Note by the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, A.Y. Vyshinsky, to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, I.V, Stalin, dated May 1945[[1]](#footnote-1)

Secret

To Comrade I.V. Stalin

The British Government, with Ambassador Kerr’s notes from 18 October, 8 November and 1 December 1944, has invited the Soviet government to start tripartite talks in London with representatives of the US and UK governments (later joined by the French government) on the establishment of the European Coal Organization[[2]](#footnote-2) and the European Economic Committee[[3]](#footnote-3).

The US government supported the British government’s proposal. We believed that the British proposal for the establishment of the European Coal Organization and the European Economic Committee is not in the interests of the Soviet Union for the following reasons:

A) It is an attempt by the British to consolidate its leading role in the resolution of the post-war economic problems in Europe;

B) It is intended to limit the role of the Soviet Union in resolving the problems of reparations and, accordingly, to reduce the sum of reparations to the Soviet Union;

C) It is intended to delay possible future Soviet economic penetrations into Eastern, South-Eastern and Northern European countries.

However, we thought it would be possible to go on the proposed negotiations for the following reasons:

A) If the Soviet Union were to refuse to participate in these negotiations, then Britain and the United States would be able come to an agreement without the Soviet Union’s role in resolving European economic problems;

B) By participating in the negotiations, the Soviet Union could better protect its interests and make the most of these organizations to the benefit of the Soviet Union, in particular by imparting consultative nature on them.

In regards to this, the Soviet government has agreed to start informal talks of exploratory nature in London on the establishment of the above-mentioned organizations.

Our representatives were instructed to find out in more detail about the intentions of the British and Americans, and not to make any promises to support these organizations. If the British and the Americans began pushing for a quick decision on the establishment of the Coal and the Economic Committee, our representatives were encouraged to say that we agree to participate in informal negotiations on the establishment of the European Coal Organization. As to the European Economic Committee, our representatives were encouraged to indicate to the British and Americans that due to the presence of significant amount of various economic agencies of an international nature, the creation of a new European Economic Committee is inappropriate. Moreover, the argument that was recommended to be put forward was that, since the question of establishing the International Economic and Social Council and the regional organizations of this Council is to be discussed at the San Francisco conference, it would then be inappropriate to now decide on the establishment of the European Economic Committee.

However, the British and the Americans did not agree with our arguments and proposed 18 May as the day to convene Conference on the creation of the European Coal Organization and 25 May as the day for the Conference on the European Economic Committee.

During the discussion on establishment of the European Coal Organization a fundamental divergence had emerged between the Soviet delegation and the delegations of the United States, Britain and France on the question regarding German coal. The British, the Americans and the French believe that the European Coal Organization is now currently able to proceed to some extent with the distribution of German coal.

From our perspective, the distribution of German coal can take place only after German coal supply has been ensured towards reparations.

I am submitting a proposal to inform the British and the Americans that we consider the convening of these conferences to be untimely. If the British and the Americans do not accept this offer and if the organizations are to be created without our participation, then the Soviet Union's interests would not be affected, since the distribution of German coal will be carried out under the supervision of the Allied Control authorities in Germany, and the absence of our representatives in the European Economic Committee will allow us to preserve our freedom of action in the sphere of economic policy in Eastern Europe.

                                                                                                      A. Vyshinsky.

[FPARF, f. 07, inv. 10, fold. 7, file, pp. 48-50]

Keywords: inter-allied relations, post-war Western Europe

1. The document does not bear an exact date, only May 1945. Judging by the Soviet Government’s subsequent declarations, these ideas were approved by Stalin (See The directives to Gusev in London of 15 May 1945, but also the Soviet Government’s note in reply to notes received from the British Foreign Office on 3 May 1945 in: AVP RF. F. 046. Op. 3. P. 7. D. 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It was created in London in May 1945; its prototype was the Solid Fuels Committee which acted under the Supreme Command of the Allied Expeditionary Forces during the war. It included representatives from the USA, Great Britain, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway and Turkey. The USSR held back from participating in it. See: Samuels N. The European Coal Organization // Foreign Affairs. 1948. Vol. 26. No. 4. P. 728–736. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Emergency Economic Committee for Europe. It was created in May 1945 in London by representatives from nine Allied governments. It ‘advised on economic issues during the last phase of the war and the transitional period directly thereafter, but also on subsequent reconstruction and longer-term development’ (Schipper F. Driving Europe: Building Europe on Roads in the Twentieth Century. Amsterdam, 2008. P. 164). It is evident from Churchill’s response to the House of Commons on 31 May that the Prime Minister did not exclude the possibility that the committee would fulfill a coordinating function in relation to the different organisations working in the field of European reconstruction (coal, transport, etc.). See: Hansard. Parliamentary Debates. 5th Series. Vol. 411. Col. 355. House of Commons, 31/05/1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)