Note from M. Peterson, British Ambassador in Moscow, to A. Molotov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, containing a record of the conversation between Mr Bevin and Messrs Zarubin and Kukin, dated 3 February 1947

Received 3 February 1947. Translation from English

CONFIDENTIAL THE BRITISH EMBASSY

(104/33/47) Moscow

2 February 1947

Dear Mr Molotov,

Mr Bevin entrusted me with sending the enclosed record of the conversation between Mr Bevin and Messrs Zarubin[[1]](#footnote-1) and Kukin[[2]](#footnote-2) on 27 January and confirming that the record contains Mr Bevin’s summary of what has taken place.

Rest assured, esteemed Mr Molotov,

Yours sincerely,

Maurice PETERSON[[3]](#footnote-3)

To His Excellency

Mr V.M. MOLOTOV,

Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Moscow

In handwriting: [To Comrade Soldatov[[4]](#footnote-4). Compare the telegram from Comrade Zarubin and this record and prepare a memorandum if there are any discrepancies]. [Signed] V.M. MOLOTOV 4.2.47

Translated [signature] (O. Troyanovsky)

Sent to: Stalin, Molotov, Beria, Zhdanov, Malenkov, Mikoyan, Vosznesensky, Vyshinsky, Dekanozov, Gusev, Zarubin (London), European Department, to file.

Translated from English

Mr Zarubin, accompanied by Mr Kukin, called on me on 27 January. After the exchange of courtesies, during which I said that if the Soviet Government ever doubts our actions or our way of tackling the problems, the best way to get explanations and to avoid misunderstandings is to meet with me, he enquired after the reply from Generalissimo Stalin regarding the treaty and especially about the last part of this reply. I told him that we welcome this reply and study it, and that the Generalissimo may expect a communication from us in the nearest future. He must bear in mind that there are a number of conferences and meetings taking place presently, but we will deal with this issue at our earliest opportunity.

2. Mr Kukin then touched upon the issue of standardisation[[5]](#footnote-5) and asked whether the agreement has been reached. I told him that the agreement has not been reached yet, but I must frankly say that the information exchange, that had led to common standards, had been very useful during the war and we resumed it. I pointed out to him that when we fought alone in 1940 and our internal defence brigades did not have rifles to repel the invasion, the Americans sold a big supply of rifles to us but did not have any ammunition for them, while our own ammunition did not fit. This attracted our attention to the fact that if we ever have to oppose an aggressor again, it would be useful for both countries to agree on standards. A wide mutual exchange took place during the war, which was useful for the Russians as well as for us, and as far as I know the Soviet Union carried out standardisation with Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, while all the produce of Skoda plants is now in fact based on the Russian standard. Mr Kukin said this was not known to him. I said that our data confirms it. I told him that I cannot understand the anxiety caused by such issue, as I believe that common peace depends greatly on the USSR, the USA and ourselves, and that sooner or later we will have to address this problem, especially if we are going to implement clause 43 of the Charter sometime[[6]](#footnote-6). However, nothing has been decided yet except continuing the exchange of useful information, which started during the war and proved to be mutually beneficial.

3. Mr Kukin then raised the issue of the American interest in Middle Eastern oil and the proposal on the Palestinian oil pipeline[[7]](#footnote-7). I told him that in my opinion there is nothing of significance here: this is a purely commercial enterprise. It has no other meaning than that. We have oil for sale. We sell it to American companies and make the best plan for getting this oil for consumption to Europe. No part of this oil is used for any purposes against the Russians. Furthermore, I believe that an exchange of views with the Soviet Government on the oil issue during my visit to Moscow may prove very useful. I told him that, as I understood it, there was an impression that we opposed the Russian concession in Azerbaijan. I said that we did nothing of the kind, that our interests lie with the South, and that we do not want to be disturbed there. With regard to the North, we will not obstruct any concessions which the USSR might want to have in this part of Persia. However, as both our countries may have concessions in Persia, we aim that these concessions are not used for undermining the independence of Persia and that they do not lead to interference in the political administration of Persia. Mr Kukin said that Persia has been a source of conflict between Great Britain and Russia for a long time, but he expressed his sincere gratitude for what I had told him.

4. Further I said that the Middle East is of the utmost importance for us; the Middle East for us is a vitally important communication line and we intend to preserve it. My wish to do so was strengthened by Generalissimo himself during my latest visit to Moscow. The Generalissimo then expressed his hope that we would not leave this region, as he quite understands that the region is extremely vulnerable and its defence must be supported. I said that we consider this problem only from the defence standpoint. Unless we did it like this, we could have lost the Second, if not the First, World War.

5. Mr Kukin then mentioned Germany. I said that we never doubted the goals of the USSR. I never thought that the USSR would be at war with the British Empire or the United States and cannot imagine it. However, I am most concerned about continuing disagreements that take place on the German issue. We tried to implement the Potsdam decision, but there seems to be a propensity to attack us rather than address the problem of how to contain Germany. I do not believe that the conversion of a Nazi into a Communist or Social Democrat or Christian Democrat provides us with any security for the years to come. A German will always remain German. If he sees the opportunity to get to power again, his militant spirit will prevail. I believe that we have to take into account the lessons of the First World War, and when meeting in Moscow, the Four should aim to reconcile our approaches to the issue and to try and put together such a plan that, while allowing the German to live and apply his diligence, would exempt us from expenditure on his maintenance and would ensure at the same time our mutual security. I approached this issue on the basis of a federal Germany, as I deadly fear its high centralisation. On the other hand I believe that the USSR is more reliant on a centralised Germany. This depends on the standpoint, and I hope that the most open exchange of views on this issue will take place in order to reach the right decision. I understand the anxiety of the French, and I think that if I were French, I would fear a highly centralized Germany as much as they do.

6. Mr Kukin then returned to the issue of armament, and I told him that I believe that we must ensure collective security. Our country cannot become an outpost for saving other countries once again. If the world security is to be supported, there should be a collective security ensuring that simultaneous actions are taken if an aggressor attacks, so that no one of us finds himself in the same difficult situation as we had been in 1939-1945. My main goal is to prevent Germany from turning to a new arsenal, and His Majesty’s Government will fully cooperate with its allies.

7. In conclusion I expressed a wish that we get an opportunity to resolve these problems so that we could move forward much quicker than now with the economic restoration of Europe and the whole world.

Translated by [signature] (O. Troyanovsky)

[FPARF, f. 069, inv. 31, fold. 106, file 2, pp. 29-33]

Keywords: inter-allied relations, post-war Middle East, Iran, post-war Germany

1. Zarubin, Vasily (1894 - 1972) - Soviet intelligence officer. Legal resident in the US (1941 - 1944), Deputy Chief of Foreign Intelligence (1944 - 1948). Zarubin appears to have been based in London in 1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kukin, Konstantin Mikhailovich (1897–1979), Soviet diplomat and intelligence officer. Deputy Head of Foreign Intelligence, Section 1 (1940–1943). In 1943 posted as resident foreign intelligence officer in London. In 1947 appointed concurrently Ambassador Extraordinary of the USSR in Great Britain. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Peterson, Maurice (1889-1952) - British diplomat. British Ambassador to Madrid (1939 - 1940), Assistant Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs - Middle East/Far East (1942 - 1944), British Ambassador to Ankara (1944 - 1946), British Ambassador to Moscow (1946 - 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Soldatov, Aleksandr Alekseyevich (1915–1999) - Soviet diplomat. Staff member of the central office of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1946–1948, 1952–1960), Political Advisor at the Permanent Mission of the USSR to the United Nations (1948-1952), Soviet Ambassador to the UK (1960–1966). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ISO, the International Organisation for Standardisation, establised in Geneva on 23 February 1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the original text there the text is underlined and a handwritten note added: “No indication in Zarubin’s record”. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The construction of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline began in 1947. It was assumed initially that its final point would be the port of Haifa, in Palestine. However, with the formation of the State of Israel the route of the pipeline was changed. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)