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KGB General Philipp Bobkov dead – a fighter against dissidents and self-publishing (Samizdat) June 17, 2019



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[General-of-the-Army Philipp Bobkov](#) died in Moscow at the age of 93. He served in Soviet State Security for 45 years, For 16 of them he headed the KGB 5th Directorate ("glavki"), responsible for "combatting ideological sabotage."

The circle of his professional interests included intellectuals, dissidents, Jews, nationalists, and the church.

Bobkov worked in the MGB/KGB under 12 Directorates (glavki) of this institution, from [Vsevolod Merkulov](#) to [Vladimir Kryuchkov](#), and personally did not know only the first of them (Merkulov was shot in 1953).

In 1992, he headed the analytical service of [Vladimir Gusinsky's](#) Bridge ("Most") Holding. Government figures condemned Bobkov for "serving the oligarchy," the liberals of Gusinsky - for having brought in the *Committee* guys and who knows who else! The alliance, however, proved fruitful and lasted 9 years, until Gusinskiy's expulsion.

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Philipp Bobkov was born on December 1, 1925 in the village of Chervona Kamenka (now the Kropivnitsky District of Ukraine) in a surveyor's family. At the beginning of the war he evacuated with his father to the Kuzbas and worked on a construction site. At the end of 1942, having attributed himself an extra year, he joined the army.

He was wounded twice. He joined the CPSU at the front. He finished the war in Latvia. Apparently, his abilities stood out because he commanded a platoon without being an officer.

Immediately after the victory, Bobkov was sent to the Leningrad School of Military Counterintelligence. It must be believed that he also studied successfully, because he received an assignment to Lubyanka (in May 1946 "[Smersh](#)" was transferred from the military institution to the Chekist and converted into the [3rd Chief Directorate \("GLAVK"\) of the MGB](#)).

On October 23, 1946, the new employee entered the famous building for the first time, where he later occupied a huge cabinet decorated with wood on the 4th floor with windows facing the Children's World store.

Almost immediately he received a major case – he investigated corruption charges against Soviet intelligence officers who worked in the U.S. under the guise of the company "[Amtorg](#)" and those engaged in supplying nickel to the USSR, bypassing U.S. law. The charges were dropped.

At the age of 36, Philipp Bobkov became Deputy Chief of Counterintelligence, at 40 he made general.

He can be considered the founder of what the KGB later called "[active measures](#)" and today the world calls "[information sabotage](#)."

*[Translator: "активные мероприятия"; "информационные вбросы" – a branch of information warfare and attacks - also translated by Russians as **information "stuffing"**; **information sabotage; fakes; fake news; ballot-box stuffing**, and worse.]*

In the early 1960s, Bobkov suggested that the leadership should step up their work with the Western press.

The highest class - when materials useful for Soviet policy come from publications and authors whom no one suspects of pro-communist sympathies. Trying to recruit and directly bribe journalists is counterproductive but trusting relations with an informed source is an insurmountable temptation for them, he argued.

One of the channels with which Bobkov worked for many years was [Victor Louis](#) - a Soviet journalist who lived in Moscow but cooperated exclusively with the Western press. He became famous for being the first, about a day before the official announcement, to inform the world about Khrushchev's ouster.

In 1968, the new KGB Chairman [Yuri Andropov](#) created the Fifth Directorate. A few months later it was headed by Philipp Bobkov.

Those who became the object of attention of Bobkov and his subordinates had no reason to love him, but unanimously noted that he was at least a smart man.

Bobkov was the only high-ranking KGB official who spoke often to the public, especially to Moscow students, and, apparently, did so with pleasure.

He was an inveterate theatergoer, who was considered a frivolity in the [nomenclatura](#) crowd, and he collected a rich library. According to him, he helped publish some previously banned authors, such as Osip Mandelstam, Igor Severyanin and Bruno Yasensky.



Bobkov spent most of his life in this building часть жизни Филиппа Бобкова

Bobkov was involved in many cases worthy of a separate book.

In 1956, he was the first at the site of the suicide of the writer [Alexander Fadeyev](#) and passed his scandalous suicide note “up the chain.”

On April 12, 1961, he presented foreign correspondents in Moscow with a photo of Yuri Gagarin, which at that time neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs press department nor the Pravda editorial board had, and then arranged foreign press conferences with the first cosmonaut.

In 1965 he oversaw the creation of a documentary film, the main character of which was Vasily Shulgin, who once accepted the abdication of Nicholas II.

In 1972 he went to Reykjavik for the Spassky-Fischer chess match in order to check the rumor that the Americans were affecting the Soviet grandmaster with secret rays.

In 1980-81 he led the investigation into the mysterious murder of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan Sultan Ibraimov, who was shot dead in his own bed at his country home. During this case, DNA testing was carried out in the USSR for the first time.

The investigation named the alleged killer, but he, firstly, had no obvious motives, and secondly, it was determined that he either hanged himself or was hanged in an empty electric train car in the Kuibyshev Region. Many in the republic did not believe the official version.

Subsequently, critics of Philipp Bobkov said that looking for sedition and recruiting informants in a creative environment is easier than solving crimes and catching real spies.

The writer and independent historian Leonid Mlechin pointed out that Bobkov and his colleagues focused on the fight against intellectual dissent and overlooked the real threat to the USSR in the face of nationalism.

Under Gorbachev, Philipp Bobkov went on to become the First Deputy Chairman of the KGB, although he later called the former Soviet president an "empty personality."

After leaving office in January 1991, he did not take part in the tumultuous events that followed.



In the 2000s he was an expert of the Institute of Social and Political Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, an advisor to the Director General of RIA Novosti, Vice-President of the Academy of Security Issues, and generally acted as an analyst. He has published memoirs "KGB and Power" and "The Last 20 Years."

Philipp Bobkov's political statements were rather eclectic.

He said he regretted some of the things he did in the KGB, especially his involvement in the persecution of the academician Sakharov.

He criticized the Soviet Politburo ("decisions poured in in a stream, but most often they absolutely had nothing To do with real life problems"). Of all the leaders of the USSR, only Yuri Andropov was positively assessed.

In 2001, he supported the decision to close Russian military facilities in [Cam Ranh](#) and [Lourdes](#) ("we are not the Soviet Union now").

He considered the anti-globalization movement "a natural process of human development, at which we should take a closer look."

He approved of Vladimir Putin's foreign policy ("We will not humble ourselves before America") but spoke out against the verdict of the participants of *Pussy Riot*, calling the whole incident nonsense.

In an interview with journalist Dmitry Gordon in 2013, he said that while working in the KGB he never heard of an employee named Vladimir Putin.

¹ [Translator: glavk from glavny komitet (*chief committee*); after reorganizations, the term was held over for "chief directorate" and then just "directorate"]