

*Paul Duffy*

## **From the Soviet Archives: A Secret Document Relating to Canada**

In recent times Russian archives have been pouring forth their heart-rending treasures. To observers of the Soviet regime, however, there is nothing particularly startling in these revelations. For example, the CBC's Moscow correspondent Don Murray recently informed Canadians that the Lenin museum had at last disclosed what was until then a well-guarded secret: that V. I. Lenin, founder of the Soviet state, suffered from syphilis. Stories of Lenin's illness have been too commonplace for this to amaze students of his biography, but there is always some satisfaction at the publication of any evidence which sheds a little more light on the mystery of the Soviet Communist Party and its deified founder.

Similarly, Russians familiar with the paths which led to any prestigious, well-paying appointment abroad would have known that only "special" people were entrusted with diplomatic, journalistic, or academic postings outside the country. The actual mechanisms of such postings were always obscure, however, and any theorizing about them had to be tempered by such words as "probably," "presumably," "one assumes," and so on.

The archival document published here for the first time is therefore of some interest. It contains nothing out of the ordinary, only a routine decision by the Politburo: on the 3rd of March 1989 it decided to open, in Canada, a new position for a correspondent of the important and much-read Soviet newspaper, *Komsomolskaia pravda*. The secretary of the Politburo directed that the position was to be filled by "an officer of the KGB, USSR." Since the correspondent might need a little help, a

secretary-typist was also called for.

This historic decision (and judging by the number at the top, there are many others like it) is labelled "top secret" and "to be returned within 3 days." There is also the usual "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" as a reminder that the ultimate goal is to help the proletariat.

When this decision was made, Gorbachev was in charge and the world was praising him as the leading proponent of "glasnost" and "perestroika." There is nothing surprising in the routing of the document to Kriuchkov, the head of the KGB, since this appointment is obviously his business; but one might well ask why Shevardnadze, Minister of Foreign Affairs, is included, as its officials were always at pains to make clear that it never had any hand in the espionage activities of the KGB.

A few details in this curious document merit attention. What is so extremely important about this decision? Are the officials involved so accustomed to keeping their business a secret? What is so sensitive about a correspondent's posting, that the highest institution in the Party (and the country) has to give its go-ahead? The link between the Komsomol and the KGB was well established: both Shelepin and Semichastnyi led the Communist Youth organization in the 50s and 60s before becoming KGB bosses. It is nonetheless nice to see explicit evidence of the cooperation of the two organizations in this joint proposal to the Politburo. It could be inferred from paragraph 2, which stipulates that the post be filled by a KGB officer, that such a connection may not always have been necessary. Another inference that can be drawn is that the editor-in-chief of the newspaper has not been consulted, and is expected to abide by the decision of the superior institution.

No less an official than the Chairman of the Council of Ministers gives his authority to the Minister of Finance to grant the editorial board of *Komsomolskaia pravda* the necessary funds, in Soviet and foreign currency, for the organization and support of the correspondent's position in Canada. The chairman's signature validates the decision of the Politburo.

Finally, it should be noted that the KGB could be relied upon to furnish an incumbent with all the proper qualifications for the job. The fact that foreign currency is a precious asset may explain why such a relatively insignificant matter as this had to be referred to the highest Party and government levels. There is no indication of exactly how much

money was to be allocated. Presumably, Kriuchkov and Mironenko, representing the KGB and the Komsomol respectively, were to find a way of subsidizing the correspondent in the everyday business of responsible journalism.

point 50, protocol No. 148

Top secret

Project

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR

INSTRUCTION

from March 1989

Moscow, the Kremlin

The Ministry of Finances of the USSR is to grant the editorial board of the newspaper "Komsomolskaia pravda" the necessary funds in Soviet and foreign currency for the organization and support of a correspondent's station for the newspaper "Komsomolskaia pravda" in Canada consisting of a correspondent and a secretary typist.

Chair of the  
Council of Ministers of the USSR

N. Ryzhkov

To be returned within three days  
to the Central Committee of the  
Communist Party of the Soviet Union (General Division, first sector)

THE COMMUNIST PARTY  
OF THE SOVIET UNION

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

TOP SECRET  
SPECIAL FILE

No. P148/50

PERSONAL

Comrades Shevardnadze, Kriuchkov, Mironenko, Falin—  
everything Smirtiukov—p. 3

Extract from protocol no. 148 of the meeting of the Politburo of the  
Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of 3  
March 1989.

*On the opening of a correspondent's station for the newspaper "Komsomolskaia pravda" in Canada.*

1. To accept the proposition of the Committee on State Security of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Komsomol to open a correspondent's station for the newspaper "Komsomolskaia pravda" in Canada, consisting of a correspondent and a secretary typist.
2. To ensure that the post of correspondent of the newspaper "Komsomolskaia pravda" is filled by an officer of the KGB of the USSR.
3. To approve the project of the instructor by the Council of Ministers of the USSR on the given question (attached).

Secretary of the Central Committee