

CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister

Letter to Mr. Foot

attached for your signature

Ref. A082/0346

MR BUTLER

F.E.R.B.

2.12

Official Secrets: Rhona Ritchie

In paragraph 8 of my minute of 26 November, I told you that I was sending Lord Bridge a statement of the facts of the Ritchie case, and asking him whether he thought that an investigation would be likely to serve a useful purpose.

2. I have now discussed this with Lord Bridge. His view coincides very much with my own, as indicated in the minute which I sent to you. Were it not for other things that have been going on, we should probably take the view that the facts of the case do not themselves appear to call for further investigation by the Security Commission. But there is the question whether positive vetting could or should have brought Miss Ritchie's vulnerability to light; and I think that, in view of present Parliamentary comment to the effect that Lord Bridge takes too complacent a view of these matters, he would be reluctant to advise that the Ritchie case should not be the subject of an investigation by the Security Commission. His opinion accordingly is that the case should be referred; and I concur in that view.

3. I think that the case for referring the Ritchie case to the Security Commission is strengthened by the consideration that we shall probably not want to refer the Hambleton case. Even if Hambleton is found guilty, he is not a "British" spy, and his activities do not call in question British security procedures or arrangements. We shall, however, have to consider whether the Aldridge case should be referred; and, as Aldridge was positively vetted only this year, his case is relevant to the consideration of positive vetting which the Security Commission will in any case have to undertake in the context of the Prime and Ritchie cases. I am therefore, in accordance with the agreed procedure, seeking a view from Lord Bridge as to whether the Aldridge case should be referred to the Commission straightaway,

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



without waiting for the trial proceedings. Before I can consult Lord Bridge, however, I shall need to take a view from the Director of Public Prosecutions, and this may take a little time. I do not think that we should hold up the process of dealing with the Ritchie case in the meantime.


4. If the Prime Minister agrees, the next step is for her to write
_____ to the Leader of the Opposition. I attach a draft letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'RA' in a stylized, cursive script.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

1 December 1982

CONFIDENTIAL


DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO
THE RT HON MICHAEL FOOT ESQ. MP, HOUSE OF
COMMONS

Following the conviction and sentence of Miss Rhona Ritchie on 29 November, I have, in accordance with the procedures laid down by Harold Wilson on 25 March 1969, sought the opinion of Lord Bridge as to whether the case should be referred to the Security Commission.

The damage to national interests in this case has clearly been a great deal less than in the case of Prime. Nonetheless, there are ~~certain~~ aspects of the matter which ~~it would be useful for the Security Commission to suggest that some further inquiry would be~~ ^{consider} ~~advisable,~~ and Lord Bridge has expressed the opinion that the case should be referred to ^{them.} ~~the Security Commission.~~

~~I should be glad to know whether you~~ ^{If you can let me know that you} agree that the case should be referred to the Security Commission, ^{I will} ~~If you share my~~ ~~view that it should be,~~ I propose to make an announcement to that effect next week. I understand that Lord Bridge's intention would be that this case should be considered by the same panel as is considering the Prime case.

Security

The Prime Minister: In overall terms the real value of the basic retirement pension is around 4 per cent. higher in November 1982 than in November 1978 when the rate we inherited was set. A precise figure will not be known until mid-December. It is not possible at this stage to extend this assessment beyond November 1982.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if she wishes to add to her oral reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 25 November regarding direct payments from the South Atlantic fund to Servicemen who were disabled in the Falklands conflict and also the clawback of London weighting allowance from disabled servicemen during hospitalisation; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I said on 25 November sums ranging in the main from £2,000 to £20,000 have been paid to the seriously injured. 81 such payments have now been made, the total sum paid is about £400,000. A further £1,500,000 has been given to Service charities so it can be made quickly available to meet any needs which arise among the injured. Further interim payments will be made as appropriate. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Armed Forces has today announced a change in the rules for the payment of the London pay supplement which will be backdated to 1 April 1982.

Mr. Churchill: asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on disbursements from the South Atlantic fund.

The Prime Minister: I have consulted the trustees and they are grateful for this opportunity to place on record some of the facts about the work of the South Atlantic fund. They are glad of the opportunity to correct some recent misleading reports about the conduct of the fund.

The fund was established to disburse money through existing charities. Subsequently it was registered as a charitable trust and the trust deed reflects the policy of using the existing experience and machinery of Service charities to achieve the fund's principal aim of meeting needs. Thus many individuals who have received help from the charities may not appreciate that the money they have received originated from the South Atlantic fund. The trustees quickly transferred £1.5 million to Service charities so that they had funds available to relieve immediately any hardship that came to their notice. They have applied this money to assist people in many ways, such as moving house, meeting educational expenses, expenses of visiting the injured in hospital, and the provision of suitably modified cars. Additionally some 200 charities were contacted and invited to give immediate assistance whenever required and subsequently to seek reimbursement.

The trustees anticipated that assessing the long term needs of the bereaved and injured comprehensively and compassionately could take some time as the Services would not wish to press individuals to come to terms with their situation and to decide how they wished to live their future lives. Interim grants totalling £1.9 million were therefore made through appropriate charities to the bereaved to meet their immediate needs pending completion of the longer term assessments, which are being conducted comprehensively, compassionately and as expeditiously as possible. The trustees are very

conscious of the wish for speed and confidentiality in reaching settlements. Specialist charities such as BLESMA and St. Dunstons are being consulted. The trustees have also informed me that compassionate medical assessments have been conducted of those most seriously injured and interim grants totalling some £400,000 have been made to help them over the rehabilitation period, again through other charities. The trustees continue to fund interim awards on a personal and confidential basis and stress that they have so far funded only a small fraction of what will be disbursed over the next four months.

Poverty Trap

Mr. Arnold asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the co-ordination between the Department of Health and Social Security and the Treasury in relation to the problems caused by the poverty trap.

The Prime Minister: Yes.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Proctor asked the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic; and if she will make a statement on Anglo-Irish relations.

The Prime Minister: There are no plans for a meeting at present. Our future relations with the Republic will inevitably depend on the attitude of whatever Irish Government is formed next month. It is our long term aim to foster close relations with all our European Community partners.

Regina v Ritchie

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the security implications raised by the case of Regina v Ritchie.

The Prime Minister: Miss Rhona Ritchie, a Second Secretary in the British Embassy in Tel Aviv, was tried at the Central Criminal Court yesterday on charges under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. She pleaded guilty, and was given a suspended sentence of nine months' imprisonment.

The facts of the case were fully set out in yesterday's proceedings, and I need not recapitulate them here. Miss Ritchie's activities were prejudicial to the conduct of international relations, in a sensitive area of those relations, but the content of what she admits to having transmitted cannot be described as damaging to national security.

In accordance with the procedure described to the House by my predecessor on 25 March 1969, the Chairman of the Security Commission has been asked to say whether in his opinion an investigation by the Commission would be likely to serve a useful purpose, and in the light of his advice I shall consult the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition before deciding whether or not to refer the case to the Commission. I shall keep the House informed of further developments.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Woolwich Arsenal (Prison)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has drawn from the feasibility studies carried out by the Property Services Agency on the possible construction of a new prison at Woolwich Arsenal; when work is now likely to start; and what is the estimated cost.

Mr. Mayhew: The Government have concluded that a local prison should be built on the Woolwich site and the Property Services Agency has been authorised to proceed with the detailed design. It is hoped that tenders will be invited in 1986 with a view to the main construction starting in 1987. The preliminary order of cost at current prices is £40 million.

Airguns

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to ban the sale of airguns direct and by mail order to prevent them falling into the hands of young people under 17 years of age.

Mr. Mayhew: There are already restrictions on the possession of air weapons by young people and we are not persuaded that changes in the law are justified or would be effective. A publicity campaign to heighten public awareness about the dangers of air weapons misuse will take place next year. Amongst those actively involved will be voluntary organisations which work with young people.

Confidence Tricksters

Mr. Arthur Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in view of the increasing number of confidence tricksters calling at the homes of the aged and sick purporting to be officials of public utilities or local authorities, he will propose a code of practice to those bodies whose officials make home visits which would oblige these men to carry photographic identity cards and which would suggest to the public that doors should not be opened to those who do not produce such cards.

Mr. Mayhew: No; it is already the general practice of officers of local authorities and public utilities who call on householders to carry documents of identity or authority, in some cases incorporating a photograph. The Home Office and the police advise all householders always to verify the identity of callers before admitting them. A new Home Office leaflet on this subject will be generally available in the new year.

Deportation

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigrants from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan have been recommended for deportation by the courts in each of the last three years.

Mr. Raison: The number of people from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan recommended by a court for deportation in the last three years, is as follows:

	<i>New Commonwealth</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>
1979	389	31
1980	414	44
1981	333	40
1982 to 31 October	342	19

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of cases for all nationalities where it was decided not to deport the subject of a recommendation by a court in each of the last three years.

Mr. Raison: The information requested is as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>No.</i>
1979	124
1980	126
1981	104
1982 to 31 October	83

The relevant court recommendations may have been made in earlier years.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of persons recommended by a court for deportation who are currently awaiting either a decision to deport or the completion of the arrangements for their deportation and who are in detention at the latest convenient date; and how many of these are citizens of Commonwealth countries, other than Australia, Canada and New Zealand, or citizens of Pakistan.

Mr. Raison: On 26 November there were 334 people detained following a recommendation for deportation by a court, in respect of whom a deportation order has been signed or whose deportation is under consideration. This figure includes persons who received custodial sentences and whose deportation cannot therefore be effected until their release date.

Of the total of 334, 183 were citizens of Commonwealth countries other than Australia, New Zealand and Canada; and 32 were citizens of Pakistan.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons of all nationalities who were deported following a recommendation of a court in each of the last three years.

Mr. Raison: The information requested is as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>No.</i>
1979	509
1980	616
1981	576
1982 to 31 October	429

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has issued any guidelines to the courts on recommendations for deportation since April 1981; and whether he has any plans to do so in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Raison: No. We shall in due course be issuing circulars about the Criminal Justice Act 1982 which will, among other things, notify courts of the provisions in the Act relating to recommendations for deportation.