

# Mirror Images: The Novosti Press Agency Photograph Collection\*



JENNIFER ANDERSON

**RÉSUMÉ** La collection de photographies de la Novosti Press Agency, conservée aux Special Collections and Archives de l'Université Carleton, est une ressource rare et fascinante. Les 70 000 photographies et les textes d'accompagnement, qui datent de 1917 à 1991, appartenaient autrefois au Bureau de la Soviet Novosti Press Agency (APN), situé sur la rue Charlotte à Ottawa, mais le personnel de la bibliothèque Carleton a dû récupérer ce matériel rapidement vers la fin de l'année 1991 avec la dissolution de l'Union soviétique et la fermeture du Bureau à Ottawa. Fondé en partie pour encourager les Occidentaux, en particulier les Canadiens, à voir l'URSS d'un meilleur œil, l'APN d'Ottawa distribuait ces photographies et ces communiqués de presse aux médias, aux organisations et aux individus à travers le Canada. La collection offre aux historiens un aperçu de la construction de l'image que se donnait l'Union soviétique, les points de vues soviétiques officiels sur les relations internationales pendant la Guerre froide et les efforts pour adoucir les opinions anti-soviétiques au Canada. Dans son texte « *Mirror Images* », Jennifer Anderson soutient que la collection mérite d'être mieux connue des historiens de la Guerre froide au Canada et des historiens qui s'intéressent aux relations internationales et que le grand public pourrait aussi être intéressé par une exposition conçue autour de l'idéologie, de la perception et de la construction de l'identité pendant la Guerre froide.

**ABSTRACT** The Novosti Press Agency Photograph Collection, held at Carleton University in its Special Collections and Archives, is a rare and fascinating resource. The seventy thousand photographs and accompanying text, dating from 1917 to 1991, originally belonged to the Soviet Novosti Press Agency (APN) bureau located on Charlotte Street in Ottawa, but were hurriedly gathered up by Carleton library staff in late 1991 as the Soviet Union collapsed, and the press bureau closed up shop. Part of a campaign to persuade Westerners, and particularly Canadians, to view the USSR in a

\* Carleton University Library, Special Collections and Archives, Novosti Press Agency Photograph Collection [hereafter Novosti Collection]. I would like to thank Rita Richard, Jeremy Palin, Valentina Mintchev, and Trevor Smith, all of whom have worked with this collection in Special Collections and Archives at Carleton University. Apart from acquiring, organizing, writing the finding aid, and facilitating research on the collection, they also took time to offer suggestions and answer my questions. Thanks also to my supervisors, J.L. Black and Duncan McDowall, History Department, Carleton University, and Janice Cavell and Greg Donaghy at Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

more positive light, the Ottawa APN distributed these photos and press releases to media outlets, organizations, and individuals across Canada. The collection offers historians a glimpse of the constructed nature of the Soviet self-image, of official Soviet views on international relations during the Cold War, and attempts to soften anti-Soviet opinions in Canada. In "Mirror Images," Jennifer Anderson argues that the collection deserves to be better known amongst historians of Cold War Canada and international relations, and that the general public would also be intrigued by an exhibition, built around ideology, perception, and image-construction in the Cold War.

On a cold day in December 1991, staff from the Carleton University Library scooped up thousands of photographs and their accompanying text off the floor of the Novosti Press Agency office in Ottawa. The Soviet Union was crumbling, and the embassy staff was clearing out. Files and drawers in the Press Office were emptied, as individuals contemplated the sudden change of plans. Carleton University Archivist Jeremy Palin, and two others, carefully stacked seventy-thousand images into boxes to transport them to the campus, where they would be sorted and preserved for posterity. The five hundred dollars Carleton paid for the copyright, and the considerable effort it took to reestablish order in the files, were deemed a small price in comparison to the value the collection represented for future study.

Novosti, which means literally "news" in Russian, was a press agency with bureaus in most Western capitals. It was set up in 1961 by Soviet semi-official groups, including the Writers' Union, Journalists' Union, the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and the Znaniye (Knowledge) Society. It has been compared to the United States Information Agency (USIA), acting on behalf of the government to publish official news and information about the country, but with a difference: Novosti had both a domestic and a foreign audience, so it also gathered information from abroad to be used at home.<sup>1</sup> It combined the Marxist-Leninist notion that the press should serve the interests of the (Soviet) state, with a modern journalistic style that included colourful writing and photographs aimed at making this message more attractive to foreigners.<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that the photographs were more important than the press releases, but that they were an integral part of the message. Novosti (also called by its Russian acronym, APN) produced millions of books, periodicals, photographic exhibitions, press releases, and even films for foreign consumption. Its Ottawa office was located next to the Soviet embassy on Charlotte Street.

The decade immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was an exhilarating moment for historians of international relations.

1 Mark W. Hopkins called Novosti "The Soviet USIA." See especially the chapter "News of the World: TASS and Novosti," in *Mass Media in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1970), pp. 265-95. TASS stands for Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union.

2 Ibid., pp. 294-95.

Archives, which had never before been so accessible, especially to foreign historians, were suddenly opening up. Since *glasnost* had begun under Gorbachev, increasingly free exchanges of ideas, resources, and research between Soviet and Western academics had been possible. The general spirit of the times allowed a leading Cold War American historian to proclaim “We Now Know.” From newly-opened archives, we know, for instance, how ideology affected Soviet foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> The importance of ideas, and their effects on Cold War leaders, “average” citizens, and historians of the period have been the focus of much recent debate.<sup>4</sup> Archives have been at the centre of these conversations, and yet the Novosti Press Agency collection, illustrating graphically the ideological focus of Soviet image-spinning, has been largely ignored.

Coinciding with an increased interest in archival theory in the West, and followed in recent years by the apparent closing of some Russian archives,<sup>5</sup> historians continue to be excited about what the archives reveal. They are also cautious about declaring what we “know.” Issues of who has access to the collections, and the ordering and selection of archives all play a role in history-making.<sup>6</sup> This is particularly true when the archive collections include photographs. The way the photographs are arranged, the captions applied to them, and text chosen to accompany the images can tell us much about their purpose. Indeed, even the decision about which images are initially captured and which are ignored is central. Viewing the Soviet photographs in the Novosti Collection with an awareness of these theoretical discussions can add much to our understanding of Cold War culture.

The Novosti collection offers us a great story. It covers the entire Soviet period (1917-1991), but most of the photographs date from the 1960s, 1970s, and the Gorbachev era (1985-1991). A few portraits of V.I. Lenin date from the

3 From the perspective of the effect of ideology on Canadian-Soviet relations, J.L. Black has made an important contribution. See especially his *Canada in the Soviet Mirror: Ideology and Perception in Soviet Foreign Affairs, 1917-1991* (Ottawa, 1998).

4 John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997); Melvyn P. Leffler, “The Cold War: What Do ‘We Now Know’?” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104, no. 2 (April 1999), p. 523. Consider also John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *In Denial: Historians, Communism and Espionage* (San Francisco, 2003) and Ellen Schrecker, ed., *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism* (New York, 2004).

5 See the essay by Rachel Donadio, “The Iron Archives,” *Sunday Book Review, The New York Times* (22 April 2007).

6 On this, see for example, Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002); Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham and London, 2005). In the latter volume, Jeff Sahadeo’s contribution, entitled “‘Without the Past there is No Future’: Archives, History and Authority in Uzbekistan” (pp. 45-67), has particular relevance to the discussion of Soviet and post-Soviet archives.

early years of the Revolution: there are photos of his family, his burial at the Mausoleum on Red Square, and the museums constructed to his memory across the USSR.<sup>7</sup> But there are no official photographs of Stalin, and predictably, no images of any of the famous defectors. Boxes upon boxes of photographs show the USSR in the most positive light: as an advanced scientific power that sends men into space and to the North Pole, and women into the workforce; as a multi-cultural state that, from the happy faces, appears to have no inter-racial friction; as a world peacemaker that fought fascism and won.<sup>8</sup> These photographs were probably staples in each *Novosti* office, but there is a series of boxes from the Ottawa bureau that deal specifically with Canada. These contain pictures of smiling, often high-ranking, Canadians in the USSR, meant to suggest to a Canadian audience the potential for friendly relations with Moscow. This is an official portrait of the Soviet Union as it was poised on the eve of its own demise. The role of the Ottawa *Novosti* office was to project a positive image of the USSR to Canadians: to propagandize the Soviet Union abroad. In studying the photographs we can better understand how the Soviets saw themselves, how they saw Canadians, and most of all, how they wanted Canadians to see them. The images here are several times refracted.

Great care has been taken by the Carleton University Archives to reorder *Novosti*'s files as they were probably once stored, according to Marxist-Leninist archival or organizational theory<sup>9</sup> and the original index, but, as the finding aid states, "it has not been possible to ascertain the original classification scheme."<sup>10</sup> The internal logic of some files suggested to Carleton's

7 On the way Lenin's memory was immortalized in the USSR, see especially Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1983, 1997).

8 On the special place in Soviet culture given to the memory of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), see Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, 1994); and to memory and death more generally, Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia* (New York, 2000).

9 Soviet archival and library classification gave priority to issues of Marxism-Leninism, which was understood as the scientific laws that governed society, and schematically listed general sciences following these theoretical laws, and arts following these. The archivists reordering the *Novosti* Collection at Carleton used clues from the collection itself and an understanding of this system to estimate its original order. As they stated in the finding aid, "the library classification starts with Marxism-Leninism, construed as the science of the general laws of nature and society, followed in order by the pure, applied and social sciences, and the arts and humanities, to cite rough equivalents" (Carleton University Special Collections and Archives, *Novosti Collection Finding Aid*, p. 3).

10 The finding aid was compiled by Valentina Mintchev and Trevor Smith, and is available at Special Collections, Carleton University. Unfortunately at the moment it is only available in hard copy. To facilitate awareness of the resource, Special Collections should consider putting an electronic version online. For more information, visit <http://www.library.carleton.ca/specialcollections/> (accessed 27 February 2008).

Special Collections staff that the files were probably organized according to principles common to most Soviet libraries and archives, adapted for photographs. Therefore, the photographs were grouped into twenty-five large classes, beginning with theoretical issues of state and government organization, then moving through scientific and industrial aspects of Soviet society, towards social and artistic elements of Soviet life. The entire collection is now stored in twenty-five metres of acid-free boxes at a cool temperature, where its lifespan is indefinite, waiting to be discovered by researchers.

Yet few Canadian scholars have peeked into the boxes, and archivist Rita Richard says she receives only a handful of phone calls each year inquiring about the photographs. Hoping for a picture to go with a story on Soviet space or sport, Canadian journalists sometimes ask her to search for a suitable snapshot.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally she gets an international query: the duplicates of the photos held by Carleton do not seem to be accessible elsewhere. The speed and urgency with which the photograph collection from the Ottawa branch was acquired may indicate that amongst the many offices of the Novosti Press Agency in Western capitals, this collection is unique. Regardless, it represents so much more than a last-minute stop for an illustration. As is suggested in the finding aid, these photographs offer Canadians a two-way mirror on Cold War relations with the USSR: the opportunity to observe the observer observing us. Disseminated to hundreds of individuals, groups, and media sources each year, the Novosti photographs were an important part of official Soviet image-spinning.

The technical and scientific wonder of photographic production, and the ability to capture on film the technological advances of the late nineteenth century has been associated historiographically with a trend towards nation-building in the West.<sup>12</sup> In photographs posed against a modernist background, like a bridge or other architectural marvel, individuals represented themselves as part of that progress, and in juxtaposing these images with wilderness landscapes, they were able to construct for themselves images of adventure. Seeming to eliminate the barriers of time and space, the viewer was able to look through a photograph as through a window, seeing the world in a new way. Yet it should be noted that both this effect, and the image itself were highly controlled. All of these ideas also apply to the way Soviet photographs

11 Rita Richard has had numerous queries from people around the world who have found mention of the Novosti Collection via electronic resources like the Amicus or World Cat databases used by librarians, and via the Internet generally. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the photograph collections once held in Novosti Press Agency offices in other capital cities are not as easily accessible to the public as the Carleton University collection.

12 See Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, "Introduction: Photography and the Geographical Imagination," *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (New York, 2003), pp. 1-18.

were constructed. But there was more: there was the strong Marxist-Leninist desire to create “propaganda,” a word that does not carry the negative meaning in Russian that it does in English. In the USSR, propaganda was the dissemination of educational material meant to enlighten the population, and to push it towards achieving a socialist state; creating images of progress and technological advance was very much part of the service the photograph and the photographer performed for the state. Like all works of art in the Soviet Union, photos served as propaganda tools, to educate domestic and foreign audiences to the Soviet “reality.”

Western studies of photography, and the modernist impulse that frequently inspired it,<sup>13</sup> rarely refer to Soviet photography, presumably because its propagandistic tendencies were beyond dispute. Most discussion of Soviet photography by Western scholars has usually focused on the early-to-mid-1920s or post-glasnost eras, when fruitful experimentation characterized the Soviet arts.<sup>14</sup> During the 1920s Soviet photographers like Aleksandr Rodchenko played with angle, form, and subject, and it was not until the early 1930s that Socialist Realism became the sole accepted approach to artistic endeavours. Under Stalin, Soviet ideological and cultural chief Andrei Zhdanov enforced the Socialist Realist standards in all aspects of art. Although there were “thaws” and artistic experimentation after Stalin’s death in 1953, and certainly during the Gorbachev years, Soviet artistic workers continued to be encouraged to do their duty to the state by producing a certain type of art. Despite the obvious differences in intent, the similarity between Soviet and Western photographic styles in the 1930s has not gone unnoticed. As photographers in the West increasingly turned their lens on individuals suffering the effects of the Depression, Soviet photographers working within Socialist Realism, not entirely dissimilarly, focused on the everyday life of workers and farmers.<sup>15</sup>

13 Ibid.

14 See Grigory Shudakov, Olga Suslova, and Lilya Ukhtomskaya, eds., *Pioneers of Soviet Photography* (London, 1983); Sergei Morozov, Anri Vartanov, Grigory Shudakov, Olga Suslova, and Lilya Ukhtomskaya, eds. (with English edition edited by Valerie Lloyd), *Soviet Photography: An Age of Realism* (New York, 1984); MIT List Visual Arts Center, *The Missing Picture: Alternative Contemporary Photography from the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); and *The Utopian Dream: Photography in Soviet Russia, 1918-1939*, Catalogue for an Exhibition of Selected Works from the Schickler/Lafaille Collection, Los Angeles, Laurence Miller Gallery (New York, 1992), which includes an important essay by Max Kozloff. For a review of this exhibition and the meaning of Soviet photography see Vicki Goldberg, “Imagery in the Service of a Utopian Dream,” *The New York Times* (19 January 1992), p. 35. The MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie, Ontario, holds a collection of Soviet photographs that belonged to an American “friend” of the USSR. This collection also shows the value of the photograph to Soviet propaganda.

15 On this see especially Leah Bendavid-Val, *Propaganda & Dreams: Photographing the 1930s in the USSR and the US* (Zurich/New York, 1999).

Until recently, Soviet wartime photography has been discussed in the West only as documenting the heavy casualties and horror of “the Great Patriotic War,” 1941-1945.<sup>16</sup> But not long ago, another Soviet press agency photograph collection came to light in Canada, documenting the Soviet war effort, also in the interest of image-spinning: this one at the MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie, Ontario. The MacLaren has exhibited some of the more than twenty-three thousand SovFoto Agency photographs it acquired from an anonymous donor. The collection has been valued at more than fifteen million dollars.<sup>17</sup> SovFoto, like the Novosti Press Agency, was charged with disseminating Soviet information and images in North America: this time from New York.<sup>18</sup> The images in the collection are startlingly graphic, showing Nazi atrocities and the triumph of the Soviet troops. One photo features a White (i.e., anti-Soviet) Finn next to dead Red Army men in 1940, and is said to prove that crimes had been “committed by Finnish-Fascist invaders on the territory of the Karelo-Finnish republic.”<sup>19</sup> These photographs were meant for distribution at home, but also in North America, where a number of Finnish communities were convinced the USSR was protecting Finnish identity within the Karelo-Finnish republic. Famously, some had even decided to re-emigrate to their ancestral homes, although this “protection” did not last long.<sup>20</sup> Other photos feature the progress made in the USSR in education, agriculture, and industrial development, ignoring the mass deaths caused by collectivization and its related policies. A few photographs show the friendship between the Soviet Red Army and the Allies, signified by friendly smiles as individual soldiers greet each other in 1942.<sup>21</sup> The MacLaren plans to ask local East European communities and artists to respond to the propaganda message inherent in these photographs.

At Carleton, a selection of some of the seventy thousand Novosti collection photos would be well worth exhibiting. Soviet Cold War photographs had

16 See, for instance, Merridale, *Night of Stone*.

17 Val Ross, “Soviets on Lake Simcoe,” *Globe and Mail* (27 September 2006), p. R3.

18 The SovFoto Press Agency was established in New York in the 1930s by the Soviet government, but since the 1950s has operated under the ownership of an American citizen.

19 SovFoto Archive, MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON, Binder #84, World War 2, photo #7890.

20 In Canada, Historian Varpu Lindstrom has done considerable research on this Finnish “return to the homeland” in the 1930s. She was the historical consultant for the National Film Board’s *Letters from Karelia*, directed by Kelly Saxberg (2004). On how Ukrainian-Canadians were also the target of a Soviet campaign to convince them to return to the USSR after the war, see Glenna Roberts and Serge Cipko, *One Way Ticket: The Soviet Return to the Homeland Campaign 1955-1960*, which was scheduled to be published in late 2007 by Penumbra Press, Manitowick, Ontario. See also Serge Cipko and Peter M. Roberts, *Canada and the Kruschchev Government’s “Return to the Homeland” Campaign*, Occasional Paper no. 8 (Ottawa, 2000).

21 SovFoto Archive, MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie, ON, Binder #231, World War 2, Soviet Union, Allies, Military Personnel.

a very real presence in the West, and they carried a powerful image. Portraying the industrial and social might of the USSR, its space technology, and its political alternative to capitalism, Soviet press agencies abroad aimed to convince North American viewers of the USSR's superpower status. Photography's universal claims to objectivity, and its ability to capture images of the "everyman" meant that photography was readily exportable. The propaganda value of a single photograph abroad far outweighed printed material, but in most cases, print and photograph were used together to create a positive image of post-war USSR.

In Canada, the Canadian-Soviet Friendship Society, and other pro-Soviet "progressive" groups later used this type of photograph to "market" the USSR. This had been easier while the USSR was an ally against Nazi Germany, but after the 1945 defection of Soviet cipher clerk Igor Gouzenko from the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, admiration of the USSR was decidedly out of style. For forty years Stalinophile and well-known progressive writer Dyson Carter published Soviet photographs in his magazines *News Facts* (1950-1956) and *Northern Neighbors* (1956-1989), some of which came from the Novosti office in Ottawa, and others directly from Moscow.<sup>22</sup> The captions often referred to conditions in pre-revolutionary Russia, and the photos to the "improvements" made to the environment, economy, and quality of life by the Soviet government. On the anniversary of the end of World War II, Carter published Soviet war photographs. Soviet authorities also published photos in magazines and newspapers destined for foreign readerships, and Carter encouraged Canadians to subscribe to these.<sup>23</sup>

In an effort to satisfy Western interest, and to persuade foreigners the USSR was a "friendly, peaceful" country, the Novosti Press Agency offices in Western capitals were "obliging" in their service to customers.<sup>24</sup> The Ottawa Novosti office responded to letters from individuals looking for information on the Soviet Union, and sent unsolicited press releases and glossy photographs to editors of publications. Many of these readers wrote to thank

22 A card on *Northern Neighbors* letterhead returning a photograph is in the Novosti Collection, file 24.2. I am writing my doctoral dissertation on Dyson Carter and the Canadian-Soviet Friendship Society, using the archives of the Soviet All-Union Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations Abroad (VOKS) Collection, which contains documents from the VOKS British Countries Division, copied from the originals in the Russian State Archives, Moscow; as well as RCMP documents released through access to information and privacy legislation. The complete run of *News-Facts* and *Northern Neighbors* is kept at Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

23 Examples include the *VOKS Bulletin*, *Culture and Life*, *USSR in Construction*, *Sovietskoe Photo*, and the photographs featured in *Moscow News* and *The New Times*. Dyson Carter's attempts to increase the circulation of these magazines in Canada are documented in the VOKS Collection, Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations, Georgian College, Barrie, ON.

24 Hopkins, *Mass Media in the Soviet Union*, p. 294.



Novosti for this attention and information. Novosti photographs have been featured in such mainstream American journals as *Life* and *The New York Times*,<sup>25</sup> and Canadian newspapers often used the same sources. Not surprisingly, mainstream papers used these sources with caution: the Novosti press releases were referenced, but always with a second, North American, source for confirmation, and a skeptical tone.<sup>26</sup> Circulation lists noted in the margins of the press releases show to whom Novosti sent materials. For example, indicative of the success of *glasnost*, a series of photographs of striking Soviet miners in 1991 was sent to the *Canadian Mining Journal* and *Northern Miner*.<sup>27</sup> Gage Educational Publications Incorporated used a Novosti photograph of sturgeon hatcheries in one of its geography textbooks, and the University of Lethbridge student newspaper, *The Meliorist*, was so pleased with the Novosti material used in 1987 that the editor asked for more.<sup>28</sup>

When Speaker of the Senate Guy Charbonneau visited the USSR in 1986, a photograph of him there was published with an article in the Embassy's *Soviet News and Views*, under the headline "Closer Relations Between Canada and the USSR will help to Understand Mutual Problems."<sup>29</sup> Readers of this monthly magazine were told that any of the information contained in the newsletter could be "print[ed] or broadcast without permission- we appreciate a credit line and like to know when items are used."<sup>30</sup> Articles making reference to APN as a source, or touching on themes related to the Soviet Union, were collected for the files. For example, in July 1983 an article appeared on the Canada-USSR Association in Calgary, and this was clipped and kept with

25 Ibid., p. 293.

26 For instance, Theodore Shabad's articles "Russians Told Story of Physicist's Victory," *Globe and Mail* (20 July 1962), p. 3, and "Russian Mars Rocket Keeps Well on Course, Radios Information," *Globe and Mail* (5 November 1962), p. 19, cited Novosti articles and press releases, but used "New York Times Service" as the official source. Other articles in the *Globe and Mail* would cite the Associated Press, Reuters, or Canadian Press in the byline, which in turn had taken the information from the Novosti Press Agency. For example, see "Russian Trainer Replies: Criticism by Potter Called Biased, False," *Globe and Mail* (28 April 1964), p. 36; "New Details Emerge on Mrs. Gorbachev," *Globe and Mail* (10 December 1987), p. A13.

27 Novosti Collection, file 25.17.

28 The textbook, *World Geography: Investigating the Physical World*, was published in 1987. See Novosti Collection, file 24.6.1, letter from Carol Waldo, editor for Social Sciences, Gage Educational Publications Inc., to Igor Lobanov, USSR Press Office, Ottawa, 11 September 1987; and letter from John Oxley, News Coordinator, *The Meliorist*, to V. Bogdanov, Second Secretary, Press and Information, 12 November 1987.

29 Novosti Collection, file 10.12.8, *Soviet News and Views*, no. 18 (August 1986), p. 3.

30 This quotation comes from a textbox found in at least one page in each edition of *Soviet News and Views*. Copies can be found in the Novosti Collection, file 24.7.2.

related material.<sup>31</sup> There are numerous personal letters in the files from Canadian citizens, and letters from small Canadian journals praising the attractiveness and range of materials sent by the Press Office.

The Novosti collection contains not only the work of APN photographers, but also photographs from TASS and other Soviet sources. Many of the photos have short captions on the reverse, in English, French, or Russian. Some of these had been published in the Soviet press; others perhaps not. Some appear to have been well-used, and there is a paper trail for the dissemination of certain images. The range of subjects is vast, including, as might be anticipated, Soviet space exploration and technology, sports, industry, agriculture, and personalities. But for Canadians, the most interesting section may well be the seven boxes that deal specifically with Soviet-Canadian relations. Much of the material deals with the progressive groups affiliated with the Communist Party of Canada, which worked to promote cultural ties and trade with the USSR. These include the Canada-USSR Association, and leftist groups of Ukrainians, Russians, Finns, and others who looked to the Soviet Union as a symbol of socialism in action. Images and text in the collection relate to individuals involved in Canadian pro-Soviet groups, together with the photographs of their visits to the USSR. Here, too, we have pictures of Soviet immigrants to Canada who changed their minds and moved “back to the USSR.” For instance, a photo series on returnee Arkadi Berkut depicts his joy at settling back into Soviet domestic life (Figure 1). The accompanying text urges the reader to believe that the returnees are pleased with their decision.

31 Novosti Collection, file 10.3.1, Bob Bettson, “Group Fosters Soviet Ties,” *Calgary Herald* (4 July 1983), featuring an interview with Dave Rachman, of the Calgary chapter of the Canada-USSR Association. In 1960, the Communist Party of Canada reorganized and renamed the Canadian-Soviet Friendship Society as the Canada-USSR Association.



**Figure 1:** Caption: “For the article: *Arkadi Berkut: A Year After his Return from Canada*. In the photo: Arkadi Berkut with his children in his new Moscow flat. Novosti photo by Y. Gavrilov” [1988]. Novosti Collection, file 10.8.

Peace was a constant in the Soviet message, and many ordinary Canadians responded enthusiastically to this idea. A file on “Peacemakers”<sup>32</sup> includes pictures of Canadians who went to Moscow representing the Christian Initiative for Peace in 1983. The Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada came out with a statement on US-Soviet relations and the need for peace at about the same time. There is a photograph of a Canadian Doukhobor delegation visiting the USSR, and one of the statues of Leo Tolstoy, donated by the USSR to the Doukhobor community in Canada.<sup>33</sup> There is a series of photographs of Canadian veterans visiting Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) in 1987 as members of Veterans Against Nuclear Arms, and a text about their visit.<sup>34</sup> Ordinary Canadians are depicted as benefiting from the Soviet’s peaceful and benevolent attitude, as one is shown having traveled to the USSR for eye surgery, and another hugging her doctor after receiving spine surgery. This latter surgery was reported to be “too expensive in Canada”

32 Novosti Collection, file 10.9.2.

33 Ibid., file 10.34.1.

34 Ibid., file 10.20.3.

where there was “no guarantee that it would be successful,” while in the USSR it was carried out for free in a “clean and cosy” environment.<sup>35</sup>

There is a pamphlet in the collection entitled *Canada-USSR: Good Neighbourly Cooperation*, published in 1974 by Novosti.<sup>36</sup> It details the Soviet perspective on the history of Canadian-Soviet relations, blaming “Western imperialist circles” for the Cold War, and making no mention of the defection of Igor Gouzenko in Ottawa in 1945. The pamphlet concludes, that

the Soviet people sincerely extend the hand of friendship to their friends and neighbours across the pole. ... The main thing is that more and more Canadians should want to do away with the remnants of the “cold war” and become convinced that the development of friendship and co-operation between the USSR and Canada serves the interests of the peoples of both countries and strengthens universal peace and security.<sup>37</sup>

The booklet also points to the tremendous popularity of the Soviet pavilion at Expo ‘67 as proof that Canadians were warming to the USSR. Available in multiple copies, in English and French, the pamphlet was obviously intended for distribution in Canada.

There are also copies of several important speeches in the collection, including some made during the visits of Mikhail Gorbachev to Canada. For instance, there is a draft of Soviet ambassador Aleksandr Yakovlev’s famous “John Wayne” speech in which he analyzes Cold War antagonisms using cowboy metaphors of the “good” and the “bad guy.” Not surprisingly, perhaps, Yakovlev painted the West as the one with the “black hat.” There is also a text written by Dmitri Chuvakhin, who served as the Soviet ambassador to Canada from 1953 to 1958, that speaks nostalgically about wartime relations, and argues that in the post-war period, by buying into Winston Churchill’s “Iron-Curtain” speech, and co-operating with Britain and the United States, “... Canada made its contribution to the incitement of the ‘cold war’ against the Soviet Union.”<sup>38</sup> Photographs in this file show Canadian and Soviet soldiers meeting at the Elbe in 1945, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King signing wartime agreements, and welcoming Feodor Gousev, the first Soviet diplomatic envoy to Ottawa, in 1942. Ironically, whenever World War II is mentioned in the photograph captions, it is dated as 1939-1945, although the Soviet Union did not enter the war until the Nazi invasion in 1941.

35 Ibid., file 10.27.1, including Novosti text by Andrei Sturov, “Soviet Surgeon has Cured Canadian Housewife.”

36 Ibid., file 10.1a, *Canada-USSR: Good Neighbourly Cooperation*.

37 Ibid. p. 96.

38 Ibid., file 10.19.1.



**Figure 2:** Caption: “Friendly Opponents Meet Again: Wayne Gretzky [sic] at the Tretyaks’ in Moscow. Photo by Un Da-sin. TASS. No. X-94445. Photo Review No. 28, 1982.” Novosti Collection, file 10.30.2.2.

In the collection, too, are photographs of Canadian “heroes,” each being welcomed to the USSR and plainly enjoying the warm attention. Wayne Gretzky in Vladislav Tretyak’s living room, enjoying a family meal (Figure 2); Rick Hansen in conversation with Canadian ambassador to the USSR, Peter Roberts, on the one-day visit to Moscow that the Soviet authorities would allow him for his Man-in-Motion tour in 1985; a photo of the newly-wed couple, Pierre and Margaret Trudeau, holding hands while on an official visit to Moscow in 1971 (Figure 3). Visiting Canadians often expressed a desire to break down Cold War misunderstandings, and this fit well with the image of the USSR that Novosti was projecting. When Trudeau visited the USSR for the second time in the 1980s, Novosti reported that he said:

La deuxième raison de mon voyage c’est que je voulais que mes enfants pendant qu’ils sont encore jeunes et impressionables, voient ce pays sujet à tant de préjugés en Occident et qui est l’objet de tant de propagande et de contre-propagande. Je trouve qu’il est important que leurs jeunes esprits voient d’eux-mêmes qu’en dépit des différences de systèmes économiques et gouvernementaux, et d’idéologies politiques, les gens qui vivent ici aiment et font quand même les mêmes choses; il y a des voitures dans les rues, les enfants jouent dans l’eau des rivières et des mers et il y a des adultes qui vivent, qui aiment, et qui apprennent.<sup>39</sup>

39 Ibid., file 10.12.6, text “Pierre Trudeau Visite l’URSS” par Serguei Ostroumov, APN.



**Figure 3:** Caption: “During his trip through the Soviet Union Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister, visited six cities, including Leningrad. In Leningrad the Canadian Prime Minister in particular visited Petrodvorets, famous for its exquisite fountains. APN picture” [1971]. Novosti Collection, file 10.12.6.

A group of photographs of the opening of the first McDonald’s restaurant in Moscow in 1990, which was initiated by the Canadian branch of the fast-food chain, seems to show that despite different economic and political systems, taste at least is a commonality.<sup>40</sup> An article on Canadian autoparts mogul Frank Stronach and the joint venture launched by Magna International

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., file 10.16.

with the Automobile Industry of the USSR in 1988 quotes Stronach as saying, “As I stressed many times, our interest is not only financial. I believe it is also important to create a better understanding between nations.”<sup>41</sup>

There are photographs in the collection of such well-known Canadians, including, for example, Jeanne Sauvé, John Diefenbaker (Figure 4), Paul Martin Sr., Guy Charbonneau, Joe Clark, and Jean Chrétien (as Minister of Northern and Indian Affairs) on official visits to the USSR, smiling warmly, listening to Soviet officials, or laying flowers at the grave of the unknown Soviet soldier. Madame Sauvé may not have been pleased with her photographs; one of which has her standing in front of a large map of the USSR, and the other shows her smiling in front of a portrait of Vladimir Lenin, arm raised in typical fashion.<sup>42</sup> In 1989 Brian Mulroney (or his advisors) chose a better photo location, especially considering Ukrainian-Canadian opinion, when he is shown speaking in front of the monument to Ukrainian nationalist writer/artist Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv, Ukraine.<sup>43</sup> In another shot, Mulroney is trying on a bright blue official jacket of the Joint Soviet-Canadian Expedition to the Arctic, signaling co-operation in Arctic sovereignty.<sup>44</sup> A Novosti photograph of Lester Scott (Canadian Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Resources) shows him inspecting the Soviet hydro-electric station in Bratsk, Siberia, and Roméo LeBlanc (at that time Minister of Fisheries) was photographed onboard a fishing boat in Murmansk, and admiring the goods available in a Soviet “special” store for foreigners and the elite.<sup>45</sup> Even before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, the photographs in this collection give the impression that the leaders of the USSR were people Westerners could do business with.<sup>46</sup>

41 Ibid., file 10.23.2, Novosti Press Agency press release, 19 July 1988, p. 3.

42 Ibid., file 10.12.8, August 1983.

43 Ibid., file 10.14.5.1.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., files 10.23.3 and 10.25.2.

46 This refers to remarks on Mikhail Gorbachev made by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on 17 December 1984. The full text of the remarks may be found at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=105592> (accessed 27 February 2008).



**Figure 4:** Caption: “On October 16, Dmitry Polyansky , First Vice-Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, received in the Kremlin John Diefenbaker , M.P. and ex-Prime Minister of Canada, visiting Moscow, and had a warm talk with him. Pictured from right to left [sic] are: Dmitry Polyansky , First Vice-Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, H.P . Morgan, first secretary of the Canadian Embassy to the USSR, Joel Aldred, a Canadian businessman, A.D. Ford, Canadian Ambassador to the USSR, and John Diefenbaker , M.P., Canada. [The men to Polyansky’ s left in the photo are not identified.] Photo by Boris Kavashkin, APN, 1969.” Novosti Collection, file 10.12.3.

A thematic thread running through the Novosti collection is the “friendship” between the Canadian and Soviet people. A photo of Adelard Paquin, who for years served as head of the “Association Québec-URSS,” is in the collection, as are photos and documents relating to the Ontario-based Canada-USSR Association. Both of these groups claimed to have hundreds of Canadian members and to favour peaceful, friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Canadian Communist Party delegations, led by William Kashtan and Samuel Walsh, are shown visiting a Moscow exhibition of paintings entitled “We are building communism” in 1986 and speaking to international meetings.<sup>47</sup> There are numerous photographs of the “House of Friendship” in Moscow, where many of these international events were hosted, and where

<sup>47</sup> Novosti Collection, file 10.12.9.



the offices of the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries were located.<sup>48</sup> The Moscow-based group represented a challenge for Canadian diplomats in the USSR, as they struggled to maintain an official distance from Soviet propagandistic policies, while expressing appropriate interest in Soviet-Canadian cultural exchanges. There are many photographs here of Samantha Smith, the American student who was portrayed as a goodwill ambassador to the USSR in 1983, plus the stamps issued by the USSR in her honour. Here, too, are letters written to her mother by Soviet children after Samantha died in a plane crash in 1985. The work carried out by these North Americans fit nicely with the official Soviet policy on improving the USSR's image abroad, and to persuade left-leaning individuals of Soviet technical, scientific, and cultural superiority.

The Soviet-Canadian twin cities (Lethbridge-Tomashevsk, Montreal-Murmansk, Toronto-Volgograd, Winnipeg-Lviv) are also described in the collection, and pictures of the Friendship Bridge, which paired cities in annual winter competitions, contain images of Soviet participants in tug-of-wars, skiing, and polar dips.<sup>49</sup> There is a series of photos of Arctic and Antarctic expeditions, featuring the co-ordinated Canadian-Soviet program. The leaders of the 1988 trek, Canadian Richard Weber and Dmitry Shparo of the USSR, are shown holding each other's flags aloft on ski poles. The four Canadian trekkers received the Order of Friendship of Peoples from the Soviet Prime Minister for their accomplishment.<sup>50</sup> The ideals of international co-operation and exchange present in these photos were bolstered by the image of a fun, fit, energetic and young Soviet population, and a recurrent reference to Arctic sovereignty.

The Novosti Press Agency Photograph Collection is a rich resource that deserves to be better known amongst Canadian historians. This material, viewed with a critical eye, could add much to our understanding of late Cold War international relations. The theme of peace and friendship, in particular, as an important part of the post-war agenda for radical Canadian groups, is worth examining via these Soviet-produced photographs. Peace and friendship was for some Canadians a way to express their desire to act individually on the international stage, but after 1956, it was also an attempt by the USSR to polish its image, tarnished by the international outcry over the Soviet position on Suez, the invasion of Hungary, and Khrushchev's famous speech

48 The Russian acronym for this organization was SSOD, changed from VOKS in 1960, which stood for the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. In both cases it was a Soviet organization responsible for public relations abroad, monitored by the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee.

49 Novosti Collection, files 10.4 and 10.30.5.

50 Ibid., file 10.32.3.

denouncing Stalin's personality cult. The Soviet record of international expressions of friendly relations, in photographs and text, demonstrates the value they placed on these images to counter criticisms of Soviet policies internationally and domestically. The Novosti Press Agency Photograph Collection, an archival collection that speaks to the refraction of images used in the ideological, international struggle known as the Cold War, represents a considerable opportunity for historians to explore issues of propaganda and persuasion in Canada.<sup>51</sup>

51 For more information contact Carleton University Library Special Collections and Archives, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6; 613-520-2600 ext. 2739, <http://www.library.carleton.ca/specialcollections/> (accessed 27 February 2008).