

PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH DR. SAKHAROV AND MRS. BONNER

You are seeing Dr. Sakharov and his wife briefly tomorrow afternoon. He is over here to receive honorary degrees from Oxford and Sussex. He has also visited a number of laboratories including the Rutherford Appleton at Didcot, lunched with the Royal Society and given a speech at Chatham House.

You will recall that your last meeting with him was in Washington in November 1988. A note of that meeting is in the folder.

Sakharov has become increasingly pessimistic about Gorbachev's prospects, talking of the risk of a military coup d'etat. He also made himself very unpopular at the recent Congress of People's Deputies by accusing the Soviet Army of genocide in Afghanistan: he was roundly booed and forced to leave the podium. He has said publicly that you are right to be cautious about developments in the Soviet Union. The Russians are showing sensitivity to his activities over here, and are a little anxious about your meeting with him in the current delicate state of relations.

You will obviously want to ask for his views on developments in the Soviet Union and the prospects for progress towards democracy. In particular it would be interesting to know how he sees the role of the Congress and whether it will really act as a parliament and be able to restrain the executive. You might also ask how he thinks we can best support the emergence of democratic institutions in the Soviet Union. It would be interesting, too, to hear his views on the human rights situation. In anything you say, I think it is important to reiterate your support for perestroika and what Gorbachev is doing within the Soviet Union.

Another area which you might explore is the role of the military and the extent to which he feels Gorbachev is sincere in his arms control initiatives and expressed desire to reduce conventional forces. How far will the Russians go? Will they play fair?

C.D.T.

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(C. D. POWELL)

22 June 1989

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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*Jean Charles,*The Soviet Union: Call by Dr Andrei Sakharov

Dr Sakharov and his wife, Mrs Yelena Bonner, are seeing the Prime Minister at 4 pm on 23 June. They are visiting Britain from 18-25 June as FCO-sponsored visitors. The main purpose of the visit is for Dr Sakharov to receive honorary degrees from the universities of Sussex and Oxford. A copy of the programme is attached, with the main items sidelined. The Prime Minister previously met Dr Sakharov during her visit to Moscow in March 1987 and in Washington in November 1988. She also met Mrs Bonner in London in 1985. Biographical notes on Dr Sakharov and Mrs Bonner are attached.

Dr Sakharov has recently been outspoken in his criticism of Mr Gorbachev. During a speech at Chatham House on Tuesday this week, Sakharov suggested that Gorbachev's position in the Soviet Union was unstable; that there was considerable opposition to perestroika; and that Gorbachev could find himself removed by a military coup d'etat. Dr Sakharov was also reported as saying that he agreed with the caution that the Prime Minister was showing in her dealings with Gorbachev.

The Prime Minister may like to reaffirm the Government's support for perestroika: no credible alternative to pressing ahead with Mr Gorbachev's reforms has emerged. The Soviet authorities will be following Sakharov's visit closely, and any suggestion that the Government echo Sakharov's views about Gorbachev's position and the reform programme could clearly be damaging. The Russians are naturally inclined to suspect conspiracies, and at present would view anything they regarded as an official echo of Sakharov's opinions through a post-expulsion prism.

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The Prime Minister may wish to ask Sakharov about his views on progress towards democracy, in particular the central issue of the relationship between the Congress of People's Deputies and the new Supreme Soviet. So far the meeting of the Congress in late May and earlier this month has been the focus of attention. This has provided a platform for a number of remarkably outspoken speeches. It is not yet clear how the relationship between the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet will develop, and whether the Congress will become an effective constraint on the legislative functions of the Supreme Soviet and the executive decisions of the Soviet government. Although the membership of the Supreme Soviet is drawn from the Congress, the latter will only meet two or three times a year whilst the Supreme Soviet will meet in semi-permanent sessions.

Dr Sakharov's views about action that we could or should take to support and encourage the development of democratic institutions in the Soviet Union would also be interesting. We are arranging a visit by a delegation from the Supreme Soviet (probably in July or the early autumn) to study British Parliamentary procedures. This will probably be followed by a separate visit by a more senior Supreme Soviet delegation which is expected to come here in late November under IPU auspices.

The Prime Minister may like to ask Dr Sakharov and Mrs Bonner for an update on respect for human rights in the Soviet Union.

The Foreign Secretary has not seen this letter in draft. He will see a copy tonight and we shall let you know first thing in the morning if he has other comments on the meeting.

Yours ever,
Richard Gozney

(R H T Gozney)
Private Secretary

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: ANDREI SAKHAROV

Born in 1921, Sakharov graduated in physics from Moscow University, and spent 20 years working on the hydrogen bomb. Elected Academician 1953. In 1970 became founder-member of Human Rights Committee. In 1975 he was refused permission to travel to Oslo to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. From January 1980 (when he openly condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) until December 1986, he was exiled to Gorky.

On return to Moscow Sakharov spoke out on human rights. He took part in official meetings attended by Gorbachev, and in 1987 he met Mrs Thatcher and M. Chirac. He resumed his scientific work at the Academy, and in October 1988 was elected to the Academy's Presidium. In October 1988 he visited Washington, his first trip abroad for 30 years. He has since visited Italy twice, and has met the Pope.

A Deputy to the new Congress of People's Deputies, Sakharov was invited by Gorbachev to be the first to speak from the floor. In his speech he said that, while he supported Gorbachev's election as President, he considered it a matter of principle that there should be more than one candidate. In the final session of the Congress Sakharov read out a 'Decree on Power' proposing inter alia the abolition of the section of the Constitution which provides for the leading role of the Party. Sakharov was not elected to the new Supreme Soviet, but is a member of the Constitutional Commission set up by the Congress.



BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: MRS BONNER

Mrs Bonner is the daughter of a prominent Armenian Party leader who was executed in 1939. Her mother, who was active in the Revolution and later spent 16 years in the camps, died in 1988.

After the war Mrs Bonner trained as a doctor, but retired in 1971 on her marriage to Dr Sakharov and became increasingly involved in the dissident movement. In 1976 she became a founder member of the Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group. During Sakharov's exile in Gorky she travelled repeatedly to Moscow to maintain links with friends and foreigners. In 1984 she was herself exiled to Gorky.

In 1985 she was allowed to travel to the USA for heart-bypass surgery, as a result of Dr Sakharov's repeated hunger strikes. She returned to the Soviet Union in mid-1986.