From the diary of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR V.G. Dekanozov, dated 31 July 1946.

SECRET

MEETING THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY DELEGATION (LASKI, CLAY, BACON AND PHILIPS)

30 July 1946

At 18:00 I met with the members of the delegation. Harold Laski was the first to speak, he described broadly the aim of the delegation’s visit to the Soviet Union.

Our visit, said Laski, is an expression of the friendly feelings of the Labour Party and the workers of Britain towards the Soviet Government and the Communist Party of the USSR; the aim of the visit is to establish a strong base for the development of mutual friendly feelings, to discuss various issues, and to establish mutual understanding. The Labour Party members and all the working class of Britain consider the delegation’s visit as a very serious step aimed at strengthening friendship between the two countries, and believe that the relations between the USSR and Britain will depend to a significant degree on the outcome of the delegation’s visit.

Replying to my comment that the visit of the Labour Party delegation to the USSR had been expected as early as during the war, and that each time we had given positive replies to the inquiries regarding the possibility for such a delegation to visit the USSR, and that something must have prevented this visit from taking place earlier, Laski said that the delay was because of Churchill who had insisted that the Soviet Union be first visited by a Parliamentary delegation. Laski further said that the Party ranks are extremely interested in their delegation’s visit and how they will achieve the goal of establishing mutual understanding with the Soviet people with the aim of creating the basis for strong and long-lasting friendship. Ordinary Labour Party members, said Laski, believe that we have common goals with the Soviet people and therefore there is nothing to prevent us from following one and the same route.

Having said that, Laski asked if the delegation’s secretary Philips could expound the delegation’s wishes regarding the programme of their stay in the USSR.

Philips said that the members of the delegation were representing the movement which is aimed at socialist reconstruction of their country; the Labour Party believes that in order to start such reconstruction on a wide scale, it is necessary to meet one extremely important condition, namely to strengthen friendship between the Soviet and the British people. In view of this the delegation thinks that its primary goal during the stay in the USSR is to meet with various people, including Party and Government leaders, as well as representatives of the different groups of the Soviet people, and to openly discuss various issues with them.

The delegation would like:

1. To meet with the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR Comrade Shvernik.
2. To meet with the Party leaders and Political Bureau members, with whom the delegation members want to openly discuss various questions.
3. To meet with Comrade Stalin.
4. To meet with the Chairman of VTsSPS[[1]](#footnote-1) V.V. Kuznetsov[[2]](#footnote-2) and other leaders, including representatives of the transport trade union.
5. To learn about education in the USSR and to talk to representatives of the Ministry for Education, the Ministry for Higher Education, the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Harold Laski wants to get to know higher education institutions, Bacon - primary and secondary schools, Clay the organisation of adult education (non-higher education institutions).
6. To visit a collective farm [kolkhoz] near Moscow.
7. To visit the Institute of Marx, Engels and Lenin.
8. To visit the Revolution Museum and the Historical Museum.
9. To visit a factory or a plant (labour organization, workers’ welfare, trade union work).
10. To visit Leningrad.
11. To visit Stalingrad.

In conclusion Philips said that the delegation would be grateful if I named the people that I thought the delegation should meet.

I promised to inform the Government of the delegation’s wishes regarding their stay in the USSR. At the same time I showed to the members of the delegation the preliminary short programme of their visit, which included visits to Leningrad and Stalingrad, meeting with the Chairman of the Moscow Council Popov[[3]](#footnote-3) and the Chairman of the VTsSPS Kuznetsov. In conclusion I said that the final programme could now be put together taking into account the wishes of the delegates, and suggested that in the meantime they start with pursuing the preliminary programme. The members of the delegation agreed with my proposal, and Philips expressed their satisfaction with the fact that many of the delegation’s wishes had already been anticipated in the programme proposed by me.

The conversation then moved to discussing the timeframe of the delegation’s stay. Laski said that the delegation plans to stay in the USSR until 10 August, as they have been invited by the Poles to visit Poland around this date. However, if their transfer to Warsaw will be organised on 11 August, as well as subsequent transfers from Warsaw to Berlin and from Berlin to London on 15 August, the delegation will then stay in the USSR until 11 August. Visiting Leningrad and Stalingrad, according to the delegation, will depend on how the main goal will be reached, which is to meet with the leaders of wide groups of Soviet people and to openly discuss with them various questions.

The conversation continued for about an hour.

Comrade Pastoev was present.

[signature] (V. Dekanozov)

[APRF, fund 3, inv. 64, file 398, pp. 33–35]

Keywords: post-war USSR

1. All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kuznetsov, Vasilii Vasilyevich (1901 – 1990) – Soviet statesman and Party official, Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (1944 – 1953), Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1946 – 1950). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Popov, Georgii Mikhailovich (1906 – 1968) – Soviet statesman and Party figure. Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Moscow City Soviet (1944 – 1950), Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (1946 – 1949), Minister of Municipal Construction of the USSR (1950 – 1951), Ambassador to the Polish People’s Republic (1953 – 1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)