

7 (A-W.)  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

5 May 1989

Dear Charles,

Expulsion of Members of the Soviet  
Czech Embassies

Thank you for your letter of 19 April recording the Prime Minister's discussions with the Director General of the Security Service. The Security Service evidence of Czech wrongdoing has now been received and is attached. The Foreign Secretary finds the evidence convincing and recommends that the four Czechs named should be expelled.

Since their last discussion on 26 April, the Foreign Secretary has again considered whether action should be taken simultaneously against the Soviet and Czech Embassies. It has the obvious attraction of avoiding two separate incidents. But it could provoke a coordinated response and, if the expulsions became public, might be portrayed as a deliberate campaign, leading to an even greater row than if action were taken separately. Separate action would also afford us greater flexibility both in our initial action and in the event of retaliation. It might also reduce the possibility of Czech retaliation. There is virtually no chance of avoiding publicity and retaliation for the Russian expulsion (see below) but a reasonable one of avoiding publicity for the Czechs - if we act against them separately and later. In the past, the Czechs have been less inclined to retaliate if there is no publicity. On balance, therefore, the Foreign Secretary believes that the Russians should be expelled first, followed by the Czechs two or three weeks later.

Publicity

The Foreign Secretary does not believe that we shall be able to keep the Russian expulsions quiet. Eleven Russians, including three journalists, can hardly leave at short notice without it becoming apparent. Normally, Soviet retaliation follows quickly (3/4 days).

/If

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street



If there are British journalists amongst the retaliatory expulsions the expulsions will certainly leak then.

Nevertheless, we could try to minimise the impact of the expulsions by telling the Russians that we would not initiate publicity. In addition, we could exceptionally not ratchet down the ceiling on the Soviet official community. The intention would be not to provoke the possible withdrawal of local staff in Moscow (as happened to the Americans) and to avoid the downward spiral at a time when more, rather than less, people are needed to service the growing bilateral relationship. In order to ensure that the Russians did not interpret this as a sign of weakness, Sir Patrick Wright would tell their Ambassador that our decision was exceptional and should be regarded as evidence of our wish not to let this episode sour our otherwise good relations nor to make the legitimate work of the Soviet community more difficult. He would not imply in any way that the ratchet had been discarded for ever. He would say that we would be watching very closely how the Russians made use of this concession: if they simply sought to refill the posts with KGB and GRU officers, we would not hesitate to use the ratchet again.

In addition, the Foreign Secretary believes that there is a case for a personal message from the Prime Minister to Mr Gorbachev at the time of the expulsions. This, too, might help to minimise the impact of the expulsions on relations. A draft is attached. If the Prime Minister is content, we would instruct Sir Rodric Braithwaite to deliver the text of the letter at the same time as Sir Patrick Wright takes action with the Soviet Ambassador here.

As to the Czechs, even though a Press Attache is amongst the four to go the Foreign Secretary believes that there is a reasonable chance of avoiding publicity - if action is taken against them separately and later. Given that they have in the past tended not to retaliate on a one-for-one basis where there has been no publicity, the Foreign Secretary recommends that the Czech Ambassador should be told that we do not intend to publicise the expulsions. To further reduce the risk of retaliation, Sir Patrick Wright might tell the Czech Ambassador that if they do retaliate, we shall consider imposing a ceiling and ratchet system against them.

/Timing





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Timing

Given that publicity for the Russian expulsions at least seems inevitable, the best timing for action against them would seem to be before the NATO Summit on 29-30 May.

There are therefore three possible dates - 12, 19 or 26 May. Of these, 26 May is a holiday (but not for the Russians); is very close to the NATO Summit, and could be misinterpreted as deliberately provocative. It also immediately precedes a visit to the Soviet Union by Mr Clarke scheduled for 28 May (although whenever we take action in this period this visit is vulnerable). 12 May is the last day of the London Information Forum and might well be seen as a deliberately cynical choice of timing. 19 May, on the other hand, means that our own action (and probable Soviet retaliation) will have taken place before the NATO Summit. This could assist our Summit purposes if Soviet retaliation, including the possible cancellation of Mr Clarke's visit, portrayed the Russians in a hostile and thoroughly old fashioned light.

The Foreign Secretary thinks therefore that the Russians should be told of our decision on 19 May.

Since the Czech expulsions do not involve the same operational considerations, we could take action against them in early June. This would allow a decent interval before the Foreign Secretary's visit to Prague, scheduled for 3 July, and would still precede Mr Gorbachev's visit to the FRG. But if, on the other hand, the Prime Minister decides, despite the arguments above, to take simultaneous action, the Czechs could easily go on 19 May.

The Foreign Secretary has considered whether the expulsions might disrupt our talks with the Czechs about Semtex; but this seems unlikely since it would necessitate them drawing attention to the expulsions and would only damage their image with the rest of the world.

Numbers

The Prime Minister will wish to know that the number of 11 Russians now to be expelled results from

/two

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two departures from the original 12 proposed and the addition of a KGB operational driver. The Director General referred to the latter when he saw the Prime Minister on 19 April. A revised list of those to be expelled is attached.

SNF

The question arises as to what effect the expulsions might have on German thinking over SNF. The likely answer is probably not very much. The West German public is all too used to spying scandals in their own country. And there will no doubt be accusations from some quarters, if only the media, that we have deliberately timed the expulsions to influence the debate on SNF. The German public wants to believe that the Soviet threat is disappearing and will probably tend to rationalise KGB activity as part of old thinking which has been predictably slow to bend to perestroika. Nevertheless, the expulsions might be helpful with some of the other Allies at the NATO Summit.

To sum up, the Foreign Secretary recommends that 11 Russians and 4 Czech officials should be expelled in two separate actions, the first being against the Russians on Friday 19 May. The Czechs would be expelled about two weeks later. Neither event should be publicised in order to try to minimise their impact on bilateral relations. In addition we hope that the Prime Minister will agree to sending a personal message to Mr Gorbachev along the attached lines. The Home Secretary agrees with these recommendations.

I should be grateful if you would let me know whether the Prime Minister would be content to proceed on this basis. If so, we shall, of course, let you have copies of the relevant Aides Memoire, Speaking Notes and Press Lines nearer the time action is to be taken.

I am copying this letter to Colin Walters (Home Office) and to the Director General of the Security Service.

Jaws,  


J S Wall

Private Secretary

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E.

LIST OF PROPOSED SOVIET EXPELLEES

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F.

LIST OF PROPOSED CZECHOSLOVAK EXPELLEES

[REDACTED] - age 39  
Press Attache  
Identified FMV Intelligence Officer

[REDACTED] - age 36  
Technical Adviser, Commercial Section  
Identified FMV Intelligence Officer

[REDACTED] - age 38  
2nd Secretary, Scientific and Technical Attache  
Identified FMV Co-opted worker

[REDACTED] - age 35  
3rd Secretary, Political  
Identified FMW Intelligence Officer

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SECRET

Date 18 May



Send to  
Stephen Wall, FCO

10 DOWNING STREET

~~Debbie A.~~

~~Cd. you please  
hold on to  
this until we  
arrive a decision  
from FCO on  
the date.~~

Date 18 May

→ FCO

Stephen Wall

CDI

9/15

DSF (Revised Sept 85)

SECRET

DRAFT: ~~minute~~/letter/~~teletype~~/~~dispatch~~/~~note~~

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM: PRIME MINISTER

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

Your Reference

BUILDING:

ROOM NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: PRESIDENT GORBACHEV

Copies to:

*slhbfj*

~~TOP SECRET~~

Secret

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~RESTRICTED~~

~~UNCLASSIFIED~~

SUBJECT:

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT .....

We have established the practice of speaking frankly about any subject, however wide our differences. This has done much to reduce the climate of suspicion which characterised the past. I am writing to you now in that spirit. I do not intend to disclose the contents of this letter.

I have today approved a decision which I had hoped not to take. As your advisers know well, successive British Governments have pursued a resolute and consistent policy over the presence in Britain of representatives of the Soviet Intelligence Services.

/I

Enclosures flag(s) .....

SECRET



I had hoped that the action taken by my Government in 1985 would clear away, once and for all, a major obstacle both in British/Soviet relations, and to the creation of more cooperative and friendly relationships in Europe. I have been disappointed. Your country's intelligence services have, step by step, reconstructed their staff in London. Their operatives have engaged in activities which no Government could accept. We have expressed our concern repeatedly and at many levels. No corrective action has been taken by the Soviet side, and we are left with no alternative but to require the removal of certain intelligence officers whose activities in Britain have nothing to do with their stated purpose for being in Britain and are hostile to our security.

We welcome representatives of your growing political, commercial, cultural and press interests in Britain. Their presence here is important to our expanding relationship. The presence of your intelligence officers works in precisely the opposite direction.

/I have

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

PRIVACY MARKING

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In Confidence

I have decided to depart from our previous practice and not to foreclose the posts occupied by the departing intelligence personnel, in the expectation that these posts will in future be occupied by Soviet officials engaged extensively and openly in the promotion of legitimate business. I have also given instructions that publicity for the removal of your intelligence personnel is not to be given by any British official. These have not been easy decisions. But they are intended to offer a positive way forward. I shall be looking for a similarly positive approach from the Soviet side.

I am sorry that I have to write to you in this vein, so soon after your outstandingly successful visit to London. But I would be wrong to conceal from you my deep concern about a problem we should surely put behind us.