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**«Посол СССР в Великобритании Иван Майский:
дипломатия, торговля, культура»**

«Ivan Maysky, USSR’s Ambassador in Great Britain: diplomacy,
trade and culture»



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Theses

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The first visit to the UK played an important role in his fate, because it was during this period that Maysky's love for the country and its rich culture was formed, which ran like a red thread through his whole life.

In 1932, the diplomat found himself in the UK again as Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary, and this year was a turning point both in his biography and in the history of relations between Great Britain and Russia.

He bore responsibilities of the USSR Ambassador to the UK for a decade. Not only did the diplomat perform his direct duties, but he was also deeply engaged in British culture, perfectly felt the psychology of the British, understood and respected their national peculiarities.

Thanks to the work of the diplomat contacts between the USSR and Britain in the economic, military and cultural fields improved significantly.

Of particular note was the international dance festival held in London in 1935. It became a symbol of the commonwealth and unity of two cultures, two powerful states with their strong, active and unique peoples.

During the dark moments, hours and days of the first bombings that hit London, Ivan Mikhailovich shared all the horrors of the war with the British people.

By the decision of the embassy, the "Weekly of the Soviet War" was published which was an undoubted success.

Thanks to the work of Maysky and the embassy staff, faith in the indestructible will of the Soviet citizens to be and remain a great people with a great future began to return.

His work is an example of deep patriotism, where there is a place for both love for his country and respect for the foreign culture.

“The Soviet government sent me as a messenger of peace and friendship between the USSR and Great Britain, and I myself gladly and willingly undertook such a mission.”

I. M. Maysky (a Soviet diplomat)

Ivan Mikhailovich Maysky (19 January 1884 – 3 September 1975), a Soviet diplomat, served as the Soviet Union’s ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1932 to 1943.

Ivan Mikhailovich was born into the family of a military doctor in the Novgorod province. The future diplomat was brought up in the humanistic traditions of the Russian intelligentsia. Having received a classical gymnasium education, he entered the historical and Philological Faculty of St. Petersburg University, where he plunged headlong into politics. For his participation in the 1905 revolution, he was arrested by the Tsarist police. He was sentenced to exile in Siberia, which was later substituted by his expulsion abroad. Emigrating to Germany in 1908, he graduated from the Economics Department of the University of Munich. The future diplomat will repeatedly turn to the valuable knowledge gained over the years of study.

Five years later, Maysky moved to London, where he spent four years before returning to revolutionary Russia in 1917. This first visit to the UK played an important role in his fate, because it was during this period that Maysky’s love for the country and its rich culture was formed. It ran like a red thread through his whole life. In London, Maysky began to communicate with Georgy Chicherin and Maxim Litvinov, the Bolsheviks who would become foreign ministers of the USSR in the future.

In 1919, Maysky went on a Mongolian expedition to study the prospects of foreign trade. Valuable materials collected there on the economy, politics and geography of the country were published in 1921. That experience proves that Maysky was interested in a deep study of the socio-cultural foundation of neighboring countries and ready to take the initiative in research, willingly acting and achieving significant success in acquiring important information.

In 1922, Ivan Mikhailovich became the head of the press department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, and in 1925-1927 he already held the position of adviser to the USSR Plenipotentiary Representative Office in the UK acting up as de facto ambassador with the sudden death of the ambassador, Leonid Krasin. Having been forced to leave the UK in 1927, five years later, in 1932, the diplomat found himself in the Kingdom again as Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary, and this year was a turning point both in his biography and in the history of relations between Great Britain and Russia. It was a controversial period filled with fateful events. And often the position of British diplomacy in the period between the world wars was determined not only by government policy, but also by public sentiment generated by the press, the activities of various institutions, the scientific circles and cultural elite.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Moscow and London was a great victory for the Soviet government. Britain became the first major European power to recognize Soviet Russia. During this period, the USSR was isolated in the international arena and only after overcoming great difficulties formed normal political and economic bonds with other countries. The national economy of the Soviet state was still undergoing the first stages of recovery after ten years of wars, revolutions and devastation. However, despite all the hardships, the Soviet people were full of optimism and fervent faith in its bright peaceful future. In these tough times, Ivan Mikhailovich went to the UK with a mission to present, spread and support this idea in a foreign, but sincerely beloved land.

It is difficult to overestimate the multifaceted activity of Ivan Mikhailovich Maysky who bore responsibilities of the USSR Ambassador to the UK for a decade. Not only did the diplomat perform his direct duties, but he was also deeply engaged in British culture, perfectly felt the psychology of the British, understood and respected their national peculiarities. Sincerity and

dedication to work, as well as great diligence and interest were the most typical traits that he demonstrated throughout his career. The ambassador communicated not only with colleagues on political issues, but also was on friendly terms with many famous cultural figures of that era, such as the playwright Bernard Shaw, the sculptor Jacob Epstein and the Austrian artist Oskar Kokoschka, as well as with people of different professions, social status and wealth. The diplomat was a broad-minded person, able to find an approach to anyone, and this trait of character happened to be vitally important.

Upon arrival in the UK, Maysky was forced to work in an extremely difficult and hostile atmosphere that prevailed in London in those years. For a diplomat, there was no room for error then, because the 30s were that acute period between the two wars when the future fate of the whole world was at stake. Maysky assumed the post of plenipotentiary Ambassador of the USSR to England in 1932, and already in 1933, the Nazi regime established in Germany made the threat of a new world war real. Ivan Mikhailovich made every effort to improve the situation in an attempt to convey to the English public the humanistic peaceful policy of the USSR. The experience of propaganda work in underground workers' circles, the ability to explain to the journalistic world, which formed public opinion, elementary facts from the life of the Soviet country were fully useful to him. Thanks to the work of the diplomat, a new trade agreement was concluded between the USSR and Great Britain (which provided for the mutual provision of the most favored nation regime in trade and shipping by the parties), and the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations in September 1934. Due to the change of mood in the British ruling circles, relations and contacts between the USSR and Britain in the economic, military and cultural fields improved significantly.

Of particular note was the international dance festival held in London in 1935, which brought together masters of this art form from all over the world, including representatives of different peoples of the USSR: Caucasians,

Russians, Ukrainians and many others. The artists were full of joy of life, strength and hopes for the future, and they were all the embodiment of the heyday of the Soviet state. The dancers were greeted with applause and aroused admiration of the British public. During the festival, the London embassy turned simultaneously into a rehearsal hall, a conservatory and a dance class, where costumes were sewn, dance numbers were performed, the participants themselves lived and worked, an incredible atmosphere of friendship and warmth reigned. The result of the efforts was not long in coming – Soviet dancers took one of first places at the festival and won the hearts and minds of all the people of Great Britain. This episode largely demonstrates how close to the people was Ivan Mikhailovich Maysky, who was the soul of this grandiose event. His involvement in the lives of ordinary people, creators of art, his willingness to help is an incredible and inspiring example of generosity and complicity. The dance Festival of 1935 had not only artistic, but also great political importance within the framework of the difficult and changeable relations between the USSR and Great Britain, becoming a symbol of the commonwealth and unity of two cultures, two powerful states with their strong, active and unique peoples.

Unfortunately, the Munich Agreement of 1938 and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939 significantly shook relations between the USSR and Great Britain; difficult times came for both sides. On September 1, 1939, Hitler's Germany attacked Poland. England came face to face with the enemy just as suddenly. During the dark moments, hours and days of the first bombings that hit London, Ivan Mikhailovich shared all the horrors of the war with the British people. Together with two thousand other listeners he was at the concert when the siren howled, marking another bombing raid. At this monstrous moment, full of fear and horror, none of those present ran away, and the musicians continued to perform beautiful music, despite the fact that bombs were falling from all sides around the concert hall with a terrible roar.

After the attack of Nazi Germany on the USSR in June 1941, pessimistic sentiments prevailed in Great Britain regarding the outcome of the war, and the Soviet embassy made great efforts to instill faith in the inevitable success of common efforts in the souls of people. Ivan Mikhailovich had a talent for subtly feeling the changes taking place in society, and it was thanks to his sensitivity and resourcefulness that a way was found to revive hope among the British people. By the decision of the embassy, a bulletin was created, and subsequently the “Weekly of the Soviet War” was published, copies of which were distributed in huge numbers, which was an undoubted success. This struggle yielded results even in the most difficult first period of the war, and it became even more persuasive later, when the newly awakened optimism began to be increasingly supported by the facts of front-line events.

Then, it was also decided to give two books into the hands of the English reader: “War and Peace” by L. N. Tolstoy and “The Invasion of Napoleon on Russia” by the academician E. V. Tarle, which had a huge impact on the views of the British public. The defeatist sentiments of the British regarding the ability of the Soviet Union to resist the aggression of Germany gradually began to fade. Thanks to the work of Maysky and the embassy staff, faith in the indestructible will of the Soviet citizens to be and remain a great people with a great future began to return.

Yes, Maysky’s activities ensured the growth of the Soviet Union’s authority in the world. However, it is worth noting that he personified a great country. His work is an example of deep patriotism, where there is a place for both love for his country and respect for the foreign culture. It was his ability to think broadly and a sincere desire for mutual understanding that left the name of Ivan Mikhailovich on the pages of the history of world diplomacy.

Now, a century later, each of us needs to turn to this memory and think about how important it is to find common ground in the rapid passage of time,

maintain respect for one's neighbor despite the hostility and alienation that we have to face in the context of changing reality.

Illustrations (The source of borrowing is the resources of the world Network):

Picture 1: The portrait of I.M. Maysky.



Picture 2: Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain I.M. Maysky presenting Soviet orders to English pilots who distinguished themselves on the Murmansk Front: August 1943.



Picture 3: December 29, 1941. Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Great Britain Ivan Mikhailovich Maysky, Lieutenant General Nye and Sir Alexander George Montagu Cadogan on board.



Picture 4: Maysky and actors of London's Old Vic Theater at a reception at the Soviet Embassy in London.



Picture 5: Ivan Maysky and Winston Churchill.



Pictures 6 and 7: September 15, 1943. Farewell to England. Ivan Mikhailovich Maysky and his wife are returning to Moscow



Resources:

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