Translation of the letter regarding members of the Labour Parliamentary delegation visiting USSR received by the Soviet Ambassador in London and forwarded to Zarubin, 8 August 1947[[1]](#footnote-1)

Translation from English.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL. .

Dear Mr. Zarubin,

Herewith I enclose several curriculum vitae of our group members that I have compiled based on directories in order to add to the personal remarks about them which you have already received. These references along, with the general memorandum on the objectives and organization of the planned trip that you have also received, in my opinion, should give you a pretty clear idea of the intended expedition and its participants.

From Hansard (the bound and weekly releases are provided with an index) it is clear what policies the members of parliament adhered to at debates on important issues (for example, Joe Reeves speech[[2]](#footnote-2) on 18.11.1946, in which he supported the foreign policy amendment of "rebels" to the king’s throne speech; Fred Lee’s speech[[3]](#footnote-3) on Thursday 07.08.1947 in debates on the economic situation in the country; Harold Davies’ speech [[4]](#footnote-4) on Indonesia etc.).

In this letter I want to try to link the trip of this group of Labour Members of Parliament who are willing to learn about the government plans of the countries conducting socialist reconstruction with the present crisis in Britain and in the Labour Party:

The general elections in 1945 were not usual elections; they were a phenomenon similar to elections of 1831 bringing to power the Whig government, which passed a great law in 1832 on elections reform. This law destroyed the power monopoly of the landed aristocracy and started bringing the middle class to power, and that process changed Britain, having transformed it from a country,

[…]

To His Excellency the Soviet Ambassador,

the Soviet Embassy.

THE PURPOSES AND ORGANIZATION OF EXPECTED TRIP

TO EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

The purposes:

United States’ assistance to this country in overcoming the crisis in the next six months will definitely be late, and at best will be limited. We may hope for something from the Empire and the Commonwealth, and for something from Western Europe. But we shall never get out of the crisis, we will not raise our standard of living and we will not achieve full employment, if, and as long as we cannot develop our trade relations with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The countries which were not present at the conference on discussion of the Marshall Plan and which are not represented in the European Committee on Cooperation and its subcommittees are precisely the countries which usually have surpluses of foodstuff and raw materials that they produce and, in turn, need our manufactured goods and machinery. Moreover, these countries have nationalised from 70% to 80% of their industrial production, have strongly developed cooperatives and very powerful trade unions which enable workers and farmers to actively participate in economic reconstruction. They all have state plans and have started to mutually coordinate these plans and to conclude commercial treaties both between themselves and with other European countries.

Thus these countries are of great interest to Labour Britain not only as markets for our products and sources of raw materials and foodstuffs, the production of which may be intentionally expanded according to our prospective requirements in exchange for our nationally planned deliveries according to requirements of the corresponding countries. Their experience of planned socialist reconstruction, industrial democracy and the role played by their trade unions, cooperative societies, etc., contains much of what we ought to learn, in light of what we are trying to do in this country.

Thus comes a suggestion that the group of eight or nine Labour members of the parliament, including members of the trade unions, cooperative societies, experts on agriculture, and those who have general knowledge of international affairs should visit the main countries of Eastern Europe, in order to conduct on-site studies of the nature and accomplishment of their national plans and their mutual international economic relations. The results of this study would not only help these members of parliament to play their role in the Chamber, but it would be of interest for all the parliamentary factions and should be brought to the attention of parliament and the country, as well as any interested members of the government. The members of parliament undertaking such a trip should therefore be prepared to work hard and present a kind of collective report and proposals on their return.

The schedule:

It is expected that the group will leave approximately on September, 25 and will spend six days in Czechoslovakia, five days in Yugoslavia, eight days in the USSR and five days in Poland. To save time they will travel by airplane. This group will take off from London for Prague, from Prague to Belgrade, from Belgrade to Moscow, from Moscow to Warsaw and from Warsaw to London. It means that we should return by the 22nd of October.

Preparation:

Members of this group should have at their disposal literature on state plans, trade agreements and as much as possible about the demands which we could meet, and about the exports available for us from the planned countries of visits. These materials will partly be provided by the embassies of the corresponding countries and partly by the library of the House of Commons.

Distribution of obligations:

Before the departure group members should agree among themselves the division of the topics for the forthcoming studies: for example, one person shall take the topic of cooperative societies, the other - trade unions, the third - factory councils and committees, the fourth - agriculture, the fifth - general political issues of the state plan, and so on. The relevant ministries will be informed in advance about the specific purposes of the corresponding members of the group, which at first will collectively establish contacts and discuss with senior officials general aspects and then go their separate ways to have discussions and visits in accordance with their specific goals.. After this they will write out, compare and discuss the obtained information at the group sessions that are to be held at least two or three times a week.

The secretary:

The group shall take a secretary, as otherwise it would be impossible to complete the work.

Translated by [signature] (J. Modin)

[FPARF, f. 06, inv. 9, fold. 35, file 486, pp. 3, 25-28]

Keywords: post-war Eastern Europe

1. Probably written by Konni Zilliacus, Labour MP and member and unofficial Head of the delegation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Reeves, Joseph (1888–1964) - British Labour politician. Member of Parliament (1945 - 1959). Vice-chairman of the Society for Improving Relations between Great Britain and the USSR. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lee, Frederick, Baron Lee of Newton, (1906–1984) - British Labour politician. Member of Parliament (1945 - 1974). He represented the left wing of the Labour Party and was its informal leader after the death of Aneurin Bevan in 1960. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Davies, Harold, Baron Davies of Leek (1904–1985) - British Labour politician. Member of Parliament (1945 - 1970). Davies was on the left wing of the Labour Party and was one of the participants in the Keep Left group. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)