Note from Foreign Minister of the USSR, A. Vyshinsky, and Minister of Foreign Trade of the USSR, M. Menshikov[[1]](#footnote-1), to I.V. Stalin on the planned Soviet withdrawal from the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, 12 January 1950

Secret

To Comrade I.V. Stalin

In London, there is a mixed Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, which includes the All-Soviet Chamber of Commerce, eight societies on foreign trade, and the Trade Mission on the Soviet side and British firms on the British side.

A big British industrialist Maginness is the President of the Chamber; the Vice-President is Deputy Head of the Soviet Trade Mission Comrade Manzhulo. The Soviet ambassador to the United Kingdom is an honorary President of the Chamber.

The Chamber was founded in 1916 to encourage trade between Britain and Russia. Starting from 1924, Soviet organisations began participating in the work of the Chamber. From 1931 to 1939, the Chamber produced a bulletin in English, with the official goal to inform the British members of the Chamber about foreign trade and industry in the Soviet Union. During the war, the Chamber’s activities were suspended.

After the resumption of the Chamber’s activities at the end of 1947, the Soviet side adhered to a policy of formal membership and ensured that the British would not direct the Chamber’s work against the interests of the Soviet Union. We resisted, in particular, any British attempts to reintroduce publication of the bulletin, upon which they especially insisted. The British have made several attempts to speak on behalf of the Chamber without approval or knowledge from the Soviet side. At the annual meeting of the Chamber at the end of 1948, President Maginness held a speech, which stated that Soviet demands regarding the conditions of contracts for equipment allegedly served as the main reason for delays in the shipment of Soviet orders. This signalled approval for the position of British firms, which did not adhere to our justified demands. Undesirably for us, an extract from Maginness’s speech made it into the British press. […]

In April 1949, a member of the Chamber, Executive Councillor Marshall, who also heads the Russian section in one of the British trade chambers, addressed the meeting of the section with a speech on Soviet-British trade. Marshall’s speech was openly anti-Soviet. At the meeting of the section, a decision was made to send a letter to the British Ministry of Trade, which recommended aggravating conditions for orders placed by Soviet companies.

At the end of November 1949, the Secretary of the Russo-British Chamber, the British, Stardi, circulated a memorandum to the members of the Chamber without Soviet knowledge. The circular contained an extract from a protocol of the House of Lords, which reflected the provocative campaign of the British reactionaries against the London TASS [Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union] office. The protocol tendentiously illuminated the issues of Soviet-British trade relations.

Moreover, the British seek to use the Chamber in order to receive intelligence through its Secretary Stardi, who, for example, instructs representatives of companies belonging to the Chamber, before their trips to the Soviet Union.

In view of this, we deem it necessary to withdraw from the Chamber, using as a formal pretext the fact that the British breached the charter of the Chamber, in particular by publishing an information bulletin without prior consultation with the Soviet side.

We request to consider a draft resolution.

Foreign Minister of the USSR

A. Vyshinsky

Minister of the Foreign Trade of the USSR

M. Menshikov

[RSASPH, f. 84. inv. 1. fold. 61. pp. 116-117]

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1. Menshikov, Mikhail Alekseyevich (1902–1976) - Soviet diplomat, Director of the Anglo-Russian Cooperative Society, London (1930–1936), Deputy Director of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration - UNRRA (1943–1946), Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade of the USSR (1946–1949), Minister of Foreign Trade (1949–November 1951), Deputy Representative of the Council of Ministers of the USSR (1952–1953), USSR Ambassador to India (1957–1958), USSR Ambassador to Nepal (1958–1961), USSR Ambassador to the United States (1958–1961), candidate member to the CPSU Central Committee (1956–1966), Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RSFSP (1962–1968). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)