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FILE

112a

PF. 44990/B. L. b/WMD.

To: G. T. D. Patterson, Esq.,
British Embassy, Washington.

From: Director-General.

With reference to your letter W.1076 dated 18th February 1949, and to our letter of the 2nd April concerning Paul ROBESON, we are enclosing some details of his movements in this country between his arrival in February and his departure at the end of May 1949. — See 110a

It is believed that ROBESON was joined in Warsaw by Peter BLACKMAN, the Barbados negro mentioned in paragraph 2 of the attached note, and that ROBESON and BLACKMAN travelled together to Moscow via Prague.

The most recent Press reports say that ROBESON has taken part in the Pushkin centenary celebrations and considerable use of his name has been made in radio broadcasts from Moscow. Additional copies of the report on ROBESON are enclosed should you wish to pass one on to the F. B. I. Mr. Cimperman has already received one here.

21. 6. 49.
WMD/DW

h. J. [unclear]
Sir Percy Gillitoe.

3 Enclosures.

SECRET

[Signature]
21. 7. 49.

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FILE

Copy to ~~G. T. D. Patterson, Esq.,
British Embassy, Washington.~~

111a

21st June 1949.

44990/B. J. b./111a

Dear Mr. Cimperman,

With reference to your letter no. 2679 of the 4th April 1949 concerning Paul ROBESON's activities in this country, we are sending you ~~some~~ details of his movements between ^{see 110a} his arrival in February and his departure for Prague in May 1949. It is believed that ROBESON was met by Peter BLACHOWAN, mentioned in paragraph 2 of the attached note, in Warsaw and that they travelled together to Moscow via Prague.

Recent press reports, which you have no doubt seen, indicate that ROBESON was seen at the Pushkin anniversary celebrations in Moscow and had been enthusiastically received there.

Yours sincerely,

H. J. B. Bagot.
H. J. B. Bagot.

J. A. Cimperman, Esq.,
American Embassy,
1 Grosvenor Square,
London, W. 1.

1 Enclosure.

TH/DW
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3/10/49

110a

THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT
RETAINED IN DEPARTMENT
UNDER SECTION 3(4) OF
THE PUBLIC RECORDS
ACT 1958. JULY 2004

SECRET

Paul ROBESON

The following is a summary of information taken from the Press and other sources about ROBESON's activities between his arrival in the United Kingdom on 17th February 1949 and his departure on 24th May for the Czech Communist Party Conference.

1. ROBESON appears to have come over here to fulfil a normal commercial contract arranged by the well-known musical concert agent Harold FIELDING. In addition, however, he performed many other speaking and singing functions for the Communist Party and organisations sympathetic to it and is known to have placed himself at the disposal of the Party while here.
2. ROBESON was often in the company of leading Communists. Desmond BUCKLE, a trusted West Indian negro member of the British Communist Party, was in charge of his political arrangements and acted as his agent. ROBESON travelled as a rule with his accompanist, Lawrence BROWN, against whom nothing detrimental is known; Peter BLACKMAN, a Barbados negro Communist, spoke on more than one occasion on the same platform.
3. It is said that ROBESON asked that a percentage of the collections made at political meetings at which he appeared should be allotted to an "African fund". ROBESON made much of his representation of "oppressed peoples" with special mention of the condition of negroes in the United States, and it was remarked that many Indians and negroes attended his meetings especially in London and Liverpool. British Communist Party Headquarters were well pleased with ROBESON's activities, particularly with regard to negroes and colonial students in this country.
4. His political pronouncements were fervent but vague. While not admitting in as many words to membership of the Communist Party, ROBESON made it plain that he sympathised entirely with its aims.
5. It was noticed that ROBESON preferred songs of a revolutionary flavour, including some in Russian. There was a tendency to alter the words, especially in the inevitable "Ole Man Ribber", into a form more acceptable to militant "progressives".
6. ROBESON was in general well received in this country, though clearly those of his audience who were not already of extreme views came more for entertainment than for political instruction.
7. An idea of returning to the United States for a time before going to Eastern Europe would seem to have been abandoned. ROBESON is said to have expressed the fear that he would not be allowed by United States officials to leave again. There was some talk of his visiting Israel, Greece and even China later this year.

8. Movements known:-

17th February 1949. Arrived at Southampton.

6th March. Sang at the Davis Theatre, Croydon, and subsequently received delegations of African students and representatives of the Croydon International Language Club, the British-Soviet Society and the Peace Campaign Committee.

9th March. Spoke and sang in Glasgow as guest of the Scottish-U. S. S. R. Society. ROBESON announced, according to the "Daily Worker", that he would interrupt his world tour to return to New York to speak for the defence at the trial of 12 leading Communists.

Will review of B. L. a.

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21.7.49

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12th March. Attended a film show and reception at the Russian Embassy in company with two other unidentified Americans.

17th March. Reported to be in Sheffield.

25th March. Spoke at Friends' House, Marylebone, London, at a meeting called "to protest against racial discrimination". With ROBESON on the platform were the well-known Communists Yusuf Mohamed DADOO, a South African Indian, and the Rev. Michael SCOTT.

28th March. Said to have been in Wales.

31st March. Spoke and sang at a Communist political meeting at the Mile End Baths, Stepney, London, and afterwards attended a reception.

1st April. Reported to have spoken to a group of about 50 selected London Communists on the colour question. ROBESON is said to have claimed that Henry WALLACE, in his most recent talk with him, declared that Marxism would be the only solution to the problems of the world.

8th April. Sang at the Polish Embassy. The audience is reported to have included representatives of the Russian and other satellite embassies together with British Communist sympathisers. ROBESON was reported in the "Diplomatic Bulletin" as having stated that he would be returning to the United States after a short concert tour in Scandinavia. Later in this year he would go to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Poland and the Soviet Union. He hoped to be in Moscow for the Pushkin anniversary celebrations in June. He would return to the United Kingdom to play "Othello".

10th April. Attended a dinner in Manchester organised in his honour by the New International Society.

17th April. Gave the first of two commercial concerts at the Harringay Arena, London.

18th April. At the second concert the "Daily Worker" reported that ROBESON sang a special negro song in memory of three dead British Communists.

20th April. Reported to have spoken and sung at the opening session of the Paris Peace Congress.

21st April. Reported to have been unfavourably received in Stockholm.

23rd April. Left Sweden for Denmark.

27th April. When in Copenhagen said to have complained of hostile reception in Denmark and to have cancelled two concerts.

28th April. Left for Oslo.

5th May. Arrived at Northolt and travelled to Newcastle as guest of K. ZILLIACUS, M.P.

6th May. Spoke and sang at Gateshead (ZILLIACUS's constituency) giving three concerts organised by G.C. ESTHER, Chairman of the Gateshead Labour Party.

7th May. Spoke and sang at a Liverpool "Peace Rally" organised by the New International Society, held in St. George's Hall.

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11th May. Spoke and sang at a meeting in the Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, organised by the Manchester and Cheshire Federation of Trade Councils and the New International Society.

15th May. Spoke and sang at a meeting in the City Hall, Sheffield, organised by the People's Press Printing Society (which publishes the "Daily Worker").

17th May. Spoke and sang at five "report back" meetings in London on the Paris Peace Congress organised by the Communist-dominated British Cultural Committee for Peace.

23rd May. Spoke and sang at the Electrical Trade Union Conference at Worthing. This was described as ROBESON's "first appearance at a Trade Union conference".

24th May. Left Northolt Airport for Prague where he was reported to be attending the Czech Communist Conference.

14th June 1949.

EXTRACT

for File No.: P.F. 44,990 Name: ROBESON, Paul
 in File No.: S.F. 411/Poland Vol 4. Serial: 202aa1 Receipt Date:
 original from: Cutting from 'Summary of World Broadcasts.' Under Ref: - Dated: 9.6.49.
 Extracted on: 30.8.49. by: R.Y.M, Section: R-4.

Cross Reference to Report from 'Summary of World Broadcasts'
re: The Polish Trade Union Congress - 1.6.49. - 5.6.49.
mentioning ROBESON, SAILLANT & EISLER, held at Warsaw Polytechnic.

..... Among the many foreign delegates who addressed the Congress, the most notable were SAILLANT ROBESON, and Gerhard EISLER, who arrived on the last day.

..... Names of foreign delegates attending were given in various transmissions, and included the following Louis SAILLANT, as WFTU Chairman, Paul ROBESON, and Gehard EISLER.....

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 41
 Image Reference

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EXTRACT

File No. FF 41990 Name ROBESON, Albert Paul
File No. FF 55654 Serial 1628 Receipt Date 12.6.49
nal from Intercept Letter Under Ref. Dated 4.3.49
acted on 25.7.49 by SMH Section SI

Communist.

Extract from intercept letter from Dora SCARLETT "Maifred" Creditor Devon. to Dave GOODMAN, 2, Whipple Street FLEMOUTH; ment ROBESON.

.....

About Paul ROBESON, it is inevitable that he will only have a short time to give, and we must co-operate to make the best use of him. But it would be possible for the whole thing to be muddled by people acting independently, in the dark as to each others actions, or it would be possible for the BSS to be just absorbed in the Peace Group on this occasion. I shall discuss it with Bill Wainwright when I have the opportunity, and I think that if, and when, it seems certain that ROBESON is coming again, all those who have sent requests should get together and agree a procedure. If he could spare two or three days, one solution might be that he could have meetings, at which he would just speak, for each, The International Brigade, The BSS, the Peace Group, and then a grand concert for all combined. If I had a chance I would want to ask him to speak on what the Soviet Union has done for subject Races and his own attitude to the Soviet Union, as I think this would be of very great value, but might not suit the Peace Groups. Anyway we must sort this out ourselves, we cant expect ROBESON to do it.

.....

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EXTRACT

tract for File No.: P.F. 44,990 Name: ROBESON.
 ginal in File No.: S.F. 411/Czechoslovakia Serial: 435z Receipt Date: 13.6.49.
 Original from: Int. letter Under Ref: ----- Dated: 9.6.49.
 Extracted on: 27.8.49 by: PJM Section: R. 5.

Extract from "Prague News Letter", of 9.6.49. sent to Dr. Soebandrio, 138 Notting Hill Gate, London, containing speech broadcast by Paul ROBESON, Communist, from Pargue.

CZECH BROADCAST BY PAUL ROBESON

It is a great pleasure to be speaking to you from Prague. It is a great pleasure also to say hello to my friends in Great Britain and to my friends in America. I have left the British Isles, going up and down the country, you remember, not only in concerts but singing for you with great representatives of the English people, the Dean of Canterbury. And it means much to be in this city of a great new democracy.

I have had the pleasure of singing at the Music Festival. Lists are gathered here from all over the world. I met in Mr. Olstrach, that great artist from the Soviet Union, the other night, whom I knew some time ago when I was in the land of the Soviet Republics. And we in America certainly might recall that Czechoslovakia means much to us as regards the music of this country. Dvořák, one of the great composers, came to America and was deeply moved by the music of my people in America — the music of the Negro people. You might remember that he was a friend of Harry T. Burleigh the distinguished Negro composer, that the New World Symphony uses in its first movement "Swing low, sweet chariot", that Dvořák said that this great symphony was inspired by the music of the Negro people that he heard in America and which made him feel nostalgic for his home land in Czechoslovakia.

So it is a great pleasure for me to be here singing at the Festival. I also have heard many of the Czech and Slovak choruses singing their beautiful music and here in the air of Prague, of what folk music can mean in the air of Prague, because as I heard this music I could catch themes from Haydn, Smetana, themes even from Bartók — a clear case of the folk being the core of a great art. And I myself, as you know at home, consider that I am a folk singer, essentially a folk singer of my own people's songs and the folk songs of many nations. So here I have found a wonderful audience to sing. I have sung to the youth outside of the Festival appearances and am going to sing to trade unionists at many of the factories and getting an opportunity to sing to all the Czech people. However, as you also know at home, I find my art indivisible from the struggle for freedom of the Negro people and of others, and so I have been deeply impressed by the Communist Party Congress which is being held here at the same time. The leaders of the nation migrate from all over Czechoslovakia who are here to see how they are building a new life, how they are reshaping the economy. And this lesson and this example has been most enlightening.

I was in a public square yesterday with representatives from thirty nations gathered to do honour to the Czechoslovak people and to greet their leaders and to form a bond of cooperation, not for war but for peace, for the opportunity to build constructively a new kind of world, and they, the Czechoslovak people, are quite unable to understand us in America, our hysteria, the way we are drawn along into the preparations for war by a few of our greedy men who, in the words of Wallace and in the words of Roosevelt, would sacrifice the whole American people for their selfish ends.

For myself, you know that I have been a part of the Wallace struggle. I am about to return to give my impressions of what I have seen and felt in Europe and to enter again, at a higher level, I think, the struggle for peace in the world.

In Great Britain a very important thing happened the other day — Eisler was freed! I trust that the British people will understand the meaning of this. The American Government had practically told the British Government to stand back while they went on and took Mr. Eisler off. But the British people spoke, and Eisler is free. So I hope the British people will always remember that the power is in their hands, as it was in this case, and that they can

cont. on page 3

PAUL ROBESON

(continued from page 1)

win the peace — that is the real issue. The American people can sort of take a lesson from what happened there.

I want to say that I have received all sorts of messages from all sorts of people that I am to bring back to you as a representative of the progressive forces of America, as a representative of the forces of Wallace and the Progressive Party, as one who struggles with the Ford workers who are now trying to stop the speed-up, as one who comes from the Negro share-croppers in the rank and file of the Negro people and as one who is coming back home to testify in the defence of the twelve brave Communist leaders who are on trial for their devotion to the American working-class.

As I am here in this city of the Czechoslovak people, I experience once more human dignity at its highest. I know once more what it means to walk the earth in complete freedom, with my shoulders back, no fear that anything can happen, only a friendly face, a friendly hand, and I speak as one who loves my country very deeply, who wants to see that country really and truly democratic. I know what goes on at home. I say to those who attempt to lead us in the wrong direction that as an American I have constitutional rights — we progressives have the constitutional rights — to choose our friends, and I tell those who would lead us down the wrong road that I as an American refuse to be any part of a system, of a kind of policy that would restore a fascist Germany, a fascist western Germany, the people who so oppressed this great Czech people.

I belong to that part of America that will be friends with Czechoslovakia, that will be friends with the new democracies, that will struggle for peace and co-operation with the Republic of the Soviet Union. That is my position, and I come back to America to stand by that position and to fight for peace and for the liberation of the Negro people and for a decent life for the working masses of America, and we, if we understand these things, can build a world where all of us can walk in freedom, equality and human dignity.

A GENEROUS GIFT

Paul Robeson, who sang at several popular concerts during his recent visit to Prague, has donated the entire proceeds to the International Union of Students.

The money will be used to enable students from colonial countries to participate in the forthcoming 10th World Students Games and the International Youth Festival which will take place in Budapest this summer.