboration.

Miss Rhona Ritchie

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Prime Minister whether, further to her reply of 30 November, *Official Report*, c. 114, to the hon. Member for Preston, North, she has decided to refer the case of Miss Rhona Ritchie to the Security Commission.

The Prime Minister: After consulting the chairman of the Security Commission and the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, I have decided to refer this case to the Security Commission. The terms of reference will be:

"To investigate the circumstances in which breaches of security have, or may have, occurred arising out of the case of Rhona Jane Ritchie, who was convicted on 29 November 1982 of an offence under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911; and to advise in the light of that investigation whether any change in security arrangements is necessary or desirable".

It will be for the commission to decide whether the issues raised in this case overlap with its current investigation into the case of Geoffrey Arthur Prime and whether to report on the two together or separately. Its findings will be laid before the House to the fullest extent compatible with national security.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Zimbabwe (Refugees)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply by the right hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Marten) to the hon. Member for Basildon of 21 June, *Official Report*, c. 18, if he will give as much information as is available as to the numbers of refugees who have been repatriated from Zimbabwe since April 1980 with British development assistance; which were the countries of destination; what has been the cost to public funds to date; what was the cost for each refugee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Marten: None. However, in response to an appeal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, £1 million was provided in 1980 from the British aid programme to assist in meeting the cost of the return to Zimbabwe of those who, during the conflict prior to independence, had fled to neighbouring countries.

At the outset of the repatriation programme an estimated 250,000 refugees were living in camps, mainly in Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana. Some returned without assistance, but an estimated 70,000 were helped to return to Zimbabwe under the UNHCR programme.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why it was decided to purchase timber-built homes for the Falkland Islands from a Scandinavian company; and whether he will ensure that future orders for timber-framed houses are obtained from British manufacturers.

Mr. Neil Marten: The company selected to undertake the contract for the supply and erection of houses in the Falkland Islands is a British one, buying prefabricated units from a Swedish supplier. It was chosen after careful and thorough evaluation of tenders submitted by 10 companies. Of those tenders which were within the specifications laid down, the successful one was adjudged to offer houses of the most suitable design.

In normal circumstances, contracts awarded under the aid programme are confined to British suppliers.

Overseas Students

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply

of 24 November, *Official Report*, c. 489, what were his reasons for deciding to pay the National Health Service directly for any costs incurred by ill health of foreign aid-funded students, rather than taking out health insurance for these students.

Mr. Neil Marten: The general presumption is that the Government do not take out commercial insurance but bear risks directly instead. There was no reason to deviate from normal practice in this case.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 24 November, *Official Report*, c. 489, what he estimates the annual cost will be for paying hospitals directly for any costs incurred by the ill health of foreign aid-funded students.

Mr. Neil Marten: It is very difficult to make a firm estimate of the costs of such treatment. Experience indicates that aid-funded students, who are medically examined before coming to Britain, normally have a good health record whilst in this country and I should not expect the annual cost of hospital treatment to exceed £100,000.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities and Polytechnics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many places were available in (a) universities and (b) polytechnics in 1982; how many will be available in 1983; and what was the level of demand for these places in both years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The number of places available at universities and polytechnics is not known as there are no fixed targets for student entry. It is provisionally estimated that there were 79,000 undergraduate and 27,000 postgraduate full-time new entrants to universities in Great Britain in October 1982. No similar information is yet available for the polytechnics alone; but it is provisionally estimated that there were 101,000 full-time and 98,000 part-time new entrants to advanced courses in all establishments of further education in England in October 1982.

A total of 171,500 candidates applied through the universities central council on admissions for entrance to universities in the United Kingdom in 1982-83. According to the council, the number of applications received by 1 November 1982 for entry in 1983-84 was 4 per cent. up over the corresponding period for the previous year. No comparable information is available for the polytechnics.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science in which subjects demand for university and polytechnic places has (a) increased and (b) decreased in the most recent convenient period.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following table gives, in respect of the universities, those subjects for which the numbers of candidates applying through the universities central council on admissions for entry in 1982 had (a) increased by more than 5 per cent. and (b) decreased by more than 5 per cent. since 1981. An analysis over a different period would show different subjects. The subjects are those named as first choice by candidates on their application form. Similar information for the polytechnics is not available.

(a) Increase in candidates greater than 5 per cent.

Dentistry
Mining
Metallurgy
Surveying
Agricultural chemistry
Biology
Botany
Zoology
Physiology/anatomy
Biochemistry
General and combined biological sciences
Mathematics
Physics
Chemistry
Geology
Combinations of biological and physical sciences
Geography
Accountancy
Government and public administration
Sociology
Combinations of arts and social sciences, home, hotel and institutional management
Welsh and the Celtic languages and studies
Hispanic languages and studies
Russian language and studies
Other Slavonic and East European language and studies
Oriental, Asian and African language and studies
Classical studies
Combinations of arts and languages
History
Archaeology
Philosophy
Theology
Art and Design

(b) Decrease in candidates greater than 5 per cent.

Ophthalmic optics
Chemical engineering
Civil engineering
Combinations of engineering and other subjects
Agricultural biology
Forestry
Veterinary science
Other general and combined physical sciences
French

A and O-levels (Statistics)

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the number and percentage of the school age group who passed one or more A-levels in 1979, 1980 and 1981, respectively;

(2) what number and percentage of 16-year-olds obtained one or more O-levels in 1979, 1980 and 1981, respectively.

Dr. Boyson: Information about O-level achievements is not available in the form requested. However, information on the academic attainment of school leavers in England is as follows:

England: O and A-level achievements of school leavers

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
<i>GCE O-level</i>			
Leavers with one or more O-level* passes ('000)	315.33	323.24	321.94
as percentage of all leavers	42.8	43.1	43.9
<i>GCE A-level</i>			
Leavers with one or more A-level passes ('000)	113.45	117.02	120.83
as percentage of the 17-year-old population	15.5	15.5	15.7

* O-level grades A-C

Source: School Leavers Sample Survey