From the Diary of Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain, Ya.A. Malik, record of a conversation with the State Minister of Great Britain, Selwyn Lloyd, dated 21 August 1953

USSR EMBASSY

IN GREAT BRITAIN

No. 348

MINUTES OF CONVERSATION WITH THE STATE MINISTER OF GREAT BRITAIN SELWYN LLOYD

On 10 August, I visited Selwyn Lloyd[[1]](#footnote-1) at his request.

Lloyd said that he invited me with regards to the Englishman Sanders, who was arrested by the Hungarian government and remains in prison in Hungary[[2]](#footnote-2). After a brief introduction, Lloyd started reading a diplomatic note, which had been prepared earlier and printed on headed paper and which he had probably intended to pass onto me.

Having listened to a couple of phrases, I immediately remarked that I was not clear what the Soviet Union had to do with this problem and that the British government had every opportunity to discuss the issue directly with the Hungarian government.

Lloyd, who probably felt uneasy, stopped reading the note and began explaining its content in his own words. He said that the British government requested the Soviet government to help with freeing Sanders, and that as soon as Sanders was freed, the British government would immediately restore trade relations with Hungary, which had been terminated in response to Sanders’s arrest. This, in the opinion of the British government, will be a step towards the reduction of existing tensions between East and West. Lloyd added that the British *chargé d’affaires* had recently addressed the Hungarian Foreign Ministry with regards to this issue, but the Hungarian government had not yet responded to that request. Lloyd remarked several times that he understood that the Soviet government was not in the position to order the Hungarian government, but that the British government is askking the government of USSR to show the same goodwill as in the case when it helped free British nationals who had been interned in North Korea.

I pointed out to Lloyd that these two cases were not analogous.

Having agreed with that, Lloyd remarked that if, for example, the Soviet Union had encountered a contentious problem in relations with Australia and if the Soviet government had addressed the British government with a request to help resolve it, then the latter would have agreed to help. Lloyd then repeated that the resolution of the issue with regards to Sanders would help reduce tensions in relations between East and West and asked to relay the request of the British government to the Soviet government.

Having said that I would obviously inform the USSR Foreign Ministry about the conversation with him, I underlined that he must be aware that there could not be analogy between Anglo-Australian and Soviet-Hungarian relations, and that Britain and Hungary had every chance to regulate directly the issues arising between the two.

Lloyd did not go back to this question and moved on, as I expected, to the forthcoming session of the General Assembly on 17 August.

Thus, the conversation about Sanders was clearly a clumsy excuse for the British minister to meet up with the Soviet ambassador before the former’s departure to the USA.

Lloyd began by informing me he was on that same day departing for the USA for the session of the General Assembly.

He then declared that large disagreements could arise at that session, but that the British government was of the opinion that that session of the [General] Assembly should be short and limited to only procedural side of the question surrounding the political conference on Korea.

Replying to my question what Lloyd meant by “procedural side of the question,” he replied that what he meant was to agree on UN participants, the approximate date and location of the conference.

Lloyd said later that he, as the head of the British delegation at the session, wanted to discuss the main issues with other representatives of UN member states and, in particular, to convey the position of the British delegation to the Soviet representatives, inorder to exchange opinions, possibly in their final form, even before the start of the session in New York.

Lloyd then informed me that in the opinion of the British government, the session of the upcoming General Assembly should adopt a brief resolution stipulating that the UN welcomed the signing of a truce in Korea; that, in accordance with the terms of the truce, a political conference would take place with the goal to provide a final resolution of the Korean conflict. The resolution should also include invitations to the governments of the PRC and North Korea to participate in the conference.

In the conversation that followed, Lloyd explained that the British government believed that the political conference should not include a large number of participants. The British government considers it unwise to convene the conference without Soviet participation. USA, the UK, France, South Korea, and further three to four countries such as India, Turkey and possibly some other country should participate at the conference. Independently from the number of participants, he said, the British government believed that voting was not the way in which decisions should be made. The conference should be a roundtable conference, with decisions not subject to a vote. Lloyd underlined that voting at the conference would be useless since it could not force, for example, the PRC government to implement these decisions if they did not agree with them. Lloyd also declared that the agenda for the session of the General Assembly should not include “such a controversial issues” as ws the accession of the PRC to the UN because in such a case the session would last for too long and the debates would become too heated.

Regarding the agenda for the political conference, Lloyd said that the question of Korea should be the primary issue under consideration. If discussion went well, then the British government had no objection to discussion on other Fast Eastern questions, such as the accession of the PRC to the UN, the Formosa question, the issue of trade with China, and, possibly, the question of Indochina.

During our conversation, Lloyd said that he did not know if I intended to comment on the issues he had presented, but he still wanted to inform me preliminarily about the position of the British delegation on those questions.

Having listened to his statements on the abovementioned issues, I underlined, in line with the existing guidelines, that the composition, agenda, date and venue for the conference can be determined only with acquiescence from both sides who had signed the truce in Korea. Thus one cannot decide on such questions unilaterally.

When Lloyd told me that the UN resolution had to include an “invitation” for the PRC and North Korea to participate in the conference, I drew his attention to the fact that the PRC and the DPRK had signed the truce agreement, which included a provision for the conveneing of a conference, and therefore the question of an invitation could not even arise because by signing the agreement, the two agreed to the convening of the conference.

Regarding Lloyd’s request not to make “public discussions” on issues at the session of the Assembly, I said, with reference to experience, that the Assembly could hardly be convened without public discussion on the questions.

During our conversation, Lloyd stated that the Assembly should not determine the agenda for the political conference but the makeup of the UN delegation. Regarding the date of the conference, the Assembly had the right to express an opinion on these questions and send invitations to the governments of the PRC and North Korea.

At the end of the conversation, Lloyd noted that many articles had been published in the newspapers about the alleged agreement between Dulles and Yi Seung-man[[3]](#footnote-3) about the political conference on Korea and asked those journalistic fabrications should not be believed because the USA and South Korea could not decide on the question unilaterally.

I replied that, independently of the newspaper articles, it was clear that actions of Yi Seung-man were result of encouragement and directed against peaceful resolution of the Korean question. Lloyd briefly stated that he doubted that.

In conclusion Lloyd said that he wanted the content of our conversation on the Korean question to be conveyed to A.Ya. Vyshinskii and that he wanted to meet Vyshinskii in New York before the beginning of the Assembly session. I promised to do that.

Lloyd suggested that representatives of the press, if they became interested, should be told that we conversed on routine questions. I did not object.

The conversation lasted for 30 minutes. The First Secretary of the embassy, Comrade G.M. Rodionov was present.

Remark: no message about my conversation with Lloyd appeared in the press. Evidently, they decided it was best to keep silent about the meeting because of my unfavourable attitude towards Lloyd’s statement on the issue of Sanders.

USSR AMBASSADOR IN GREAT BRITAIN Ya.A. MALIK

[FPARF, f. 6, inv.12а, fold. 217, file 47, pp. 73-78]

Keywords: United Nations, Post-war Asia, China, Korea

1. Lloyd, John Selwyn Brooke (1904–1978) – Baron Selwyn-Lloyd, British political figure, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (1951–1954), Foreign Secretary (1955–1960), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1960–1962), Speaker of the House of Commons (1971–1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sanders, Edgar – British citizen, one of three expatriate employees (the other two were the American Robert Vogler and the Hungarian Imre Geiger) of the International Telegraph and Telephone Сompany of the United States who were arrested by the Hungarian authorities in November 1949 on charges of espionage. Sanders was sentenced to 13 years and was denied contact with British representatives. The incident provided the British with a reason to cease trade talks with Hungary. The latter proposed that the British Government exchange Sanders for the Chinese Communist Lee Meng, but without result. Questions about Sanders’s fate were put before the House of Commons several times. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rhee, Syngman (1875–1965) – President of South Korea (1948–1960). Re-elected four times to this post, he became famous for his dictatorial style of rule. As a result of mass demonstrations against the falsification of electoral results (known as the “April Revolution”), he was forced to resign and emigrate to the USA. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)