

## **The Lobbying Problem in the Pages of the Soviet Press (1917-1990)**

**Author:** Fedor Sinitsyn and Irina Vavochkina

**Issue:** Vol 7, no. 1 (2023)

### **Abstract**

This article covers the coverage of lobbying in the Soviet periodical press. The authors investigate the ways in which Soviet journalists covered the topic of lobbying, assess the objectivity of information spread about American lobbying, and describe the ways in which this information was presented. The article pays special attention to the ideological attitudes and the system of control over Soviet media (and, accordingly, the state of mass consciousness in the USSR). The research is based on materials from the archive of Pravda newspaper.

# The Lobbying Problem in the Pages of the Soviet Press (1917-1990)

Fedor Sinitsyn<sup>1</sup> and Irina Vavochkina<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The subject of the research of this article is the coverage of the problem of lobbying<sup>3</sup> in the Soviet periodical press. The research tasks set by the authors include identifying possible reasons for the interest in the topic of lobbying on the part of journalists, assessing the objectivity of the information spread about American lobbying and the form of presenting these materials. The article pays special attention to the ideological attitudes and the system of control over the Soviet media (and, accordingly, the state of mass consciousness in the USSR). The research is based on the archive of *Pravda* newspaper (the central printing

---

1. Фёдор Леонидович Сеницын – д.и.н, ведущий научный сотрудник Института всеобщей истории РАН. Email: permcavt@gmail.com.

Fedor Sinitsyn – Dr Hab. (History), leading researcher, Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Email: permcavt@gmail.com.

2. Ирина Дмитриевна Вавочкина – младший научный сотрудник исторического факультета МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова (г. Москва). E-mail: vavochkina@hist.msu.ru.

Irina Vavochkina – junior research fellow, Faculty of History, Moscow State University (Moscow). E-mail: vavochkina@hist.msu.ru.

3. Lobbying is a widespread multidimensional phenomenon that has long been rooted in the field of politics. As *Lobbying Manual* put it, lobbying is “the effort of groups and individuals to secure the enactment or defeat of legislation by their elected representatives” (See: *The Lobbying Manual: a Compliance Guide for Lawyers and Lobbyists*. William V. Luneburg, editor. (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1998), p. 5). In fact, lobbying activities are directed at various branches (representative, executive, judicial) and levels (federal, state, local) of government. Modern lobbying is characterized by the division of labor and specialization of lobbying activities, a developed organizational structure, the presence of professional staff and a variety of lobbying techniques.

organ of the Central Committee of the CPSU<sup>4</sup>) which had a huge readership.<sup>5</sup> The reflection of the problem of lobbying in the Soviet press has not previously received a proper assessment in the historiography. The relevance of the research presented in the article is also determined by the fact that the press is not yet being used productively enough as a historical source, whereas a frontal analysis of the content of periodicals allows us to reconstruct the general atmosphere in the country in various periods of history, recreate the mood of society, and determine the degree of influence exerted upon them by mass media.<sup>6</sup>

### “Tolkachi”<sup>7</sup> and “lobbyists”

What did they in the USSR know about lobbying? To answer this question we should start with mentioning the fact that the existence of lobbying, lobbying practices in the Soviet Union itself was denied. Russian scholars considered this phenomenon to be characteristic exclusively of Western “bourgeois democracy.”<sup>8</sup> The object of their research was primarily the United States of America, where laws regulating lobbying activities were adopted earlier than in other countries.<sup>9</sup>

Since the effectiveness of pressure groups is directly dependent on the economic power of the social forces whose interests they represent,<sup>10</sup> the lobbying efforts of business structures usually arouse the greatest interest of the expert community. Soviet scholars and journalists were no exception here.

The first Russian student of political science who paid attention to the problem of lobbying in the politics of a democratic society was Moses Ostrogosky.<sup>11</sup> His book *Democracy and The Organization of Political Parties* was first published

---

4. In 1912–1914 *Pravda* was the press organ of the Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP, in 1917–1918 – the Central Committee and the Petrograd Committee of the RSDLP, in 1918–1952 – the Central Committee and the Moscow Committee of the RKP(b) / VKP(b), in 1952–1991 – the Central Committee of the CPSU.

5. In 1931 the newspaper had circulation of 1.5 million copies (See: *Vsya Moskva. Adresnaya i spravochnaya kniga s prilozheniyem novogo plana g. Moskvy*. (Izdatel'stvo Mosoblispolkoma, 1931), p. 210). By 1977 its circulation was already 10.6 million copies (See: Rafail P. Ovsepyan, *Istoriya otechestvennoy zhurnalistiki (uchebnoye posobiye)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta (MGU), 1999), ch. 6).

6. Yuliya B. Kostyakova, *O tipovoy i vidovoy prinadlezhnosti pressy i eye materialov*, Dokument. Arkhiv. Istoriya. Sovremennost: materialy V Mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii. (Yekaterinburg: Izdatel'stvo Ural'skogo universiteta, 2014), pp. 247, 250.

7. “Tolkachi” – in Russian is a plural from the noun “tolkach.”

8. Avgust A. Mishin, *Gosudarstvennoye pravo SShA* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976); Nikolay G. Zyablyuk, *SShA: lobbizm i politika* (Moscow: Mysl', 1976); Aleksey P. Lyubimov, *Lobbizm v Rossii* (Moscow: Izdaniye Gosudarstvennoy Dumy, 2005), p. 19.

9. See: The Constitution of Georgia (1877), Art. 1, § 2.5; Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts (1890). Ch. 456.

10. Avgust A. Mishin, Op. cit., p. 57.

11. Ostrogorsky, Moisei Yakovlevich (1854–1921) – Russian lawyer, historian and political scientist, was one of the founders of political sociology. Deputy of the First State Duma (1906). After the revolution of 1917, he taught in Petrograd. For more information, see: V.G. Graftsky, *OSTROGORSKY, The Great Russian Encyclopedia*. Electronic version (2016); <https://bigenc.ru/law/text/2682462> Date of application: 11.12.2022.

in French (1898)<sup>12</sup> and English (1902)<sup>13</sup> languages. The first volume “England” was translated into Russian in 1927, and the second one “The United States of America” appeared in 1930.<sup>14</sup>

Ostrogorsky stated that “corruption” was widespread in United States politics – he included party bossism, election fraud, and lobbying in this concept. The author mainly concentrated on the negative aspects of lobbying,<sup>15</sup> describing it as one of the tools of the ruling minority to achieve its goals.

At the same time, in the late 1920s–1930s, the pioneer articles describing American lobbyists appeared in the central Soviet newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.<sup>16</sup> Let us turn to the first of them – an article written by Mikhail Tanin<sup>17</sup> and published in *Pravda* on January 6, 1928. The journalist writes: “The opening of a new session of the American Congress (parliament) served as a signal to mobilize all the forces of big capital in order to push through all the necessary bills in the “people’s representative body.” The latest American newspapers report that “lobbyists” or “talkachi” have gathered in Washington, representing the interests

12. Regarding that edition of Ostrogorsky’s monograph, see: Andrey N. Medushevsky, *Problemy sovremennoy demokratii*, n: Moisei Ya. Ostrogorsky, *Demokratiya i politicheskiye partii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997), pp. 9, 39.

13. Moisei Iakovlevich Ostrogorskii, *Democracy and the organization of political parties*, Vol. 1–2 (New York, London: Macmillan, 1902).

14. As the author of the preface to the Soviet edition E.B. Pashukanis put it, Ostrogorsky’s monograph “reveals the real mechanism of the parliamentary state” (See: Moisei Ya. Ostrogorsky, *Demokratiya i politicheskiye partii* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Kommunisticheskoy akademii, 1927), vol. 1, p. 3). It was published under the stamp of the Communist Academy (Section of Law and State) and was admitted to as a textbook for higher educational institutions by the Scientific and Political Section of the State Academic Council. Translated from the French edition of 1912: *La Démocratie et les partis politiques*, par M. Ostrogorski. *Nouvelle édition, refondue*. The chronological framework of the second volume includes the period of U.S. history from the 18th century to 1911.

15. In the Russian translation of 1927–1930 for the terms “lobby” and “lobbyist” was chosen the Latin (in the first case) and double spelling (in the second): “lobby” and “lobby’сты” (See: Moisei Ya. Ostrogorsky, *Demokratiya i politicheskiye partii* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Kommunisticheskoy akademii, 1930), vol. 2, pp. 66, 67, 245, etc.), which indicates that these terms have not yet been assimilated by the Russian language.

16. Mikhail Tanin, *Nastuplenie amerikanskoï burzhazii na vnutrennem fronte*, *Pravda*, 1928, № 5, p. 1; I. Trainin, *Izbitel'naya korruptsiya – sostavnaya chast kapitalisticheskoy politiki*, *Izvestia*, 1937, No. 245, p. 3. The title of the 1937 article is especially interesting (in English it sounds like: *Electoral corruption is an integral part of capitalist politics*), since it directly echoes Ostrogorsky’s monograph.

17. Tanin (Tanin–Tsurikov) Mikhail Alexandrovich (1897–1937). Soviet journalist, head of the press Department of the Moscow Committee of VKP (b) (See: State Archive of the Russian Federation – hereinafter GARF, fund 10035, inventory 1, case P–65185, p. 6), Deputy executive editor of the newspaper “Za kolektivizatsiy” (See: *Vsya Moskva. Adresnaya i spravochnaya kniga s prilozheniyem novogo plana g. Moskvy*. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Mosoblispolkoma, 1931. p. 207), author of several monographs: *Amerika na mirovoy arene*. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo, 1927); *10 let vneshney politiki SSSR (1917–1927)* (Moscow–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo, 1927), etc. He was published in the magazine *Bolshevik*, *Pravda* and other central periodicals. Tanin was executed in 1937 (GARF, fund 10035, inventory 1, case P–65185, p. 95). Rehabilitated in 1956 (GARF, fund 10035, inventory 1, case P–65185, p. 158–159).

of various business groups for the appropriate molding of the “people’s tribunes,” and that a dense network of various powerful influences is woven in the back rooms.”<sup>18</sup> Such an accusatory and slightly ironic tone will be characteristic of most of *Pravda*’s materials dealing with the problem of lobbying in US political life.

The terminology used by Soviet journalists to describe the phenomenon of lobbying is very indicative. As can be seen from Tanin’s article, the term “*tolkach*” was used as a synonym for “lobbyist.” In Ozhegov’s dictionary of the Russian language, we find the following definition: “*tolkach*” in a figurative meaning – a person who is tasked with pushing, speeding up the business needed at the moment (colloquial disapproving).<sup>19</sup> Soviet international journalists chose the term “*tolkach*” (as an equivalent, not a translation) because it was widely used in the USSR in relation to the actual Soviet realities. “*Tolkach*” was used as the closest analogue that could be found in Soviet realities for American “lobbyist.”

Interestingly, Soviet newspapers could call a party member, a deputy, and even a worker or collective farmer a “*tolkach*” in a certain situation. But the same word was also used to brand corrupt suppliers:

In 1919 *Pravda* under the heading “*Party life*” wrote: “The only way to work in the countryside is to use Soviet institutions. It is wrong to say that we (the Department of Rural Affairs of the Central Committee of the RCP (b) – *F. S., I. V.*) are trying to subordinate Soviet institutions to the party organization. County and city organizers cannot do Soviet work for the Soviets. Their duty is to be the *tolkachi* and supervisors of these institutions.”<sup>20</sup>

*Pravda* (1921) in the editorial: “To oblige all bodies to provide transport and means for emergency transportation, to allocate for this a special cadre of workers’ commissars to monitor the progress of work and to assist as a ‘*tolkach*’.”<sup>21</sup>

18. Mikhail Tanin, *Nastuplenie amerikanskoĭ burzhuzii...*

19. *Slovar russkogo yazyka* / Sost. Sergei I. Ozhegov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo inostrannykh i natsionalnykh slovary, 1949). Work on the dictionary began in the 1930s, so the meaning of the term we are interested in can be considered a reference for the first half of the 20th century. Cf.: *Tolkovyĭ slovar russkogo yazyka*. Pod red. D.N. Ushakova (Moscow, Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo inostrannykh i natsionalnykh slovary, 1940), vol. 4: “*Tolkach* ... 4. in the figurative meaning a person pushing forward some business, contributing to its promotion, development (rhetor.). A village teacher is a *tolkach* of education in the village. || The person who is assigned to take care of speeding up the solution of some business, question (colloquial).” We should also note that in the dictionary by V.I. Dal there is no similar figurative meaning of the word “*tolkach*” (See: *Tolkovyĭ slovar zhivogo velikorusskogo yazyka Vladimira Dalya* (St. Petersburg–Moscow: Izdaniye T-va M.O. Volf, 1909), vol. 4.

20. *Vserossiyskoye soveshchaniye po rabote v derevne. Zasedaniye tretye. Rech Tovarishcha Nevskogo (Prodolzheniye)*, *Pravda*, 1919, № 266, p. 2.

21. Iosif Vareykis, *Chto mogut sdelat mesta v organizatsii pomoshchi krestianam. postradavshim ot neurozhaya*, *Pravda*, 1921, № 167, p. 1.

Feuilleton,<sup>22</sup> published in *Pravda* in 1949: “And in general Andrey Fomich was an outstanding “talkach.” He really loved his “profession,” and being an inventive person, he elevated talkachestvo to a multi-complex skill... And not out of malice, but solely out of his ignorance, wandering around the country, he broke sales schedules as much as he could, drove casting cars, parts and machines intended for other factories to his factory... And how the other talkachi envied him, how they tried to adopt his sophisticated skill!... Engineer of the non-ferrous rolled products plant... delivered us a list of wives and daughters-in-law who are already talkachi. The head of the sales department K.M. Sibiryakov has a charming daughter-in-law, E.I. Makarova. The qualities of non-ferrous metals, the rolling technique and even the rules for loading factory products are as dark to her as Sanskrit writings. However, the shipbuilding industry enterprises authorized her to “conduct technical acceptance of non-ferrous rolled products and control the shipment of products.” E.I. Makarova has 800 rubles a month for her invisible labors.”<sup>23</sup>

*Izvestia* (1967) under the heading “*Letters of deputies*”: “I remember an employee S.A. Jacobi addressed me. She said that she had repeatedly asked to renovate her apartment... Then I came to the city administration myself, told them what conditions S.A. Jacobi lives in. They promised to deliver iron and beams. For more than a month I kept this case under surveillance: I called on the phone, inquired about business in the office. Eventually the apartment was renovated. I was pleased, but at the same time I wondered if I was doing the right thing by becoming a “talkach,” sometimes replacing employees who, according to their position, should do this or that job?”<sup>24</sup>

Based on newspaper publications, Soviet “talkachi” could be divided into two groups: talkach – “a good organizer, controller,” and talkach – “corrupted person.”

In the post-Soviet period, many studies based on Soviet material have appeared on formal and informal institutions for coordinating interests. Scientific papers

---

22. A few words need to be said about this type of newspaper publication. In the second half of the 20th century the feuilleton genre became an important part of the Soviet media and good feuilletonists were in great demand. The main task of such a publication is to reflect in a satirical form negative facts, phenomena, and processes of public life. Here is what Sergey Dovlatov, ingenious author of the Soviet era, writes about his work in the newspaper “*Sovetskaya Estoniya*” in the 1970s: “The editor had said to me as early as April, “If you write satirical sketches, we’ll give you an apartment”. It’s not easy to do. Every fact has to be carefully checked. The targets of critical attack dodge and take cover. Our city is small, people are in the public eye. To make it short, there were two attempts to beat me up. Once it was the teamsters of a freight station (successful). The second time a currency speculator named Chigir hit me with a borsalino hat and promptly received a knock-out punch in return. My articles always provoked numerous responses from readers. Sometimes in threatening form. This even pleased me – hate signifies that the newspaper is still capable of exciting passions”. (See: Sergei Dovlatov, *The Compromise* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1983), p. 12.)

23. Aleksey Kolosov, *Tolkachi*, Pravda, 1949, № 221, p. 2.

24. V. Trukhanov, deputat Vasileostrovskogo rayonnogo Soveta *Avtorit et Soveta*, *Izvestiya*, 1967, № 13, p. 3.

devoted to political, departmental, sectoral, and regional lobbying in the USSR<sup>25</sup> have been published and are being published. In our opinion, *tolkachestvo* as a type of lobbying at the local level is an interesting and little-studied phenomenon. On the one hand, it was an informal, but definitely effective and widespread way of fighting for resources, on the other – a phenomenon widely discussed in the central Soviet press in a negative way: in editorial materials<sup>26</sup>, in speeches and articles by top Soviet leaders (for example, Yuri Andropov,<sup>27</sup> Nikolai Bulganin,<sup>28</sup> Dmitry Polyanskiy<sup>29</sup>), as well as letters from newspaper readers,<sup>30</sup> in which the *tolkachi* were accused of bribery, labor disorganization, and parasitism. The objects of pressure for Soviet *tolkachi* were e.g. executive branch authorities of various levels (executive committees, regional committees, even *glavki* and People's commissariats/ministries).<sup>31</sup> Legally, the concept of “*tolkach*” was not fixed, nevertheless, this institution continued to exist throughout the history of the USSR. Soviet foreign affairs columnists used the analogy of “lobbyist – *tolkach*,” making the phenomenon of lobbying more accessible to the reader.

In the final sense, the goal of lobbying is the destruction of a competitor. A game without rules leads exactly to this. In the USSR, such a phenomenon was prosecuted by the court<sup>32</sup> and condemned at the official level as corruption. The United States went the other way: in 1946, the federal law “On the Regulation

25. Vladimir A. Lepekhin, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskiye protsessy v srede predprinimateley* (Moscow: Akademicheskii Tsentr “Rossiyskiye issledovaniya”, 1994); Sergey P. Peregodov. Nataliya Yu. Lapina, Irina S. Semenenko, *Gruppy interesov i Rossiyskoye gosudarstvo* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1999), part II; Vladimir A. Lepekhin, *Lobbizm v Rossii i problemy ego pravovogo regulirovaniya*, in *Transformatsiya rossiyskikh regionalnykh elit v sravnitel'noy perspective: Materialy mezhdunarodnogo seminaru* (Tver, 20–22 fevralya 1998 g.) (Moscow: Izdatelskiy tsentr nauchnykh i uchebnykh programm 1999), ed. by Andrey Melvil, p. 57–85; Aleksey V. Zakharchenko, *Ekonomicheskaya deyatel'nost' NKVD–MVD SSSR v Povolzh'ye v 1937–1953 gg.: istoricheskoye issledovaniye: Dis. ... dokt. ist. Nauk* (Moscow, 2014); Idem, *Vedomstvennyy “lobbizm” v sovetskoy ekonomike: ministerstva – pravitel'stvo – Gosplan. 1945–1953 gg. (na primere MVD SSSR)*, *Izvestiya Samarskogo nauchnogo tsentra Rossiyskoy akademii nauk*, vol. 18, № 6, 2016, p. 83–87, etc.

26. According to our calculations, in 1917–1990 *Pravda* has published about 500 such materials, e.g.: “*Tolkachi*” *dezorganizuyut rabotu*, *Pravda*, 1940, № 65, p. 2; N. Vorobyev, V. Zhuravskiy, *Felyeton: Treugolka i shlyapy*, *Pravda*, 1963, № 136, p. 4; Yu. Apenchenko, *Zlo vzyatki*, *Pravda*, 1971, № 29, p. 6; *Interesy gosudarstva – prevyshe vsego*, *Pravda*, 1974, № 240, p. 1

27. Yuri Andropov, *O partiynom kontrole na proizvodstve*, *Pravda*, 1951, № 102, p. 2

28. *Prodolzheniye doklada tovarishcha N.A. Bulganina*, *Pravda*, 1955, № 198, p. 4.

29. *Rech tovarishcha D.S. Polyanskogo (Predsedatel Soveta Ministrov RSFSR)*, *Pravda*, 1961, № 298, p. 2.

30. *Pravda*, 1948, № 109, p. 3; *Pravda*, 1951, № 30, p. 1, 2; *Pravda*, 1958, № 261, p. 6; *Pravda*, 1972, № 56, p. 3, etc.

31. A. Sharov, *Snova tolkachi*, *Pravda*, 1938, № 338, p. 3; V. Parfenov, N. Mitrofanov, *Glavk i zavody*, *Pravda*, 1969, № 358, p. 2; Idem, *Rychagi upravleniya*, *Pravda*, 1969, № 359, p. 2, etc.

32. “*Tolkachi*”, *Pravda*, 1939, № 86, p. 6; L. Ognev, “*Zagotovitel*”, *Pravda*, 1941, № 134, p. 6; Vorobyev, Zhuravskiy, *Op. cit.*



of Lobbying”<sup>33</sup> was adopted, which differentiated (at least on paper) the concepts of “lobbying” and “corruption” and gave a legal definition of lobbying activity.<sup>34</sup> Excluded from the scope of the law were any persons who appeared before congressional committees in order to simply speak (without payment) in support of or against any law; any officials performing their duties; any media owners covering the current work of Congress. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court significantly narrowed the scope of application of the 1946 law: the circle of persons falling under the jurisdiction of the law now included only persons engaged in fund-raising in order to exert pressure on legislators.<sup>35</sup> In 1995, State regulation was extended to contacts of pressure groups with executive officers, determining the presence of such contacts even with the President and vice-president of the country.<sup>36</sup>

But back to the Soviet press. Gradually, the lexical vagueness was overcome: since the 1950s, following the special and scientific literature,<sup>37</sup> the broad press has adopted the term “lobbyist” in relation to special interest agents acting in the US Congress.<sup>38</sup> From 1917 to the end of 1990 in the newspaper *Pravda* the terms “lobbyist” and “tolkach” (meaning “agent of special interests”) are found about 170 times in publications of various genres: informational (notes, reports); analytical (articles, reviews, comments); literary (feuilletons, humorous stories, poems). In itself, the problem of lobbying in these texts has almost never been the main one. Mentions of lobbying activities were more often an illustration, an additional touch to the main topics, whether it was the actions of the United States on the world stage, the presidential election campaign or the anti-labor policy of the fresh US administration.

The statements of *Pravda* journalists about lobbyists were based on various sources: materials from the American media, official documents, interviews with trade unionists, mainstream, and non-mainstream US politicians, personal observations. As a result, a fairly-detailed picture of lobbying was created.

---

33. Prior to that, a number of federal laws restricted the activities of only a few pressure groups: in 1935, the Public Utility Holding Company Act was adopted, which included a clause on the registration of lobbyists of all electric companies; in 1936, Congress adopted U.S. Maritime Commission General Order No. 9, which contained a rule on the registration of lobbyists of shipbuilding and shipping companies; In 1938, the Foreign Agents Registration Act was adopted.

34. *Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. Title III – Regulation of Lobbying Act. Sec. 307 (a, b)*, Public Law 601–79th Congress chapter 753–2d sess. Washington, 1946.

35. *United States vs. Harris*, 347 U.S. 612 (1954).

36. *Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995* (P.L. 104–65).

37. The terms “lobby” and “lobbyist” have been used in Soviet dictionaries of foreign words since at least 1949. (See: *Slovar inostrannykh slov*. Ed. by Ivan V. Lekhin and prof. Fedor I. Petrov, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo inostrannykh i natsional'nykh slovary, 1949) 3rd revised and expanded edition, p. 374). See also: Avgust A. Mishin, *Tsentralnyye organy vlasti SShA – orudiye diktatury monopolisticheskogo kapitala* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo yuridicheskoy literatury, 1954), pp. 155–156.

38. But still in 1960s as well as in the 1970s there “relapses” occurred. See: Sergei Vishnevskiy, *Zdravyy smysl dolzhen vzyat verkh*, *Pravda*, 1963, № 232, p. 4; Nikolay Kurdyumov, *“Tolkachi” v kuluarakh OON*, *Pravda*, 1969, № 24, p. 5; Viktor Perlo *Gonka vooruzheniy i ekonomika SShA*, *Pravda*, 1979, № 270, p. 4, etc.



From the newspaper, Soviet readers could find out what lobbying is as a phenomenon in general (there were brief, rarely detailed explanations of the term in the articles);<sup>39</sup> about lobbying in the USA, Germany and a number of other countries of the “capitalist camp”;<sup>39,40</sup> about the existence in the USA of ethical rules and federal laws regulating lobbying activities;<sup>41</sup> about the methods of lobbyists;<sup>42</sup> about specific lobbying campaigns;<sup>43</sup> about the types of lobbying (military–industrial,<sup>44</sup> clerical,<sup>45</sup> aviation,<sup>46</sup> oil,<sup>47</sup> automotive,<sup>48</sup> ethnic<sup>49</sup>); on lobbying activities on the world stage and in international organizations (in particular in the UN<sup>50</sup>). Sometimes journalists even gave specific names of lobbyists and information about their fees.<sup>51</sup>

The topic of lobbying helped to clearly reveal the well-known concept of

39. For example: “... “lobbyists” – from the word “lobby”, which means back rooms. We are talking about agents of monopolies, whose specialty is finding ways of influencing senators and congressmen on the sidelines of the House of Representatives and the Senate.” (K. Demidov, *Razlozheniye burzhuaznoy demokratii v SShA (o knige G. Grekhema “Moral v amerikanskoy politike”)*, Pravda, 1954, № 103, p. 3); “The so-called “lobbies” are agents and talkachi of large monopolies...” (I. Grigoryev, *Moral' dollara*, Pravda, 1950, № 47, p. 4).

40. Rumynskiye generaly na soderzhanii u Shkody, Pravda, 1933, № 93, p. 4; *Deklaratsiya pravitelstva Khayasi*, Pravda. 1937, № 101, p. 5; V. Mikhaylov, *Koroli v bundestage*, Pravda, 1966, № 163, p. 5; Yevgeniy Grigoryev, *Registr makhinatorov*, Pravda, 1974, № 84, p. 3; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Po kom zvonit kolokol “Lloyda”?* *Lobbisty za rabotoy*, Pravda, 1989, № 345, p. 7; A. Ivkin, *Proyekty veka: Megapolis v Avstralii*, Pravda, 1989, № 338, p. 6, etc.

41. *Opyat' skandal.* – Pravda. 1980. № 199, p. 5; *24 chasa planety: SShA.* – Pravda. 1988. № 21, p. 5 etc.

42. I. Grigoryev, *Moral' dollara*, Pravda, 1950, № 47, p. 4; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Demokratiya i “zhirnyye koty”*, Pravda, 1971, № 316, p. 4; Sergei Vishnevskiy, *Vrashchayushchiyesya dveri*, Pravda, 1980, № 245, p. 6, etc.

43. Nikolay Kurdyumov, *Lobbisty Pentagona v kongresse*, Pravda, 1976, № 29, p. 5; A. Tolkunov, *Vynuzhdeny uyti*, Pravda, 1976, № 48, p. 5, etc.

44. Viktor Perlo, *Amerikanskiye finansovyye magnaty i vneshnyaya politika SShA*, Pravda, 1957, № 325, p. 5; B. Orekhov, *Nyu-York: Protivoborstvo*, Pravda, 1969, № 209, p. 5; *Tolstosumy speshat*, Pravda, 1969, № 78, p. 5, etc.

45. *Sluzhanka monopolii: “Neyshnl gardian” o nravakh amerikanskoy pressy*, Pravda, 1960, № 243, p. 3; A. Tolkunov, *Prepodobnyy antikommunist*, Pravda, 1974, № 285, p. 5, etc.

46. *Na sluzhbu k kontsernam*, Pravda, 1971, № 245, p. 5; *Kto poletit na “Konkorde”?*, Pravda, 1975, № 229, p. 5, etc.

47. Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Neft. gaz i tseny*, Pravda, 1977, № 299, p. 5; *Vynuzhdeny opravdyvatsya*, Pravda, 1980, № 220, p. 5, etc.

48. V. Sukhoy, *Razvenchannyye simvoly*, Pravda, 1980, № 197, p. 5; E. Rusakov, *“Novyy god” po-Nyuyorskki*, Pravda, 1975, № 280, p. 4, etc.

49. *Statia Bivena v “Tribyun”*, Pravda, 1955, № 232, p. 4; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Kolonka kommentatora: Retsidiv “kholodnoy voyny”*, Pravda, 1973, № 251, p. 5; Victor Linnik, *Antiyaponskaya kompaniya v Soyedinennykh Shtatakh*, Pravda, 1990, № 49, p. 4, etc.

50. Nikolay Kurdyumov, *“talkachi” v kuluarakh OON*, Pravda, 1969, № 24, p. 5; *Blizhniy Vostok: otpor avantyuram Tel-Aviva*, Pravda, 1970, № 43, p. 5; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Agressory i ikh posobniki*, Pravda, 1972, № 257, p. 5, etc.

51. *Vashington podbirayet marionetku*, Pravda, 1965, № 162, p. 1; G. Vasilyev, *“Rytzar” bez dospekhov*, 1966, № 145, p. 5; *Tak osushchestvlyayetsya podkup v politike*, Pravda, № 211, p. 5, etc.

“merging of the state and monopolies” and at the same time interest the reader with an intriguing narrative about the political underhand struggle in bourgeois democracies (including in the USA). Actualization of facts about the activities of lobbyists in the field of domestic and foreign policy of capitalist countries was achieved by linking this information to such important issues as the arms race, unfair wars, nationalism, violation of workers’ rights, corruption, etc.<sup>52</sup>

The most talented and popular international journalists of the USSR – Thomas Kolesnichenko, Evgeny Grigoriev, Yuri (Georgy) Zhukov, Malor Sturua, etc. – paid attention to the role of lobbying in the political life of Western societies. Victor Perlo, the “American economist” as was usually indicated in his author’s signature to newspaper and magazine materials, stood apart among these authors. Perlo became an exclusive, valuable “acquisition” of the *Pravda*’s international information department.

Victor Perlo was born in New York in 1912. His parents, who most likely came from the Privislinsky region of the Russian Empire, emigrated to the United States long before his birth.<sup>53</sup> He received an economics degree at Columbia University (in 1931), after which he entered the civil service.

Perlo was an ordinary new dealer – in 1933–1937 he was engaged in economic and statistical research for the National Recovery Administration. During the Second World War he worked in the Commerce Department (1939–1941), Office of Price Administration (1941–1943), War Production Board (1943–1945), and later – in the Treasury Department (1945–1947). As he himself believed, he managed to make a feasible contribution to the prosperity of his country during the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>54</sup>

After the war, when American elites began to purge new dealers from their ranks, Victor Perlo appeared before a US congressional commission investigating anti-American activities. They tried to incriminate him with espionage in favor of the USSR and membership in the Communist Party of the United States,<sup>55</sup> but no

52. See: Yuriy Zhukov, *Vzglyad iz Moskvy: Chto delat s raketami maloy dalnosti?*, Pravda, 1989, № 44, p. 6; Oleg Ignatyev, *Kolonka komentatora: Provokatsii dalnego pritsela*, Pravda, 1967, № 143, p. 5; *Milliony amerikantsev ne imeyut raboty: Chto pokazala konferentsiya po bezrabotitse v Vashingtone*, Pravda, 1959, № 105, p. 5; I. Belyayev, *V plenu samoobmana: kto zatyagivayet blizhnvestochnyy krizis?*, Pravda, 1968, № 33, p. 4; Tomas Kolesnichenko, *Skandal razrastayetsya*, Pravda, 1980, № 42, p. 5, etc.

53. We have gathered biographical data from several sources: from *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Sovetskaya entsiklopediya”, 1975), vol. 19, p. 422–423; in the article: Vladimir G. Sarychev, “Perlo (Perlo) Victor” in *Ekonomicheskaya entsiklopediya* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Sovetskaya entsiklopediya”, 1979), vol. 3, p. 230; from V. Perlo personal file held in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (hereinafter – RSACH) Fund 5. *Apparat TsK KPSS (1949–1991 gg.)*, as well as his own testimony given under oath during the hearings of the Commission to Investigate Anti-American Activities (See: US Congress. Hearings in the Committee on Un-American Activities. The House of Representatives. 80th Congress, 2nd session. Washington, 1948. pp. 675–701).

54. US Congress. Hearings before the Committee on Un-American activities, p. 680.

55. At the time of the interrogation (July – August 1948), Victor Perlo had already left the civil service. The investigation found him in the position of an economic consultant for the Progressive Party (See: *Ibid.*, p. 678).

trial ensued.<sup>56</sup>

We do not know when Victor Perlo joined the Communist Party of the USA. Documents from his personal file, kept in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, only allow us to say that his active participation in the life of the party began in the 1960s.<sup>57</sup> The International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU oversaw the gradual rise of Perlo in the party hierarchy,<sup>58</sup> as evidenced by the reports of employees of the international department.<sup>59</sup> The subject of their close attention were also the publications of Perlo, published both in the USSR and in the USA.

Due to his background, Victor Perlo was undoubtedly a very well-informed economist. In the 1970s, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* and the *Economic Encyclopedia* on their pages devoted space to his person, and his scientific and journalistic works, in which Perlo considered the financial, socio-economic, racial, and cultural problems of American society. Many of these works were translated into Russian.<sup>60</sup> Undoubtedly, his comparative studies of two economic systems also deserve attention.

---

56. The CIAAA (Commission to Investigate Anti-American Activities) was established back in 1938 and has existed for more than thirty years. In 1948, it was headed by J. Parnell Thomas. During this period, the Commission consisted of ardent opponents of the New Deal, the “big government”, labor unions and communists. One of its members was Congressman Richard Nixon (the future US president), who actively participated in the interrogations, including Victor Perlo. But Perlo was lucky, and he did not become the main aim, because the attention of the CIAAA was drawn to the figures of more significant newdealers – Harry Dexter White and Alger Hiss. Interestingly, Martin Dies, the initiator of the creation of the CIAAA and its first chairman (1938–1944), believed that the anti-communist activities of the Commission did not bring political dividends to any of its members, with the exception of one person – Richard Nixon, who “backed away from it”. (See: Goodman, Walter, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1968), p. 271.) However, according to the American researcher Walter Goodman, in 1948 Nixon gained some popularity thanks to the “Hiss Case”. (Ibid.)

57. RSACH, fund 5, inventory 109, case 10466, p. 26.

58. In 1959 Perlo became a delegate from the New York Party Organization at the XVII Congress of the CP USA. In April 1969 he was elected as a member of the National Committee of the CP USA. Since January 1984 he was a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CP USA. Also, since 1977 Perlo headed the Economic Commission of the CP of the USA. (See: RSACH, fund 5, inventory 109, case 10466, p. 93). According to an obituary published in the New York Times, Perlo retained positions in the party until his death in 1999 (See: *Victor Perlo, 87, economist of the Communist Party of the USA*, New York Times. December 10, 1999, p. 19).

59. RSACH, fund 5, inventory 109, case 10466, pp. 26. 69. 72. 84. 93. 123.

60. Victor Perlo, *Amerikanskiy imperializm* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1951); Idem, *Negry v selskom khozyaystve yuga SShA*. (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1954); Idem, *Imperiya finansovykh magnatov* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1958); Idem *Ekonomicheskoye sorevnovaniye SSSR i SShA*. (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1960); Victor Perlo. Karl Marzani, *Dollary i problema razoruzheniya* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo inostrannoy literatury, 1961); Victor Perlo, *Neustoychivaya ekonomika*. (Moscow: Progress, 1975) etc.

Perlo knew Soviet realities well: he visited the USSR twice (1960 and 1977),<sup>61</sup> visited the countries of the “Soviet bloc,”<sup>62</sup> was familiar with the works of Soviet economists. He carefully studied the theory and practice of Soviet planning and highly appreciated the achievements of the “five-year plans.” On his first visit to the Soviet Union, Perlo was honored to meet personally with Anastas Mikoyan. The result of their almost three-hour conversation was the book *How the Soviet Economy Works: an Interview with A.I. Mikoyan, First Deputy Minister of the USSR* (New York: International Publisher, 1961).

After the investigation in 1948, Victor Perlo continued publishing articles in scientific American journals devoted to economics and statistics. However, after his open affiliation with the Communist Party of the USA, this opportunity obviously disappeared, although his journalistic works still appeared in American communist press, e.g. in *The Daily World*, *The Daily Worker* and *Political Affairs Magazine*.

In the USSR, after the beginning of the “Thaw,” Perlo got the opportunity not only to be published in Soviet scientific journals, but also to address the Soviet readership from the pages of the general press. In total, from 1957 to 1989 he had published about 90 articles in Russian, including 10 (huge texts by newspaper standards) in *Pravda*.<sup>63</sup> Perlo’s articles combined an analysis of current American politics with a deep knowledge of the economic processes taking place in the United States. Perlo paid considerable attention to the influence of economic pressure groups on the formation of the internal and international agenda of the United States, criticized the cronyism that existed, from his point of view, in the American financial sector. He subjected the US military-industrial lobby to the greatest criticism.

### Press and Propaganda

When assessing Soviet journalism, it is necessary to show the ideological framework in which it was forced to exist. The system of party management of the press included propaganda and censorship bodies. Journalistic and propaganda

61. Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, fund 5, inventory 109, case 10466, p. 13, 74. In 1960, in addition to the RSFSR, he also visited the Uzbek SSR and the Kazakh SSR. (See: *Viktor Perlo otvechayet na nashi voprosy*, Novoye Vremya, No. 28, 1960. p. 13).

62. Victor Perlo, *Chto ya videl v Rumynii i Chekhoslovakii*, Novoye Vremya, 1961, № 4, p. 25–27.

63. Victor Perlo, *Amerikanskiye finansovyye magnaty i vneshnyaya politika SShA*, Pravda, 1957, № 324, p. 5–6; Idem, *Amerikanskiye finansovyye magnaty i vneshnyaya politika SShA (okonchaniye)*, Pravda, 1957, № 325, p. 5–6; Idem, *Gonka vooruzheniy – «zolotoye dno» dlya monopolii*, Pravda, 1959, № 72, p. 5; Idem *Amerikanskaya ekonomika na poroge 1961 goda*, Pravda, 1960, № 340, p. 3–4; Idem, *Amerikanskaya ekonomika na poroge 1961 goda (okonchaniye)*, Pravda, 1960, № 344, p. 3; Idem, *SShA: ekonomika i krizis*, Pravda, 1970, № 251, p. 4; Idem, *SShA: ekonomika i krizis (okonchaniye)*, Pravda, 1970, № 252, p. 4; Idem, *Geroi – lyudi truda. Amerikanskiy ekonomist o Sovetskom Soyuze*, Pravda, 1977, № 212, p. 4; Idem, *Gonka vooruzheniy i ekonomika SShA*, Pravda, 1979, № 270, p. 4; Idem, *Krichashcheye protivorechiye. Sotsialnyye posledstviya nauchno-tekhnicheskoy revolyutsii na Zapade*, Pravda, 1986, № 51, p. 4.

activities in the USSR were one of the main instruments of control over the “masses.” The propaganda’s goal was to form a consciousness in society as close as possible to the “official” one<sup>64</sup>, which implied loyalty to the state and ideology, readiness for creative work, participation in the defense of the country, etc.

In the Soviet state the propaganda system was managed by structures created within the governing bodies of the Communist Party (Propaganda and Agitation Departments, Press Departments, Ideological Commissions), as well as similar bodies within the executive branch, which, however, fully obeyed the instructions of party ideologists.

The renowned statement that journalism is always closely connected with propaganda and somehow broadcasts certain political attitudes has received a vivid practical embodiment in the Soviet state. Vladimir Lenin – a lawyer by education and a journalist by profession<sup>65</sup> – as early as in 1905, in his article “Party Organization and Party Literature,” persistently pursued the idea that “freedom of speech and the press” should be limited to the interests of the party,<sup>66</sup> and in 1918 declared that “the press should serve as an instrument of socialist construction.”<sup>67</sup>

The Soviet propaganda system reached its peak with the beginning of the “information era.” In 1970, the one-time circulation of newspapers amounted to 139.7 million copies (1.16 times more than in 1967), in 1977 – 7985 newspapers were published with a one-time circulation of almost 170 million copies.<sup>68</sup>

The trend was to strengthen the role of all-union newspapers – if in 1955 their annual circulation was about a third of the total circulation of newspaper publications, then in 1972 it was more than half.<sup>69</sup> This manifested the desire to strengthen control over the sphere of propaganda, so that as much information as possible came from the “center.”

In the USSR press bureaus (structures that were engaged in the dissemination of news information) were created at the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union,<sup>70</sup> the Novosti Press Agency,<sup>71</sup> the *Pravda*, *Krasnaya Zvezda* and *Komsomolskaya*

64. Boris Grushin, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniya. Ocherki massovogo soznaniya rossiyan vremen Hrushcheva, Brezhneva, Gorbacheva i El'sina v 4-h knigah. Kniga 2-ya: Epoha Brezhneva (chast' 2)*. (Moscow: Progress–Traditsiya, 2006), p. 496.

65. In this article, we consider it very appropriate to mention that Lenin belonged to the Professional Union of Journalists (Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), Vol 43, p. 415), and for personal questionnaires as his ‘profession’ usually indicated ‘journalist’ or ‘writer’ (Viktoria Uchenova, *Besedy o zhurnalistike* (Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 1985), Chapter 6; Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1970), Vol 41, p. 465; *Ibid.*, Vol. 44, p. 511).

66. Vladimir Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1947), Vol. 12, p. 99–105.

67. *Pravda*, 1918, 28 April.

68. Sergey Tsukasov, *Sovetskaya pechat' – puti povysheniya effektivnosti i kachestva*, *Kommunist*, 1977, No. 7, p. 11.

69. *Zhurnalistika v politicheskoy strukture obshchestva: nekotorye problemy politicheskoy organizatsii sistemy sredstv massovoy informatsii i propagandy* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1975), p. 11.

70. Was established in 1925.

71. Was established in 1961.

*Pravda* newspapers.<sup>72</sup> In addition, new technologies were introduced – in 1977, central newspapers were transmitted by phototelegraph to 25 cities of the country out of 44 where they were printed (it was believed that the Soviet phototelegraph network was “the most extensive in the world”). An experiment was also launched to transmit newspaper strips using a communication satellite.<sup>73</sup>

The strongest growth since the period of Nikita Khrushchev’s rule has occurred in the field of broadcast media, which corresponded to global trends. If in 1955 there were 9 television studios in the USSR, then in 1965 – 121, in 1970 – 126, in 1975 – 131 studios. The growth rate of television was higher than that of radio broadcasting: from 1955 to 1973, the average daily volume of radio broadcasting in the country increased from 492 to 1050 hours, and television over the years increased its volume of broadcasting from 15 to 1889 hours.<sup>74</sup> The percentage of time allocated for “ideological” information on central television was about 25% of the airtime.<sup>75</sup>

The vast majority of the population of the USSR was a regular consumer of print and broadcast media. Thus, according to a survey conducted in Taganrog in 1968–1970, more than 80% of the information people received from newspapers, radio, and television.<sup>76</sup> Many citizens used all the main types of media – in 1977, the editorial board of the newspaper *Pravda* found out through a survey of its readers that 75% of them read two or four newspapers, 92% watched TV, and 87% listened to the radio.<sup>77</sup> In 1975, 74.9% of respondents read newspapers daily in Leningrad. The newspaper *Pravda* was subscribed to by 36.9%, bought by 15.7%, *Leningradskaya Pravda* – by 29.4% and 20.6% of respondents, respectively.<sup>78</sup> In 1977, there were more than four periodicals for every family in the USSR.<sup>79</sup>

Quantitative indicators of the expansion of propaganda systems and “political education,”<sup>80</sup> were very significant, which should have guaranteed the success of the transmission of ideological attitudes.

The leaders of the USSR believed that Soviet propaganda and the system of “political education” were very effective. Ideologists emphasized the superiority of Soviet propaganda over Western propaganda. In 1969 Georgy Smirnov, Deputy head of the Propaganda Department of the CPSU Central Committee, put forward the concept that the second one is built “by analogy with commercial

72. *Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RSACH)*, fund 5, inventory 33, case 220, p. 86.

73. Tsukasov, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

74. *Zhurnalistsika v politicheskoy strukture obshchestva*, p. 96–97.

75. *RSACH*, fund 5, inventory 59, case 28, p. 82–83; *Journalism in the Political Structure of Society*, p. 99–100.

76. *Zhurnalistsika v politicheskoy strukture obshchestva*, p. 95.

77. Tsukasov, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

78. Boris Firsov, Kuanyshbek Muzdybaev, *K postroyeniyu sistemy pokazateley ispol'zovaniya sredstv massovoy kommunikatsii*, Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya, 1975, No. 1, p. 115, 117.

79. Sergey Tsukasov, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

80. A system of lectures and other information and training events in the field of ideology and current political events aimed at general public.



advertising,” and it is based on “lies” (as in advertising), whereas “the Marxist–Leninist understanding of the purpose of propaganda is to develop the political and moral consciousness of the masses, to increase their knowledge in order to make them aware of their position and their revolutionary tasks.” In January 1971, Leonid Brezhnev, in a circle of confidants, declared that party workers know how to “work with the masses,” and as a result, “the masses are with them,” i.e. that the Soviet people are loyal to the party and ideology. The secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Pyotr Demichev, expressed confidence that there is nothing “more authoritative, more meaningful than our newspapers, our television.”<sup>81</sup>

However, despite the impressive quantitative, “technical” indicators, in the midst of the “information revolution” of the 1960s–1970s, Soviet propaganda ceased to comply with the dictates of the time. Its main features were formalism, “contrivance” and “bulkiness,” the pursuit of the number of events,<sup>82</sup> which was the main criterion for reporting. Information and propaganda events have turned into a fiction, the participation of citizens in them was often involuntary.

The level of content and design of propaganda was low. It was dominated by the obsessive repetition of the same appeals and slogans, as well as clichés that even the propagandists themselves were tired of (for example, in 1965 they proposed “not to call, as it was before, any Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU historical, and any party event, large or small, Leninist”). Visual agitation acquired only a “decorative character” – many people did not even know the content of the slogans and posters that hung directly above their workplaces.<sup>83</sup>

An absurd circumstance was the combination of the delay and concealment of current news in the Soviet media<sup>84</sup> with the overall huge amount of information that was published in them: all these volumes were characterized, as noted by Russian sociologist Boris Grushin, “extreme content incompleteness, not to say striking limitations, exorbitant poverty.”<sup>85</sup>

Direct, undisguised propaganda, for which “it is characteristic to monstrously simplify the surrounding reality, reduce all the diversity of the surrounding world to a set of stamps,”<sup>86</sup> could indeed have been effective before the onset of the “information era” in the 1960s. However, when “uncontrolled” information from

81. *RSACH*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 35, p. 21; *Ibid.*, case 41, p. 8, 18.

82. *RSACH*, fund 5, inventory 60, case 23, p. 23–24; *Ibid.*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 35, p. 5.

83. *RSACH*, fund 5, inventory 33, case 216, p. 124; *Ibid.*, case 220, p. 86, 93; *Ibid.*, case 229, p. 7; *Ibid.*, case 241, p. 19–20; *Ibid.*, inventory 59, case 24, p. 67; *Ibid.*, case 30, p. 64; *Ob ideologicheskoy rabote KPSS: Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1983), p. 242; *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyuciyah i resheniyah v rezolyuciyah i resheniyah s'ezdov, konferency i plenumov CK*, Vol. 11 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1986), p. 146.

84. It was accepted as a rule that for the sake of ‘the common good’ information in certain cases ‘cannot be given in an open form’, and also that ‘sometimes silence is more useful’ than words. – See: *Central State Archive of Moscow*, fund II–4, inventory 158, case 44, p. 60.

85. Boris Grushin, *Op. cit.*, p. 492, 498.

86. Vladimir Batyuk, Dmitry Evstafyev, *Pervye zamorozki: Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniya v 1945–1950 gg.* (Moscow: Russian University Publishing House, 1995), p. 4.



all over the globe began to actively enter the country, ideologists scored alarm<sup>87</sup> and began to incline the leadership of the USSR to revise the policy in the field of propaganda. The situation was aggravated by the clearly revealed changes in the state of Soviet society, including the intensification of its deideologization and “Westernization.”

Ideologists put forward proposals for a radical restructuring of propaganda. Thus, the author of an article found in the archive of Georgy Smirnov and dated 1967 (most likely, it was Smirnov himself), pointing to the scarcity of information and the “varnishing” of realities in the Soviet media, proposed to ensure the “truthfulness” of propaganda as “a necessary condition for the activity and consciousness of the masses, their ability to mobilize efforts to overcome difficulties.” In fact, this meant the end of censorship of news information. The article also proposed to stop the informational “isolation” of the Soviet population from the West. The author did not see any sense in it, because, in his opinion, cultural, economic, and other contacts with captains did not necessarily cause damage to Soviet ideology, but the “isolationist position” just led “to the delay of our technical and scientific progress”<sup>88</sup> (indeed, the USSR was in dire need of cooperation with the West). As a result, additional measures were implemented to improve the system of propaganda and “political education” – for example, in the late 1970s, the differentiation of the presentation of information for different target groups was strengthened in the Soviet media.<sup>89</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted several formal resolutions to improve propaganda,<sup>90</sup> which remained “on paper.” Literally a few years later, Perestroika was launched in the USSR, as a result of which censorship was gradually abolished, party propaganda finally faded and disappeared, and in the early 1990s a completely new media system was formed.

With all the strict ideological and censorship restrictions, the Soviet school of journalism was able to create a product that attracted readers. Studies of the readership of the newspaper *Pravda*, conducted by sociologists in 1968–1969 and 1976, revealed a huge interest of Soviet citizens in publications on international topics.<sup>91</sup> Some modern researchers explain this fact by the lack of information

87. *RSACH*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 28, p. 6, 8–9.

88. *RSACH*, fund 104, inventory 1, case 28, p. 4–6.

89. Hoffmann, Eric P., Laird, Robbin F. *Technocratic Socialism: The Soviet Union in the Advanced Industrial Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), p. 129, 136.

90. *Ob ideologicheskoy rabote KPSS*, p. 352, 354–356; *Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza v rezolyuciyah...*, Vol. 13 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1987), p. 337.

91. During a poll conducted in 1968–1969, 86% of readers answered the question about which sections (topics) they were particularly interested in in *Pravda*: ‘International information’. (See: “*Pravda*” i ee chitateli: nauchnyy otchet ob itogah sociologicheskogo obsledovaniya / Scientific Supervisor – Doctor of Economics Vladimir Shlyapentokh (Moscow, 1969), p. 22–23.). In 1976, the international theme was again in the first place (See: “*Pravda*” i ee chitateli: sopostavlenie rezul’tatov dvuh sociologicheskikh issledovaniy (Moscow, 1977), p. 26, 32).

about life abroad in the conditions of the Cold War.<sup>92</sup> However, this does not exclude the presence of other factors, e.g. a high level of Soviet journalists and high culture of the average Soviet reader.

## Conclusion

The Soviet mass media have always paid considerable attention to international topics. The share of information about the foreign policy and domestic life of the United States in the Soviet central media increased as the political weight of this country on the world arena increased.<sup>93</sup> The Soviet press discovered the topic of lobbying in the late 1920s. The publication of Ostrogorsky's monograph in the USSR played a role in this. Before the Great Patriotic War there were only 4 publications in *Pravda* that mentioned lobbyists/tolkachi. After the war, the number of such materials began to grow: in the 1950s 5 articles appeared and in the 1960s, an average of two per year were already published, in the 1970s – 4 publications per year. The largest number of texts dealing with the issue of lobbying – about 8 per year – was published in the 1980s, that is, after the end of the era of Détente.<sup>94</sup>

Lobbying, the reverse side of which is corruption, was very suitable as an argument in the ideological confrontation with Western quasi-liberalism.<sup>95</sup> The attempt made in the USA in 1946 to distinguish between lobbying and corruption caused rejection among Soviet theorists which in accordance with the “principle of party literature,” was reflected in the publications of the newspaper *Pravda*.

And yet the attention to the problem of lobbying was not limited to the needs of propaganda. Obviously, there was a desire to comprehend the peculiarities of the enemy's political system, the American culture of political bargaining. Most likely there was also a practical goal – to find among the numerous US interest groups those that were determined to cooperate with the USSR.

It is necessary to note the inaccuracies and gaps that existed in the publications of Soviet authors. For example, journalists sometimes interpreted the concept of “lobbying” too broadly. The confusion was caused by the fact that in American political science literature and mass media, in the statements of politicians, there were (and still are) both broad and narrow interpretation of lobbying: in a broad sense, such activities are understood not only as pressure on the authorities from individuals and organizations, but also as the actions of parliamentarians and executive officers (including the US president); in the narrow – direct contact of a private lobbyist with a legislator or official. Therefore, on the pages of the Soviet press, including *Pravda*, one could find reports about “presidential lobbying” or

---

92. Ekaterina Kamenskaya, *Konflikty v mirovoy sisteme socializma: obrazy v sovetskikh gazetah (vtoraya polovina 1960-h – nachalo 1980-h gg.)*: PhD Dissertation (Yekaterinburg, 2015), chapter 2, paragraph 1.2.

93. It is possible that the growth of US hegemonism was one of the factors that influenced the dynamics of the appearance of articles about lobbying in the Soviet press.

94. Our calculation – F. S., I. V.

95. Many other examples of the ideological “battles” between the USSR and the USA in the media space during the Cold War one can find in Dina Fainberg's study *Cold War Correspondents* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

“lobbying of the US State Department.”<sup>96</sup> In addition, for ideological reasons, newspapers of the USSR preferred not to write about the lobbying activities of American labor unions. Very little was reported about the fight against illegal lobbying, about the investigations of lobbying activities conducted in the US Congress. Despite these shortcomings, Soviet journalists showed the readership a complex mosaic of the representation of interest groups in the United States politics. Their materials reflected the activities of lobbyists at the level of individual states,<sup>97</sup> at the federal level, and also drew attention to the struggle of interest groups in the international arena, including in international organizations.

Counter-propaganda is often much more difficult to conduct than propaganda itself. And Soviet journalists as a whole successfully coped with this task. Focusing readers' attention on such a phenomenon as lobbying, they showed what is behind these or other events in the field of domestic and foreign policy of the United States and other countries. The high level of publications, the variety of genres attracted readers and strengthened the authority of the Soviet press.

In conclusion, it should also be noted that Soviet journalists were freer and bolder in their statements than scientists, and therefore they could afford to openly draw parallels between lobbyists and *tolkachi*, which, in our opinion, was quite logical. At the same time, critical articles about Soviet *tolkachi* were evidence of recognition of the shortcomings of the socio-economic system of the USSR. Showing these problems, the journalists called on the authorities to find solutions to the problems of supplying industrial enterprises and the trading system. Thus, the feedback of society with the authorities was carried out, which is one of the main functions of the press.

#### About the authors:

**Fedor Sinitsyn** is Dr. Hab. in History and a Leading Researcher at the Institute of Global History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He is the author of 9 books and a number of articles devoted to different issues of ethnic and religious policies, ideology, propaganda, and migration in the Soviet Union and Russia.

**Irina Vavochkina** is a junior research fellow, Faculty of History, Moscow State University (Moscow). Her research focuses on US politics with a specialization in the interest-group system and lobbying regulation.

---

96. *Na povodu u militaristov*, Pravda, 1983, № 146, p. 5; Vitaliy Gan, *Kachnulsya li mayatnik? Kongress SShA i voyennyy biznes*, Pravda, 1986, № 218, p. 4; *Reshitelnyy protest*, Pravda, 1980, № 210, p. 5, etc.

97. *Tak osushchestvlyayetsya podkup v politike*, Pravda, 1960, № 211, p. 5; Sergei Vishnevskiy, *V vashingtonskom Kapitolii: "Muchitel'naya pereotsenka"*, Pravda, 1974, № 12, p. 4; E. Rusakov, *"Ma Bell" i antitrustovskie zakony*, Pravda, 1975, № 46, p. 4, etc.