Letter from Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the VKP (b), V. Grigorian, to Minister for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, V.M. Molotov, with a short note of instruction added by V.M. Molotov at the end of the document, 14 May 1950

Top Secret

To Comrade V.M. Molotov

In accordance with your instructions, the Committee on Foreign Relations has reviewed proposals to improve the quality of Soviet print publications in London. We requested the opinions of Comrade Zarubin, while he was in Moscow, and of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, H. Pollitt[[1]](#footnote-1), who is still in Moscow. Their evaluation of the Soviet print publications generally corresponds with the conclusions of the Committee on Foreign Relations, presented in the attached note. Measures to improve the quality and distribution of Soviet print publications can be undertaken immediately; the issue of allocating an additional £27,177 to increase the volume of publications should be put on the agenda of the CPSU CC[[2]](#footnote-2) for consideration.

A report on the improvement of Soviet publications in Britain and a draft resolution of the CPSU Central Committee are attached.

I request your instructions.

Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations

CC CPSU [Signature] (V. Grigorian)

14 May 1950

N25-C-807

[…]

[ANNEX]

May 1950 Draft

Top Secret

Resolution of the CPSU CC

To increase Soviet print propaganda in Britain, increase the volume of “Soviet Weekly” from 8 to 12 lines and assign “Sovinformburo” with additional funds of £22,177.

Top Secret

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOVIET PRINT PUBLICATIONS IN BRITAIN

A survey, undertaken by the CPSU CC Committee on Foreign Relations to examine the state of Soviet print propaganda in Britain, has revealed that the circulation of Soviet publications in the country in the past four years has decreased. While in 1945 the average monthly circulation of the weekly Soviet newspaper “Soviet Weekly” stood at 70,000 copies, in 1959 it dropped to 43,000 copies. The circulation of the daily USSR Embassy bulletin “Soviet News” for the same time period declined from 11,000 copies to 750. In 1945, 27 brochures were published with an overall circulation of 171,372 copies, but in 1949 only 6 were published with a circulation of 51,000 copies. The promotion of articles written by Soviet authors for the British press is also unsatisfactory. In 1945, 1235 articles written by Soviet authors were published and in 1949, only 35 articles.

The hostile policy towards the USSR pursued by the British ruling circles primarily explains the decline in circulation of Soviet publications and print materials in Britain. However, another significant reason for the decline lies in work deficiencies of the Sovinformburo and the Soviet Embassy team in Britain.

The press publications released by the Sovinformburo in Britain still pay little attention to the socio-economic peculiarities of the country. Articles that get dispatched to Britain do not differ in their form and content from articles dispatched to other countries. Most articles are verbose and full of general statements.

Only very few articles are placed in “Soviet Weekly” that intelligibly explain to the British reader the peaceful nature of Soviet foreign policy.

In articles on Soviet matters, there are not enough facts that showcase the advantages of the socialist over the capitalist system. There is little factual, vivid material that is being published on the work and life of ordinary Soviet people.

The newspaper insufficiently promotes the peace movement. Material published on this subject is usually restricted to official information.

The fascist clique of Tito does not receive a satisfactory exposé on the pages of “Soviet Weekly.”

Sovinformburo does not adequately work with authors, who write articles for our publications in Britain.

As a way to eliminate the abovementioned deficiencies and to improve Soviet print propaganda in Britain, and considering the increase in the volume of print publications in Britain, we deem it necessary to propose to the Central Committee that the Sovinformburo be allocated additional funds of £22,177.

A meeting took place at the Committee on Foreign Relations, where the cadre of Sovinform, the Head of the Second European department at the Foreign Ministry, the editor of “Soviet Weekly” and others participated. The following initiatives, to be undertaken rapidly, were devised at the meeting:

1. Instruct the Sovinformburo (Comrade Pozdeev) to improve the quality of articles dispatched to Britain, so that they are intelligible, in form and language, for a wide readership. Oblige the Sovinformburo to select a group of authors for permanent work for “Soviet Weekly” and to hold regular consultative meetings with them to share experiences and assign concrete tasks. As a way to improve the quality of articles published in “Soviet Weekly” and to make them more intelligible for the British reader, to instruct the publishers of “Soviet Weekly” to review material received from the Sovinformburo, engaging progressive British journalists for this task.

Oblige the British desk of the Committee on Foreign Relations to check the implementation of this clause.

2. Set the goal to increase the circulation volume of “Soviet Weekly” in 1950 up to 50,000 copies.

3. Allow the Sovinformburo to increase the volume of the newspaper “Soviet Weekly” from 9 to 12 lines and reinforce the editorial office with additional 2-3 qualified employees.

4. Instruct the Foreign Ministry of the USSR (Comrade Vyshinsky) and the Sovinformburo (Comrade Pozdeev) to ensure the regular release of “Soviet News”, the bulletin of the Soviet Embassy in Britain, and to increase its circulation up to 10,000 copies. Organise distribution of the bulletin in grassroots trade union organisations and progressive societies. Consider it necessary to publish articles on general political topics alongside official material in “Soviet News”.

5. Advise that the Sovinformburo should in the nearest future radically improve the placement of its articles in British progressive publications. For this purpose, it is necessary to assign 3-4 editors within the cadre of the Sovinformburo to work on articles for placement in the publishing organs of trade unions, cooperatives, Anglo-Soviet friendship societies, etc.; the public relations office of the Sovinformburo in Britain should improve their connections with these organs (list attached).

Oblige VZSPS[[3]](#footnote-3) to help Sovinformburo illuminate life in the USSR in the British trade union press.

6. Advise TASS (Comrade Palgunov) to stop sending photographs to “Planet-press”, which uses these photographs for narrowly commercial goals, and often hostile to the USSR. Assign the publisher of “Soviet News” with the responsibility of exclusively distributing photographs in the British press.

THE LIST OF PROGRESSIVE AND TRADE UNION PUBLICATIONS

(attachment to clause 5)

1. “Challenge”

2. “Our Time”

3. Insurance Agency Chronicle

4. “Railway Review”

5. “Post”

6. “New Dawn”

7. “Land Worker”

8. “[unclear in the document] and Baker”

9. “Bank Officer”

10. Mansley Report

11. “Chemical Worker”

12. “Electrical Trades Journal”

13. “Draughtsman”

[…][[4]](#footnote-4)

15. “Locomotive Journal”

16. “Journal”

17. “Public Employee”

18. “Scientific Worker”

19. “Garment Worker”

20. “Tobacco Worker”

21. “A.S.B Mansley Journal”

22. “Power Worker”

23. “Man and Metal”

[…]

25. “Journal and Report”

[…]

27. “Metal Worker”

28. “Miner”

Note added by V.M. Molotov in response to V. Grigorian:

To Comrade Grigorian

Need to put on the CC agenda.

(V.M. Molotov)

[RSASPH, f. 82, inv. 2, fold. 1142, pp. 28-31]

Keywords: propaganda, post-war USSR

1. Pollitt, Harry (1890–1960) - British politician, General Secretary of the National Minority Movement (Communist-led front with trade unions) (1924–1929), General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain - CPGB (1929–1956). CPGB papers including the papers of Harry Pollitt can be found in the People's History Museum in Manchester. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CPSU CC - Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Known in English as the AUCCTU - All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the central body managing the activity of all the USSR trade unions (1918-1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Omitted in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)