

MISSION TO MOSCOW

By CPL. F.N. BRIEN

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The duties of RCMP personnel are many and diversified. From earliest recruit days members of the Force learn that variety is the rule rather than the exception of Mounted Police life. Consequently surprise is an element which rarely enters into one's reactions to a change of routine. I confess, however, that a phone call I received in September from my officer commanding (Regina Sub-Division) left my aplomb somewhat rudely shattered. I had been selected, I was told, "to accompany the Minister of External Affairs, the Hon. Lester B. Pearson, to Moscow, Singapore and other countries".

With a variety of details to attend to before leaving Canada, I arrived in Ottawa on September 12, and was busy until the 30th receiving numerous inoculations and vaccinations, as well as meeting Mr. Pearson and officials of the Department of External Affairs. Mr. Ray Crepault, who was to accompany the party, was in charge of the arrangements. He explained my role was to be that of personal escort to the Minister and being in "Review Order" to be representational of Canada. I would also provide Security Liaison where necessary.

Transportation for the mission was to be by air, with departure scheduled for September 30 from the RCAF base at Rockcliffe, near Ottawa. After the usual farewell formalities, the party boarded the big Air Force C-5 at 1 p.m. and the plane took off for London, England, via Gander, Newfoundland.

The aircraft carried a crew of 17 RCAF personnel under the command of Wing Cmdr. W.G.S. Miller, CD, a very efficient and knowledgeable officer who instilled confidence in all who met him. The C-5 is a luxury aircraft, comparing favourably with any of the larger commercial passenger planes. The crew were obliging and efficient and the stewards, Sergeants Roy and Martin, continually amazed us all with the delicious meals they produced from the tiny kitchen.

We left Rockcliffe on a Friday and arrived in Berlin on the following Tuesday. En route the aircraft touched down at Gander, London and Orly Airport, Paris, France, staying two hours at Gander, overnight in London and approximately 48 hours in Paris. Official duties at these places were not too confining and I

managed a visit with Insp. L.S. Grayson (RCMP Liaison Officer) and staff in London, and an evening seeing the sights of Paris.

The flight to Berlin took us over the famed Berlin Corridor where the ground is still pock-marked with bomb craters from the allied bombings of over a decade ago. Dr. Walther Klein, German Chief of Protocol, welcomed Mr. Pearson at Berlin's Tempelhof Airport, and accompanied him and Mr. Ritchie, Canadian Ambassador to Germany, who had joined our party in Paris, to the City Hall. I followed in a police car with Inspector Kahn of the German Federal Criminal Police, who had been assigned as security officer for the Minister. The Federal Criminal Police is not a uniformed force and the duties of its personnel are mainly investigational.

At the City Hall the Minister was met by Dr. Otto Suhr, Mayor, and signed the Golden Visitor's Book of Berlin. Later, I accompanied the Minister and Mr. Ritchie on a tour of West Berlin, which included a view through the Brandenburg Gate into East Berlin. To a great extent the bomb damage sustained in World War II is still in evidence.

Before leaving for Moscow on October 5, Inspector Kahn introduced me to members of the well drilled and smartly turned out German Traffic Police. I also met the navigator and radio operator of the Soviet Air Force who were to accompany us to Moscow. They could speak some English and were much interested in flying in a Canadian plane. (It was said that the C-5 was the first Western plane to travel over East Germany to Moscow since the war but I was in no position to verify this).

Our flight to the Russian capital followed a route over Warsaw, Poland and the Ukraine to Vnukova Airport, 27 kilometers from Moscow. The countryside appeared to be much like parts of Canada with large farms, forest belts and numerous lakes and rivers. From the air Moscow, a large city with many shining towers reaching into the sky, appeared to be surrounded by forests.

As Mr. and Mrs. Pearson came down the ramp from the aircraft, the Minister was welcomed by Mr. Molotov and a number of dignitaries. While the more formal ceremonies were taking place, I was besieged by a number of reporters - Tass, Pravda, Reuters - who wanted to know what I was and what my job was. The Russians did not seem familiar with the RCMP uniform, but they did not ask for any leading or embarrassing statements. The arrival of the Canadian mission was televised by both the Russian and Canadian camera men and all members of the press - Canadian, British, Russian - did not appear to be restricted in any way.