

Intelligence output was often exaggerated as a result and low-grade information was presented as being much more significant than it actually was. According to Gouzenko, "Everybody on the Military Attaché staff began to find reasons for remaining after hours so that their check-out signature would appear frequently in the 'overtime' section of the time journal which was always mailed to Moscow. This developed into something of a competition typical of most Soviet institutions. We faked our work to see who could stay longest." Even Zabotin, constantly prodded by his bosses to produce information, was "eager as a schoolboy to be praised for good work."³⁰

But Zabotin was distracted by other matters. According to a subsequent British MI6 report, Zabotin began an affair in early 1944 with a Russian émigré, Nina Farmer, who was separated from her American husband and living in Montreal. The "buoyant and attractive" Mrs. Farmer first glimpsed Colonel Zabotin sitting in full uniform with other Soviet officers at a gala performance of the symphony in Montreal. After seeing Zabotin again, this time at a ballet, in early January 1944, she returned with him and his retinue of officers to the lavish Prince of Wales Suite at Montreal's Ritz Hotel, where the group was staying while in town. They danced and feasted until 4 a.m., whereupon Zabotin accompanied Mrs. Farmer to her apartment. According to the report, based on a long interview with Mrs. Farmer in 1946, several months after the spy scandal broke,

A month later, at the hour of midnight, Mrs. FARMER was rung up by Colonel ZABOTIN apparently in a mood of gay irresponsibility – he was at that time paying a visit of inspection to the ORVIDA war plant and was in good spirits as he had roistered with some Russian engineers whom he had found on the spot. After that, the ice was thoroughly broken and Colonel ZABOTIN would quite often ring her when visiting war plants in the vicinity. He also got in touch with her in Montreal whenever he passed through, and used to take her out, dine and dance with her, and entertain her.³¹