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COUNTRY: USSR

REPORT NO. 00-A-3, 203, 015

SUBJECT:

Oleg B. Pirogov, Soviet Exchange Student; Unquestioned Return to the USSR; Possible Susceptibility to Coercion; Incident with American Agent in USSR

DATE DISTR. 4 December 1961

NO. PAGES 3

REFERENCES

Case No. 35,120

(NY-52511)

c/s Morgan 5

Source: [redacted]

DATE OF INFO:

20 Nov 61 and earlier

PLACE & DATE ACQ:

27 Sep 61 - FA 200-1

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

SOURCE:

US citizen, head of the chemistry department of a large US technical institute.

During the period 27 Sep to 23 Oct 61, Oleg B. Pirogov, Soviet Exchange Student under State-Department Agreement, was under the supervision of [redacted] member of his staff.

1. Oleg B. Pirogov came to do post-graduate research work in the department of chemistry under the supervision of [redacted] and [redacted] on 27 Sep 61. He was present to the State-Department exchange agreement and it was intended that he would work here for a period of three or four months. He had been here less than a month when his sudden and unexpected departure occurred on 23 Oct 61. Prior to coming here, he had been a Scientific Associate of the Institute of Chemical Physics, at the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow.
2. We were very much disturbed by Pirogov's sudden departure because we feared that the whole exchange program might have been jeopardized. So, on 27 Oct 61, we sent a cable to Professor Nikolay Alekseyevich Pirogov, a member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, who is the head of the Institute of Chemical Physics, Moscow, where Pirogov had worked. [redacted] replied to this cable with a cable which we received 11 Oct 61. It was very conciliatory. It stated that Pirogov was back for family reasons. "We are extremely sorry," it said, "and will write a letter with details later." However, no such letter has arrived to date, 20 Nov 61.
3. Another cable was sent by the National Academy of Sciences, 6 Nov 61 to the Russian Travelers' Bureau, President of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, this cable, as we reply has been received, on 20 Nov 61.
4. As far as I am concerned, I am sure that this [redacted] Pirogov's wife and family will return to the USSR to get the reason for his departure.
5. I think the [redacted] stated, there is a [redacted] to being connected. Or it may have been a combination of two or three little things that brought about his recall.
6. Pirogov stated he was well here. He is a very glib person. He gave him the title of [redacted] Scientist. He seemed to work with post-graduate [redacted]

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students about four or five years after receiving their Ph.D. When he arrived, he spoke very little English but was interesting first. He had a room in a dormitory over at the Long Island College, where he continued to live. He made many friends. He is married and has a wife and two children who remained in Moscow. One of his parents came from the Ukraine, I believe. The F.A.S. has all the details. They are getting the freight."

7. He was extremely impressed with Pirogov's ability and regarded him as a capable research worker. He is well informed in the kind of work in which he has been working. He shared well with the other students. He was not pretentious. He did not seem to hide anything. On the subject of housing, for example, he did not pretend that the USSR's is up to par in the U.S. He was not prejudicing for the Soviet system. It seemed to me that he was the sort of man who might have been converted to the U.S. way of doing things, if he was not careful. It may be that the people to whom he reported in the Council of the Soviet Delegation to the UN at Park Avenue and 68th Street, New York City, may have regarded him as a communist. Or his department may have been brought about for other reasons, for example, by his work with Soviet-American flying, aerodynamics and president of the International Astronomical Society and chairman of the Soviet Interplanetary Commission.
8. Dr. Sidorov was visiting our institution and one of us thought it would be a good idea for Pirogov to meet Sidorov. This was brought about at a reception where he was introduced as "Pirogov of Moscow." They shook hands and Pirogov said something in English like, "pleased to meet you." Sidorov said something to him in a very sharp tone in Russian and later, in the elevator, saw his smile and laughed him in a very stern voice. I was present and observed that Pirogov grew pale. Later, he became very nervous and went to the UN Delegation Headquarters on Park Avenue and 68th Street. I understood that they laughed at his apprehensions and told him not to worry. However, from then on he became more nervous. Suddenly, he said, had indicated that he was talking too much. He was afraid he had given away some important information.
9. This was a lot of bother because we already knew what they are doing. He certainly had no reason to feel he was disclosing more than he should. He only disclosed what was necessary to do the work planned for him in the problem assigned under the exchange agreement. It would have been impossible for him to carry out his assignment without making the disclosures that he made. We just cannot work on such a project without being confidential. Just the same Pirogov became very apprehensive and could be recalled. They still reported no danger. They think I have talked too much about what we are doing in the Institute of Chemical Physics. Pirogov had taken the position that it was not wrong for him to talk about his work at this institute in the USSR, which is the one headed by Kurchatov, incidentally. Pirogov maintained that an exchange project cannot be all take and no give. There is supposed to be an exchange of information.
10. Another thing that contributed to Pirogov's apprehensions was the fact that he had not heard from his wife or family for several weeks. He was greatly concerned about this. However, I believe he did have a letter from his wife just before he left.
11. By one feeling is that his popularity worked against him. The suspicious people in the UN Delegation office did not like the idea of his becoming a part of the community here. The students liked him and he went to classes with them. When some of my students were exhibiting research under the degree, Pirogov joined the party and after dinner he came along with the rest of them to have a drink at my home. He obviously acted like a human being.
12. In my opinion, Pirogov's signature into a certain attitude is not appreciating what a good propaganda agent he was for their system, even though he was not afraid to admit that the Soviet system is not perfect and that there

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NO FURTHER ACTION

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is a heavy shouter, for example. They thought he talked too much and was too friendly. He did not keep his mouth shut and he did not act like a Jew. I am sure they concluded that he was susceptible to conversion. I thought of myself.

13. As I suspect that Pincus dug his own hole. He had to report to the Council of the US Delegation every week and, in the process, his general attitude got across to them. He talked too much. His conversation with Acker was an example.
14. Again, what he was working on here was very close to what he had been working on under Germany and the Council may have jumped to the conclusion that he was telling us all that he knew.
15. The problem on which he worked here was the capitalization of German and alpha-ciphers using a transition metal catalyst system. For example, one of the capitalizations on which he worked involved the dimer, beta-dimer, and the alpha dimer, pyrolysis.
16. He was known to many of the staff and was intimate with ten or fifteen students here but was probably most intimate with the man with whom he shared a laboratory. This was an Italian, named Dr. Emilio Barbieri. They appeared to be good friends.
17. I do not think that Pincus was the victim of an informer. I have wondered about this a lot but I do not think this is what happened. I think, as I said before, that he dug his own hole. Instinctively, we were most anxious to keep this incident out of the papers and there was no leak. Had there been an informer, this might not have been the case.

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