



a MASTER SET

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 January 1984

Dear Roger,

CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY MR. AND MRS. YANKELEVICH

The Prime Minister met Mr. and Mrs. Yankelevich this morning, in response to Mr. Yankelevich's letter to her of 8 January about his father-in-law, Dr. Sakharov and Mrs. Bonner-Sakharov.

The Prime Minister invited Mr. and Mrs. Yankelevich to describe the latest position. They explained that the Sakharovs' situation was becoming extremely threatening. Mrs. Bonner-Sakharov had applied a year and a half ago for permission to leave the Soviet Union for medical treatment, but as yet she had received no reply. Dr. Sakharov had said in a private telephone conversation that if matters were not resolved within a month, he was ready to begin another hunger strike. Mrs. Bonner-Sakharov, although reluctant to leave her husband, accepted that there was no other way in which she could receive the medical treatment which she now desperately needed, and she was prepared to go as soon as permission was granted.

Mrs. Yankelevich explained that Mrs. Bonner-Sakharov needed a heart bypass operation, which was not obtainable in the Soviet Union. Her eyesight was also giving cause for concern since she had suffered a massive infraction. She was feeling very low. As the only link between her husband and the outside world, she had to travel at least once a month from Gorky to Moscow. The authorities regarded her as a public enemy, and the press were spreading the rumour that she was being used by the CIA to influence Dr. Sakharov in his public statements.

The Prime Minister commented that, however false, this argument should lead the authorities to the conclusion that it would be a good thing for her to leave the Soviet Union. Mr. and Mrs. Yankelevich thought that their motives may be more simple. They had constantly used those close to Dr. Sakharov to apply pressure on him.

The Prime Minister asked where Mrs. Bonner-Sakharov would go for treatment if she were allowed to leave. Mr. and Mrs. Yankelevich believed that she would go either to the United States or to Italy where she had previously received eye treatment. The Prime Minister wondered whether the Soviet authorities fully recognised the urgency of her need for treatment - it could be very damaging for them if something happened to her which could have been prevented if she had been allowed to leave, since this would provide further evidence of the inhumanity of the Soviet regime.

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The Prime Minister referred to the British Government's repeated requests to the Soviet Union for better treatment of Dr. Sakharov and his family. She recognised how urgently action was required to help Mrs. Bonner-Sakharov, and she undertook to consider how the British Government might best lend its support. Mr. and Mrs. Yankelevich expressed their gratitude. They said that neither Dr. Sakharov nor his wife were afraid for themselves - their fear was only for each other, and it was this that the Soviet authorities were exploiting.

Following the meeting, the Prime Minister said that she would be grateful if the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary could take a suitable opportunity of raising the plight of Mrs. Bonner-Sakharov with Mr. Gromyko in Stockholm. She would be glad to know the result as soon as possible.

Should you need to contact the Yankelevichs, I understand that they will be staying at the Grosvenor Hotel, Buckingham Palace Road, Victoria, SW1, for the next two days.

MR. D. BARCLAY

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.