Note from the Minister for State Security of the USSR, V.S. Abakumov[[1]](#footnote-1), to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All Union Communist Party (b), A.A. Zhdanov, 2 November 1946

Top secret

2 November, 1946

VKP (b) CENTRAL COMMITTEE[[2]](#footnote-2)

To Comrade А.А. Zhdanov

The Ministry of State Security of the USSR has been informed that “British Ally”[[3]](#footnote-3), the magazine published in the Soviet Union, has a negative influence on certain groups of Soviet readers.

This magazine regularly publishes articles directly or indirectly aimed at giving the Soviet reader an impression of advantages of life, culture and “democracy” in the “British commonwealth of nations” in comparison with the Soviet one.

Thus, for example:

a) In a series of articles about the new social insurance system (the so-called Beveridge Report[[4]](#footnote-4)) the opinion is imposed that the British workers are prosperous and are vigilantly taken care of by the British government;

b) Articles describing the extraordinary flourishing of science in the British colonies are regularly published. In these articles a lot is written about the role of native scientists and ostensibly, favourable work conditions are underlined;

c) The seemingly harmless sketches and short stories published in the magazine describe everyday British life, while some of the details are aimed to make the Soviet reader think that average British people enjoy an extraordinarily high standard of living;

d) In a number of articles British policy in Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Egypt and other countries is justified;

The so-called weekly press and event reviews published in every issue of the “British Ally” magazine usually contain tendentious and perverted interpretations of certain international policy issues, disguised as seemingly objective statements of “facts”.

In the magazine detailed reports on the speeches of British government leaders and some reactionary parliament members containing deformed interpretation of the Soviet government foreign policy are regularly published.

The magazine “British Ally” is published in 50 000 and is widely distributed in the Soviet Union.

In 1946 the magazine circulated approximately as follows:

Subscription in Moscow … … … … … … … … … … … … … … 15.000 copies

Subscription outside Moscow … … … … … … … … … … … … 22.000 copies

Free mailing … … … … … … … … … … … … … … … … … …1.700 copies

Retail in Moscow … … … … … … … … … … … … … … … … 6.300 copies

Retail on periphery … … … … … … … … … … … … … … … … 4.000 copies

Dispatched to Teheran, Belgrade and distributed by the magazine editorial board … … … … … … … … … …1.000 copies

The data presented proves that a big share of the magazine’s circulation sold via retail networks (10.300 copies) gets to casual readers.

Among the subscribers of this magazine there are teachers, professors and writers.

The content of the articles published in the magazine is often wrongly understood by some readers and in some cases some of them, using the information obtained from this magazine, actually promote the dissemination of pro-British propaganda among their acquaintances.

Thus, V. RAKOVSKY[[5]](#footnote-5), the tutor of Peat Institute, operating with the “facts” obtained from the magazine “British Ally”, declared that the bourgeois-democratic system has a number of advantages in comparison to the socialist one, that the natives in British colonies live well and are not hostile to British people. According to him the allies’ military equipment and their success in the last war exceed those of the Soviets.

FROST[[6]](#footnote-6), the tutor of the Ist Moscow State University, also spoke of British technology and military success with excessive admiration and supported his statements with references to information published in the magazine “British Ally”.

It happened that some military people have sent letters to the magazine “British Ally” expressing strong gratitude for publication of “indispensable valuable information aiding to appreciate our ally well enough”.

Such non-critical attitude to the magazine “British Ally” is explained by the fact that some of the readers believe that this magazine is censored by corresponding Soviet bodies, and, hence, its information is truthful.

The readers are also mislead by the fact that in the magazine there’s no indication telling it is an publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, thus they wrongly take it for a Soviet publication.

Perhaps it is reasonable to commission the Propaganda Division of the Central Committee of VKP(b) to consider the issue of the “British Ally” magazine and to plan practical activities for banning this magazine’s bad influence on Soviet readers and for restricting its retail distribution[[7]](#footnote-7).

Awaiting your directions.

 [signature] (ABAKUMOV)

[RSASPH, f. 17, inv. 125, file 436, pp. 27–29]

Keywords: post-war USSR

1. Abakumov, Viktor Semyonovich (1908 – 1954) – Soviet statesman, Deputy People’s Commissar for Defence (1943 – 1946), Minister for State Security of the USSR (1946 – 1951). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. There is a hand-written note at the top: ‘To Comrade Aleksandrov, please look through this and let me know your opinion. [signature of] Zhdanov’. The reference here is to Aleksandrov, Georgii Fedorovich (1908 – 1961) – Soviet statesman and Party figure. Director of the Higher Party School attached to the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) (1939 – 1946), Head of the Directorate of Agitation and Propaganda of the Party’s Central Committee (1940 – 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A weekly magazine published in the USSR by the British Embassy in 1942 – 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A report entitled ‘Social Insurance and Allied Services’ that was published in November 1942 by the economist W. Beveridge. It laid the conceptual foundations for the post-war welfare state in Great Britain. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rakovskii, Vladimir Evgenyevich (1900 – 1987) – Soviet chemist, professor, Doctor of Chemical Sciences, Director of the Institute of Peat at the Academy of Sciences of the Belorussian SSR (1942 – 1948, 1960 – 1963). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Frost, Andrei Vladimirovich (1906 – 1952) – Soviet Chemist, professor, Doctor of Chemical Sciences, in charge of the Department of Physical Chemistry in the Faculty of Chemistry at Moscow State University (1942 – 1952). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On 13 October a draft report was compiled by Aleksandrov on this issue for Stalin where, among other things, it was noted that ‘the publication of *Britanskii soiuznik* (British Ally) in the USSR is clearly harmful politically’. However, at this stage the Soviet authorities did not move to close the paper. See: Stalin i kosmopolitizm: dokumenty Agitpropa TsK KPSS, 1945–1953 / Sost.: D. G. Nadzhafov, Z. S. Belausova; otv. red. D. G. Nadzhafov. М., 2005. Dok. №29. For more detail on the Soviet reaction to the activity of *Britanskii soiuznik* see: Vladimir Pechatnov, The Rise and Fall of “Britansky Souyznik”: A Case Study in Soviet Response to British Propaganda of mid-1940-s // Historical Journal, 1998, № 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)