

U DX347

**Papers relating to the British-Soviet
Friendship Society visit to the USSR**

1952-1992

Historical Background:

In Britain during the inter-war period, Communist groups such as the 'British-Soviet Friendship Society' and the 'Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR' were actively promoting cultural exchanges between Britain and the USSR. The Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, founded in 1924, was recognised as a British counterpart of the 'Soviet Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries' (VOKS), and, in principle, aimed to recruit new members from the limited ranks of the intelligentsia. The British-Soviet Friendship Society, established in 1927, which tried to attract supporters from a wider base, mainly from the working class, had a membership of about 12,000 individuals along with some 50,000 affiliated members in 1954.

Alderman Harry Watton visited the USSR in September 1952 as leader of the delegation organised by The British Soviet Friendship Society. Included in the delegation was the News Chronicle journalist/artist "Vicky" as an unbiased observer. The delegation (see U DX347/4) got off to a bad start with a three day delay in London due to visa problems, but eventually sailed to Ostend and then travelled by train via Prague having missed the intended flight. The group spent 12 days visiting museums, schools, hospitals and other locations including the Kremlin and the offices of Pravda; they also visited Tbilisi in Georgia.

Custodial history:

Deposited by Jean Thomas and Harry Watton, June 2011

Description:

Papers relating to a visit by a British-Soviet Friendly Society delegation to USSR in 1952.

Extent: 37 items

Related material:

British-Soviet Friendship Society, 1941-1972 [U DEV/1/24, 31, 38 & 49, U DBN/18/8, U DYO/2/33 & 35, 4/97, 111-113 & 124, 13/18]

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U DPM John Platts-Mills

Access conditions:

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

Hull History Centre: Papers relating to the British Soviet Friendship Society visit to USSR

U DX347/1	<p>USSR 1952</p> <p>Album includes newspaper cuttings and published account in the 'Birmingham Journal', Nov 1952, of the visit with particular emphasis on the working conditions and practices. The album includes correspondence about the trip and details of the visit. The album includes articles from the 'News Chronicle' with an account and numerous line drawings and sketches by 'Vicky' (Oct 1952). With many postcards, mostly black and white but some colour, of buildings the group visited. Includes tickets, currency, postcards and other ephemera from the trip. Typescript notes and recollections of the trip upon his return that became the article published by the 'Birmingham Journal' and notes possibly for a talk under a range of sub-headings including the Kremlin, Welfare, Education. Also includes postcards sent to his wife and personal letters written by his wife and sent to him in Moscow during his stay.</p> <p>Some items in Russian.</p> <p>1 item</p>	1952
U DX347/2	<p>Slipcase containing loose photographs</p> <p>Series of photographs showing the group visiting a number of sites and schools including the Balneological Institute in Tbilisi; the Tbilisi Palace of Pioneers; the Park of Culture and Rest in Tbilisi; the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow; the Permanent USSR Construction Exhibition; at a Collective Farm in Zugdidi District of Georgian SSR including with two heroes "of Socialist labour" Tamara Kupnia and Makatsaria; at the Home Museum of J. V. Stalin in Gori; and at Sverdlov Square, Moscow.</p> <p>Each photograph has a typed caption identifying the location on the reverse.</p> <p>34 items</p>	1952
U DX347/3	<p>Welcome address</p> <p>Welcome address for a concert at the Town Hall, Birmingham by Alderman Harry Watton to celebrate the 38th Anniversary of the USSR and calling for peace between the two countries.</p> <p>1 item</p>	21 Nov 1955
U DX347/4	<p>The Birmingham Post</p> <p>Brief typescript and annotated notes from Mrs Watton forty years after her husband's visit to the USSR. With reply from 'The Birmingham Post' returning the photographs (now amongst U DX347/2) Mrs Watton had sent for possible inclusion in a story recalling the visit.</p> <p>1 item</p>	1992