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*From the Private Secretary*

22 December 1986

SEMINAR ON THE SOVIET UNION

Thank you for your letter of 18 December about the seminar on the nature of the Soviet system under Mr. Gorbachev. I have discussed this with the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister agrees to follow the usual form of a morning session extending over lunch with academics present, followed by an afternoon session for Ministers and officials only. She does, however, wish to keep numbers very small. This will inevitably lead to some disappointment. I am working initially on a total of 16 altogether. This means that we shall have to leave out any businessmen or journalists.

The academics whom the Prime Minister intends to invite are:

Professor Amman  
Mr. Brown  
Mr. Donnelly,  
Professor Nove  
Professor Howard  
Dr Kaser  
Mr. Frank

I should be grateful if you would let me know whether you regard this as a reasonably balanced selection.

The Prime Minister also thinks it would be helpful to have at least one American academic present. I suggest that the best choice would be Seweryn Bialer. We would presumably have to pay his fare and expenses. If you agree that he would be a good choice, I should be grateful if you could let me know how and where he can be contacted. The Prime Minister would also like to invite Robert Conquest.

That means that on the Government side we can only have the Foreign Secretary, Sir Percy Cradock, Sir Bryan Cartledge, Mr. Nicholson, one other official and myself. I realise that this is very restricted but the Prime Minister is adamant that she wishes the seminar to be small.

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JB.

You enclosed a draft agenda for the seminar. I think that it is on the right lines. What we want to ask is what are Soviet objectives internally and externally, how far these have changed under Gorbachev and how feasible they are. As regards the United Kingdom's role, the questions should be what policies we should adopt towards the Soviet Union and what effect we expect them to have. Perhaps you could amend the draft to reflect these points.

The Prime Minister agrees that it would be a good idea to invite Mr. Frank to produce a paper. I will propose this when I write to invite him.

If you could let me have your comments by 5 January, I will issue invitations.

CHARLES POWELL

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