Letter from A. Zhdanov[[1]](#footnote-1) to Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, I.V. Stalin, 27 July 1946

To Comrade Stalin

On the 29th of July the delegation of the British Labour party (Harold Laski[[2]](#footnote-2), Morgan Phillips[[3]](#footnote-3), Harold Clay[[4]](#footnote-4) and Alice Bacon[[5]](#footnote-5)) will arrive in Moscow. I attach a draft programme for the delegation’s stay and considerations regarding the character of possible political discussions with the delegation, prepared by Comrades Suslov[[6]](#footnote-6) and Vyshinsky, as well as a reference on the delegation’s visit.

Awaiting your directions.

[signature] (A. Zhdanov)

27 July 1946

[…]

ON THE TOPICS OF DISCUSSION WITH THE DELEGATION

OF THE LABOUR PARTY

There should be no initiative in putting any questions to the delegation from our side. If the Labour delegation on its own initiative poses the question of strengthening friendship between Great Britain and the USSR, we could, in our turn, pose the following questions:

1. On stopping the anti-Soviet libellous propaganda in Britain:

(a) lies about the USSR being an aggressive country;

(b) stories about the ‘iron curtain’ and the USSR’s intention to ‘sovietise’ neighbouring states;

(c) libellous portrayal of the USSR as the clandestine mastermind behind the communist parties in various countries, etc.

1. Curbing the instigators of war in Britain (Churchill and others).
2. On the anti-Soviet position of the British Government on certain issues in the UNO (the Iranian issue and attacks on the issue of right to veto are still on the Security Council’s agenda).
3. On the support by the British Government of fascist and semi-fascist regimes:
4. The Greek issue
5. The Spanish issue
6. The Issue of Indonesia.
7. On the support by the British Government of reactionary elements:
8. The so-called deported persons in Austria and Germany;
9. Material support of Anders’s army, support of reactionary forces in Poland and Arciszewski’s reactionary clique in Britain;
10. Support of reactionary and anti-Soviet leaders of the so-called ‘historical parties’ of Maniu and Bratianu in Romania.
11. The Bulgarian issue. The policy of the British Government as regards Bulgaria (neglect of the decision of the Moscow conference on acknowledging Bulgarian Government and support of the so-called opposition of Patriotic front).
12. On the policy of the British Government as regards Germany (neglect of the Potsdam agreement on Denazification, on reparations to the USSR).

The general issues regarding Germany as covered by Comrade Molotov at the Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers.

1. On the British Government’s attitude towards the Soviet Baltic Republics[[7]](#footnote-7):
2. On returning the gold;
3. On returning the steamers.
4. On the repatriation of the Soviet citizens.

REFERENCE

on the Arrival to the USSR of the ‘Good Will’ Delegation

of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party

On the 6th of June 1946 Acting Chargé d’Affaires of the USSR in London, Comrade Kukin[[8]](#footnote-8), received a letter from the Secretary of the Labour Party, Morgan Phillips, whereby the latter asked whether an opportunity to visit the Soviet Union could be granted to the ‘Good Will’ delegation of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, including: H.J. Laski, Harold Clay, Alice Bacon and Morgan Phillips.

While reporting it, Comrade Kukin has specifically noted that Morgan Phillips, in his talks with correspondents on the 6th of June has made a false statement that “he had applied to the Soviet Embassy a few days ago but had not received any reply”, in order to conceal from the public the fact that this letter had been sent out 5 days before the Labour Party conference and after Bevin’s speech (in the House of Commons on the 4th of June 1946[[9]](#footnote-9)).

Comrade Kukin believed that the decision of the Labour Party to send the delegation to the Soviet Union needed to be considered as a manoeuvre whereby the Labour management wanted to calm down those Labour circles that were displeased with the foreign policy of the Labour Government and were anxious about deteriorating British-Soviet relations. This manoeuvre was meant to demonstrate that they were doing everything within their powers to maintain friendly relations with the Soviet Union.

Comrade Kukin thought it desirable to publish, by the 10th of June, an article that would expose this manoeuvre of the Labour Party leaders.

Comrade Molotov on the 10th of June 1946 instructed Comrade Kukin to send out a letter of reply to Phillips saying that he had informed the Soviet Government of Phillips’s address and that the Soviet Government had expressed its consent to the arrival to the Soviet Union of the ‘Good Will’ delegation of the Labour Party National Executive Committee.

On the 10th of June a communication was published in *Pravda* and other Soviet newspapers under the heading “On the Arrival to the USSR of the ‘Good Will’ delegation of the Labour Party National Executive Committee”, in which factual reference to the delegation’s arrival to the Soviet Union was given.

It was specially stated in the communication that it was not the first time that the question of the Labour Party delegation visit to the USSR had been raised, and that the Soviet Government had always been positive on this question.

On the 15th of June 1946 Acting Chargé d’Affaires of the USSR in Britain, Comrade Kukin, was paid a visit by Morgan Phillips, the Labour Party Secretary.

Morgan Phillips communicated that the delegation of the Labour Party was going to the USSR to express the feelings of the British people, especially the Labour movement, to the peoples of the Soviet Union, and to meet with Soviet trade union and political activists. Morgan Phillips himself intended to use the visit to study the Soviet system. He had never been to the Soviet Union and was very pleased with the forthcoming visit.

In reply to Comrade Kukin’s questions, Morgan Phillips communicated:

1. The delegation plans to take a flight from London via Berlin on the 27th of July.
2. Plans to stay in the USSR for about two weeks.
3. Will not express any wishes to meet with this or that political or trade union figure and will allow us to decide on the issue ourselves.
4. Has no issues that it would like to discuss in Moscow.
5. Will have no objections if it is offered to visit other places in the USSR apart from Moscow.

Comrade Kukin reminded Morgan Phillips that Laski, during his visit to Moscow in 1941, was going to talk about his plan for an Organisation of the International Socialist Movement. Morgan Phillips communicated that Laski had given up his plan for the organisation of a United International, as the Labour Party Executive Committee had spoken against the organisation of any kind of international.

According to Phillips, this position of the Labour Party was stipulated by the following practical issues:

1. Labour would not object against co-operation with VKP(b), but they were against co-operation with the British Communist Party, therefore they considered it impossible to participate in the United International.
2. It is difficult to organise the United International due to different relationships between socialist and communist parties in the countries of Europe.
3. If the Socialist International was to be revived, it would be difficult not to admit emigrant parties of Poland, Russia, and Baltic States into it.
4. The Labour Party does not want to take upon itself any obligations and does not want to receive instructions from any international organisation whatsoever.
5. If a Socialist International is created without communists, this would inevitably lead to the organisation of a Communist International.

In view of all of the above, said Phillips, the Labour Party currently recognises the conferences of Social-Democratic parties, periodically convened to exchange information, as the only acceptable way of its liaising with other Social-Democratic parties. Such a conference had been recently held in London and would be reconvened in November 1946.

On the 8th of July 1946 the Soviet Embassy in London issued visas to the members of the delegation: Harold Laski, Miss Alice Bacon, Harold Clay, and Morgan Phillips.

The delegation plans to fly from Britain to Berlin on the 28th of July this year.

[APRF, f. 3, inv. 64, file 398, pp. 24–32]

Keywords: post-war USSR, inter-allied relations

1. Zhdanov, Andrei Aleksandrovich (1896 – 1948) – Soviet statesman and Party figure. Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (1934 – 1948), Chairman of the Soviet of the Union of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1946 – 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Laski, Harold (1893 – 1950) – member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. Chairman of the Party’s Executive Committee (1945–1946); Professor of Political Sciences at the London School of Economics (1926–1950), political theorist and journalist. According to the characterisation given in the Soviet reference, “notwithstanding his remarks on the need for improvement of British -Soviet relations, he is one of the ideological masterminds behind the anti-Soviet politics carried out by the British Labour Government” (AP RF, f. 3, inv. 64, file. 398, p. 17). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Phillips, Morgan (1902 – 1963) – secretary of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party. According to the characterisation given in the Soviet reference, “though seemingly loyal, in fact hostile towards the Soviet Union” (AP RF. F. 3. Inv. 64. File. 398. p. 19). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Clay, Harold (1886 – 1961) – Member of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party representing the Transport and non-General Workers Union, assistant to the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. Since 1938 – Chairman of the London Labour Party. According to the Soviet characterisation, “Clay is Bevin’s man, fully sharing his political views and his policy” (AP RF, f. 3, inv. 64, file 398, p. 20). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bacon, Alice (1909 – 1993) – Member of Parliament for North East Leeds, member of the national Executive Committee of the Labour Party (elected as a representative of the female Labour organisations). A teacher. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Suslov, Mikhail Andreevich (1902 – 1982) – Soviet statesman and Party figure, leader of Foreign Policy (Foreign Relations) Section of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (1946 – 1947, 1953 – 1954), Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1947 – 1982; before 1952 – of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The question of reciprocal property claims that arose in Anglo-Soviet relations with the inclusion of the Baltic States within the USSR was only settled in the course of the visit to Britain by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, A.N. Kosygin in February 1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Kukin, Konstantin Mikhailovich (1897 – 1979) – Soviet diplomat and intelligence officer, official at the British Embassy in the USSR (1943 – 1947 гг.). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In his speech Bevin inveighed against the Soviet position on various international issues, but also emphasized his disagreement with the theory of ‘running through all the speeches and writings of our Soviet friends, the theory that they alone represent the workers, they alone are democratic.’ See: Hansard. Parliamentary Debates. 5th Series. Vol. 423. Col. 1825–1860. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)