



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 May 1989

Dear Charles,

Expulsion of members of the Soviet and Czech Embassies

Thank you for your letter of 8 May.

The Foreign Secretary has looked again at whether to expel the Russians and Czechs simultaneously. While there are no operational reasons why the expulsions should not be carried out at the same time, his view remains that linkage of the expulsions will almost certainly produce a concerted and stronger reaction. The point of separating them is to give us a chance of avoiding Czech retaliation. (Whatever we do we do not think we can avoid Russian retaliation.)

That said, there is no reason why the separation could not be by one week, as the Prime Minister suggests. Indeed, if the Czech expulsions followed five or six days after the Russians, the latter's retaliation, which normally comes within three or four days, might generate sufficient publicity to distract media attention from the Czech departures. This might encourage the Czechs not to retaliate, given that in the past they have not retaliated when there has been no publicity. We cannot, of course, offer any guarantees, but on balance the Foreign Secretary thinks that we should expel the Czechs in the week beginning 22 May.

As regards the Prime Minister's concern that action against the Russians first would forewarn the Czechs,

[redacted] The timing now proposed will keep the delay to a minimum.

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

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Jones
Stephen Wall
(J S Wall)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street



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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

8 May 1989

EXPULSION OF MEMBERS OF SOVIET AND CZECH EMBASSIES

Thank you for your letter of 5 May about the proposed expulsion of members of the Soviet and Czech Embassies.

The Prime Minister is generally content with what is proposed:

- she agrees the list of those to be expelled;
- she is content for the expulsions of the Russians to take place on 19 May;
- she agrees to write to Mr. Gorbachev in the terms suggested in the draft enclosed with your letter and I will now get this typed.

The only outstanding question is whether to expel the Russians and Czechs simultaneously or separately. The Prime Minister's view is that it would be better to get both sets of expulsions out of the way before the NATO Summit and President Bush's visit. In practice that would mean doing them at most only a week apart. There is also the consideration that action against the Russians would warn the Czechs. You may like to reflect further on whether it would not be best to carry out all the expulsions on 19 May.

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

C. D. POWELL

Stephen Wall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office