



From the Minister of State for Industry

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Norman Lamont MP

Handwritten:
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2) Prime Minister
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CONFIDENTIAL

Charles Powell Esq
Private Secretary to
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

21 November 1984

Dear Charles

SOVIET ASSISTANCE TO THE NUM

Colin Budd wrote to you on 20 November recording the Foreign Secretary's view that Mr Lamont's lunch yesterday with the Soviet Ambassador was the most natural occasion on which to make to the Russians the points at paragraph 3(a) of Colin's letter.

As you know, the Prime Minister agreed that Mr Lamont should make these points with some force. Accordingly Mr Lamont said that the Government were very concerned about press reports which suggested that cash contributions approaching £1 million had been received by the NUM from Soviet miners and asked the Ambassador whether this was true and what was the involvement of the Soviet Government. The Ambassador said that "the Russians recognised that the UK was a democratic country; the UK must recognise that the USSR was a democratic country". There was no reason why Soviet miners as individuals should not raise money for British miners if they wished to do so. This had nothing to do with the Soviet Government.

Mr Lamont then pointed out that the Soviet miners' access to convertible roubles and their ability to take money out of the USSR strongly suggested Soviet Government involvement. He asked whether all Soviet citizens had these rights. The Ambassador maintained that citizens could transfer money for some purposes, and emphasised the importance and independence of Soviet trade unions. Refusal to allow their rights to be exercised would have constituted unwarranted interference by the Soviet Government in the Soviet miners' union's own affairs. But he stressed that trade union independence was only exercised in appropriate spheres: it did not endanger the fulfilment of contracts entered into by the Soviet Government, and all such contracts would be honoured.

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Mr Lamont stressed that the Government viewed with great concern the transfer of money from the Soviet Union to the NUM. He said that the Soviet Union must understand that the UK Government considered this a very serious matter. He referred to the forthcoming visit of Mr Gorbachev to the UK and said he hoped that the Soviet Union would not risk souring the atmosphere for this visit. The Ambassador noted his comments.

All in all, the discussion was somewhat unsatisfactory. The Ambassador did not specifically confirm the press reports of Soviet cash for the NUM, but he made no attempt to deny their veracity. No question on the role of the Soviet Government was answered directly: the Ambassador simply maintained that Soviet trade unions were independent and democratic, and that the Soviet Government was not answerable for their exercise of their rights.

I am copying this letter to Colin Budd (FCO), Michael Reidy (Department of Energy), David Peretz (Treasury), and the Attorney-General's Chambers, and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely
Edmund Hosker

E N R HOSKER
Private Secretary

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