



FCS/84/303

HOME SECRETARY

Prime Minister  
 Agree to rather  
 discouraging reply  
 proposed on the  
 application from the  
 three further Soviet  
 prisoners? CDP  
 19/xi

Soviet Prisoners of the Afghan Resistance

1. Thank you for your letter of 18 October about the applications for asylum from three further Soviet prisoners forwarded to the Prime Minister by Mr Sandy Gall. I have delayed replying because I wanted to reflect on the implications for our policies of the recent return of Rykov and Khlan to the Soviet Union.
2. I believe that our experience with Rykov and Khlan underlines the need to look extremely carefully at any further applications for resettlement here. The admission of further Soviet prisoners offers little in the way of political advantage. Any propaganda value is likely to be limited and of short duration, and would rapidly be lost if the individuals concerned followed Rykov and Khlan's example. Nor is there much prospect of any intelligence gain. Above all, publicity generated by further admissions, which can only be arranged with the direct assistance of the Pakistan Government, could adversely affect our wider collaboration with the Pakistanis on policy towards Afghanistan.
3. I can well see that for wider reasons you would not want to change our public position that we consider applications for asylum on their individual merits and on an humanitarian basis. In addition to the need for consistency across the board, this puts us in a better position to encourage US, Canada and the Europeans to consider favourably the admission of future cases, in the interests of burden-sharing.
4. But the successive return to the Soviet Union in recent weeks of Bitov, Svetlana, Rykov and Khlan leads me to conclude that we should think very carefully indeed before accepting any /further



further applications from Soviet prisoners, including those forwarded by Mr Gall. It also reinforces the need to handle any future cases with as little direct involvement by HMG as possible.

5. One lesson of the Rykov and Khlan case is that, in the absence of a large Russian emigre community in the UK able to provide moral and practical assistance, asylees face major problems in settling down here. In political terms, both domestically and internationally, we have already demonstrated our goodwill by admitting Rykov and Khlan, albeit with disappointing results. I do not think that we should regard ourselves as under any political pressure to respond positively to further applications.

6. A further consequence of the Rykov and Khlan episode is that the Pakistan Government will now be more wary than ever of incurring Soviet hostility, given the intense diplomatic and military pressure to which they have recently been subjected. Nonetheless, a degree of Pakistan Government cooperation will continue to be essential if further Soviet prisoners are to be brought out of Afghanistan. We shall therefore need to keep in touch with their approach to this problem as part of our regular contacts with them, while avoiding as far as possible direct involvement with individual cases.

7. Mr Miller's associates have been pressing for an early decision on the cases put forward by Mr Gall. They have asserted that the three would be in immediate danger of their lives if arrangements were not made to extract them by 16 November, along with two other men who have been accepted for resettlement by the FRG. Our Ambassador in Islamabad believes that Mr Miller's assertion is probably an attempt to bounce the Government into a decision, and that there is nothing to suggest that the men are in imminent danger. We should not allow this approach to influence the timing of a decision on these cases.



8. The three men are also being considered by the Canadian Government for resettlement in Canada. The Canadians seem to be further advanced than us in considering these applications, and we should clearly not make any decision of our own while a chance remains that the Canadians might take them. All in all, I consider that we should give Mr Gall and Mr Miller no grounds to expect a positive response on the three men; that we should continue to take this in slow time and in any case not get ahead of the Canadians; and that unless there are very strong arguments the other way we should be prepared to refuse the applications in due course.

9. There is one further point. If we did decide for some reason to accept the applications, we would need to think very carefully about handling and timing, given the consequences for our relations with the Soviet Union, and bearing in mind the fact that there are likely to be two high level Soviet inward visits within the next six months.

10. In the circumstances, I think the draft of the reply from the Prime Minister's Private Secretary to Mr Gall should be somewhat more discouraging than the draft you proposed. I attach a form of words.

11. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister and Sir Robert Armstrong.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
19 November 1984

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10 DOWNING STREET

*See the  
cc Sir P. Crook*

*From the Private Secretary*

20 November 1984

SOVIET PRISONERS OF THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE

BF | The Prime Minister has seen a copy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 19 November to the Home Secretary on this subject. She would be content with the draft Private Secretary reply to Mr. Gall annexed to the minute, provided that the Home Secretary sees no objection. Could you please let me know whether we may now despatch it?

I am copying this letter to Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Hugh Taylor, Esq.,  
Home Office.

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

26 November, 1984.

In September you passed on to the Prime Minister a letter from three Soviet soldiers, Messrs. Naumov, Busov and Plotnikov, who are prisoners of the Afghan resistance, seeking asylum in the United Kingdom.

The letter has been passed to the Home Office, who are responsible for deciding such applications, and is being considered there. You will understand readily enough that the circumstances of the applicants raise a number of difficult issues. We also have to consider carefully whether it is possible to provide in this country the facilities and arrangements necessary to enable applicants, if admitted, to settle down here. These various factors need to be weighed carefully, and I understand that at this stage it is not possible to say when a decision will be reached.

Charles Powell

Sandy Gall, Esq.

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Charles Powell, Esq.  
10 Downing Street,  
London

*MR. JONES* *V6*  
*see*  
*AM*

27th November 1984.

Dear Mr. Powell,

Thank you for your letter of 26th November 1984. I have in fact written to the Home Secretary about the three defectors. I feel they are exceptional young men and they should be helped to find a foothold in the West.

My documentary "AFGHANISTAN: ALLAH AGAINST THE GUNSHIPS", which includes a long interview with Mr. Naumov, will be shown on Thames Television at 11.40 P.M. on Wednesday December 5th. It has already been shown on ITV in the rest of the country.

Yours sincerely,

Sandy Gall

AFGHANISTAN: Lt Sir

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*M. J. H.*  
*29*  
*29*

Charles Powell, Esq.  
10 Downing Street,  
London

27th November 1984

Dear Mr. Powell,

Thank you for your letter of 26th November 1984. I have in fact written to the Home Secretary about the above details. I feel that you are exceptional young men and they should be helped to find a foothold in the West.

My documentary "AFGHANISTAN: ALAN AGAINST THE CURSHING", which includes a long interview with Mr. Karmov, will be shown on Thames Television at 11.45 P.M. on Wednesday December 20th. It has already been shown on ITV in the rest of the country.

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29 NOV 1984

Yours sincerely

*Charles Powell*  
Charles Powell

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Prime Minister

You are at the

Palace that night. But  
we shall record  
it for you.

Ref. A084/2734

MR POWELL

mf

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. '57a.

'C' thought that the Prime Minister  
might like to know that Sandy Gall's new  
full-length documentary about his adventures  
in Afghanistan is to be screened on Independent  
Television on 23 October at 10.30 pm.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12 October 1984

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FILE

RJ

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

10 September, 1984

REQUEST FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM FROM RUSSIAN DEFECTORS  
IN AFGHANISTAN

Sandy Gall of ITV has recently been in Afghanistan. He has passed to us a letter from three Russian defectors to the Prime Minister seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom. I enclose the letter together with a translation.

Mr. Gall will be referring to the letter in his programme about Afghanistan which will be broadcast on 11 September. We agreed that your press spokesman would be in touch with him to explain the procedures involved in seeking asylum.

BT  
I should be grateful for advice and a draft reply in due course.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

(C.D. Powell)

H. Taylor, Esq.,  
Home Office.

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