

Letter from Joseph Retinger to Guy Mollet (London, 15 April 1948)

Caption: On 15 April 1948, Joseph Retinger, Secretary-General of the International Committee of the Movements for European Unity, sends to Guy Mollet, Secretary-General of the French Socialist Party, a letter in which he refutes the criticism of the Congress of Europe held in the Hague made by the British Labour Party and the European Socialists.

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Letter from Joseph Retinger to Guy Mollet

Mr. Guy MOLLET
Honorary Secretary
French Socialist Party
PARIS

16th April, 1948

I understand that the International Socialist Conference in Paris on April 25th is likely to discuss the attitude to be adopted by the Socialist Parties towards the Congress on European Unity, which is being held at The Hague from May 7th until May 10th. I therefore venture to send you some information which may help to dispel certain misunderstandings which have arisen.

OBJECTIONS OF BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

Earlier in the year the British Labour Party raised objections to the Congress on grounds that it would be unrepresentative, particularly on the Socialist side, and that Mr. Churchill would exercise an undue influence upon its deliberations.

I addressed a letter on this subject to Mr. Morgan Phillips on the occasion of the Socialist Conference in London last month. I do not know whether the contents of my letter were conveyed to the Conference, but for the sake of easy reference I enclose a copy.

MR. CHURCHILL

I am sure you will appreciate that the suggestion that Mr. Churchill is going to try and dominate the discussions is without any foundation. It is expected that Mr. Churchill will make one speech only, and that of a general character, in the Opening Session. He will, like other delegates, listen to the subsequent debates, but it is not anticipated that he will wish to make any further intervention.

In order to preserve the political balance, the Organising Committee have invited that other great European, Monsieur Leon Blum, to deliver the principal speech in the Closing Plenary Session.

SOCIALIST REPRESENTATION

We have throughout been guided by the general principle that the political element in each national delegation should include representatives of all democratic parties in proportion to their numerical strength in their respective Parliaments.

The Constitution of the Organising Committee itself lays down that the Movements which are members of it shall, in choosing their representatives, ensure a proper balance between the various political parties. In fact, out of a committee of 22, of which several members are drawn from outside politics, eight are Socialists. Those include several Socialist Parliamentarians and a member of the Executive of the French Socialist Party.

ALLEGATIONS OF BAD FAITH

I understand that at the recent Socialist Conference in London, it was alleged that the Organising Committee had attempted to obtain support for the Congress by claiming falsely that prominent Socialists, in particular, Monsieur Spaak, Monsieur Blum, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. Dalton had accepted to attend the Hague Congress, whereas, in fact, they had not.

A full and detailed reply to this charge was given to you orally. I shall, therefore, confine myself to stating the following facts:-

When the holding of the Congress was first announced, Sir Stafford Cripps informed me of his willingness to make a speech on a cultural or spiritual topic during the course of the Congress. Monsieur Spaak likewise told me that he would address the delegates at The Hague on the political problems of European Unity. This information was quite properly given to Monsieur Blum at the time when he was invited to attend the Congress and we received from him a letter of acceptance.

After the disagreement which arose with the British Labour Party, we realised that these gentlemen might feel it necessary to reconsider their decision and we have, therefore, since then made no further use of their names in approaching others.

I do not understand how the suggestion that Mr. Dalton's name has been improperly used has arisen. I have made full enquiries and am satisfied that no member of our committee or anyone speaking on its behalf has at any time stated that Mr. Dalton had accepted to attend the Hague Congress.

I hope that the particulars I have given above will help to clarify the situation. If there is any further information you desire, I shall be glad to place it at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. J. H. Retinger
Honorary Secretary
Joint International Committee