

**November 29, 1956**

**Letter, Director-General of Security Colonel Charles Spry to Prime Minister Robert Menzies**

**Citation:**

"Letter, Director-General of Security Colonel Charles Spry to Prime Minister Robert Menzies", November 29, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Obtained by Harry Blutstein. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/176424>

**Summary:**

Spry, the director of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO), apologizes for the arrest of KGB defector Vladimir Petrov, who was under ASIO protection when he left a safehouse and got into an argument while drunk.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

[9]

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27 November, 1956.

*My Dear Mr R-4 -*

No doubt you have seen in the newspapers a report to the effect that a person, who gave his name as V. PETROV, was charged with drunkenness in the Southport Police Court on 28th November, 1956.

I regret to say that the person concerned was our Vladimir PETROV. The Police have advised that they genuinely believe PETROV, whilst in a state of drunkenness on the night of 27th November, 1956, mistook his place of residence when returning thereto. An argument developed with the occupants when PETROV insisted that the flat was his; this resulted in him being held until the Police arrived. During a struggle his trousers were badly torn. PETROV was taken to the Police Station, charged with drunkenness, and released at 5.00 a.m. the next morning on a ten shillings bail. As I believe is not uncommon in such cases, he forfeited the latter.

Whilst I have no brief for his behaviour in any way, I do feel that such should be considered in the light of his Soviet background, and the circumstances resulting from his defection in Australia. Both the PETROVs, in my opinion, are now psychopathic cases due, I believe, to the following -

- (a) remorse at their betrayal of their country;
- (b) the hostility which has been engendered against them in Australia;
- (c) their feeling that they are unwanted and will be discarded when their usefulness is ended;
- (d) the difficulty of obtaining suitable employment (which they feel will be an impossibility in view of (b) above). (We are in fact finding this a most difficult task for that reason.);
- (e) the never-ending debriefing which allows no rest from remorse at their actions.

Mrs. PETROV has been under psychiatric treatment and I am endeavouring to persuade Mr. PETROV to undertake the same.

There is one additional factor in the case of Mr. PETROV, which is invariably the cause of an outburst. This is the attitude of his wife. She loses no

[8]

2.

opportunity when aroused to remind him that he is the cause of her present predicament and thereby the probable death of her mother and sister in Russia. On such occasions, he normally takes refuge in the mists of alcohol. I am informed by my officers that they believe his last escapade followed an argument with his wife.

Yours *o -**CCF*  
(C.C.F. SPRY)

The Right Honorable R.G. Menzies, C.H., Q.C.,  
Prime Minister,  
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Treasury Gardens,  
MELBOURNE.      C.2.