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‘Trotskii’s Consul’: Peter Simonoff’s Account of His Years as Soviet Representative in Australia (1918–21)

KEVIN WINDLE

‘Let them accept me as I am, [an] extreme revolutionist.’¹

IN the months and years immediately following the Bolshevik seizure of power, relations between the new Soviet state and Great Britain, and therefore Australia, were marked by a level of hostility not seen since the Crimean War of 1854–56. Indeed, during part of this period Britain and Soviet Russia were engaged in an undeclared war, to which Australia made its contribution in the form of troops in the British intervention force in the north, and naval support in the south; the destroyer HMAS *Swan* visited Kerch’ and Mariupol’ in December 1918, in support of the White armies in the region. Diplomatic relations were subject to great strain: in August 1918, Captain Francis Cromie, hero of the Royal Navy’s submarine fleet and British Naval Attaché, perished — revolver in hand — when Bolshevik troops stormed the British Embassy in Petrograd. For some

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¹ Canberra, National Archives of Australia (NAA), A6286 1/76, Peter Simonoff to Norman Freeberg, 29 October 1918, QF2254. Here and below the names of Russian residents of Australia and Britain appear in the forms they themselves customarily used: Peter Simonoff, rather than Petr Simonov, Herman Bykoff, rather than German Bykov, Klushin rather than Kliushin, and Alexander rather than Aleksandr. This does not apply to Russian bibliographical references, where transliteration follows the Library of Congress system.

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considerable time there was no officially accredited Soviet representative in London or Melbourne, and Britain's 'Agent' in Russia, Robert Bruce Lockhart, functioned primarily as an intelligence operative, albeit with diplomatic cover.²

In London, Maxim Litvinoff represented Soviet interests without British recognition for nine months in the late stages of the First World War (January to September 1918), until he was arrested and exchanged for Lockhart. There was then no real representation of any kind until the Soviet Trade Mission in London assumed a quasi-diplomatic function under Leonid Krasin (1920–23). In Melbourne, Alexander Abaza, the tsarist consul since 1911, who had remained in office under the Provisional Government, could not represent those who violently overthrew it. He was reported as saying, 'When the present Ministry came into power I absolutely declined to have anything to do with it'.³ He soon left Australia and spent his last years in Alexandria, where he died in 1925.⁴

Within weeks the vacancy left by Abaza was filled by Peter Simonoff (Petr Fomich Simonov), whose brief account of his three and a half years as Bolshevik consul (1918–21), translated in the Appendix below, affords a rare insight into the state of Soviet-Australian relations at this early period from the viewpoint of the key protagonist on the Soviet side. Simonoff, who in 1917 headed the Union of Russian Workers (URW) or 'Russian Association' in Brisbane and would soon play an important role in the founding of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), has featured in a small number of valuable studies: Eric Fried pioneered the field when he explored the Australian material available on Simonoff in the 1980s and '90s and recounted the early history of the very active Russian community in Queensland;⁵ Louise Curtis has conducted a thorough examination of the intercepted correspondence of the Russian community between 1916 and 1919, including Simonoff's;⁶ and a recent study by Artem Rudnitskii

² See Robert Service, 'Subverting Russia', in Service, *Spies and Commissars: Bolshevik Russia and the West*, London, 2011, pp. 148–54 (pp. 151ff.).

³ 'Sacked Consul's Remarks', *Daily Standard*, 29 January 1918, p. 2.

⁴ A. Ia. Massov and M. Pollard (eds), *Rossiiskaia konsul'skaia sluzhba v Avstralii 1857–1917gg. (Sbornik dokumentov)*, Moscow, 2014, p. 34.

⁵ Eric Fried, 'The First Consul', in John McNair and Thomas Poole (eds), *Russia and the Fifth Continent*, St Lucia, 1992, pp. 110–25; idem, 'Simonov, Peter', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (hereafter, *ADB*), Melbourne, vol. 11, 1988, pp. 607–08; idem, 'Russians in Queensland (1886–1925)', unpublished BA Honours dissertation, University of Queensland, 1980.

⁶ Louise Curtis, 'Red Criminals: Censorship, Surveillance and Suppression of the Radical Russian Community during World War I', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Queensland, 2010.

benefits from his use of documents from the People's Commissariat for External Affairs (NKID), unavailable to earlier researchers.⁷ However, Simonoff's own summary of his diplomatic service in Australia, published in *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'* in November 1922, deserves to be more widely known than it is, notwithstanding some unavoidable omissions in areas where strict secrecy applied. The notes and commentary preceding the translation attempt to amplify and illuminate the context, while adducing some essential information on certain of the personalities involved and matters which Simonoff preferred to or was obliged to leave aside. Extensive use is made of sources not fully exploited by previous students of the field, such as the collection of CPA papers in the archive of the Communist International and some little-known Brisbane publications, as well as Australian government intelligence reports, with a view to enriching and amending the existing profile of a figure who in a turbulent time played a key role in attempting to establish Soviet-Australian diplomatic relations.

According to one source, Simonoff coveted a consular position even before the Provisional Government was overthrown,⁸ but his chance came only when Abaza stepped down. In late January 1918, when Simonoff's appointment first became known to the Queensland Russian community, in which revolutionary sentiments were strong, some suspected that it owed less to his merits than to his connections. Indeed, mail intercepts translated and retained by the Australian government censors provide clear confirmation for such suspicions. A. Loktin, who had lived in Cairns and Innisfail for some years and returned to Russia in 1917, wrote to Simonoff from Petrograd on 28 January 1918 to describe a meeting with Trotskii, leaving little doubt that he was acting on a request from Simonoff:

My mission has been fulfilled ... done all that I was instructed to do. Trotsky is a very agreeable person. He made arrangements in my presence for the displacement of D'Abaza. At first he wanted me to go out and succeed him. I refused. He then asked me who should be sent out. I said there were men in Australia fully capable of performing the duties of Consul-General. Of course I mentioned your name, and told him that your political views coincided with his. So your appointment came about without trouble...⁹

⁷ Artem Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba pervogo konsula: K istorii rossiisko-avstraliiskikh otnoshenii', *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, 2012, pp. 5–26 <http://interaffairs.ru/i/istor_2012.pdf>.

⁸ NAA, A6286 3/15, A. Lenin to Petruchenia, n.d. [February 1918], MF553.

⁹ NAA, A6286 1/18, Loktin to Simonoff 28 January 1918, QF812. According to Fried,

However, as Rudnitskii has pointed out,¹⁰ Trotskii had little time for foreign relations even with the major powers and is unlikely to have paid more than passing attention to the choice of a representative in a remote British dominion, content instead to act on the advice of anybody with local knowledge. Australia's importance in the eyes of the Soviets did not increase when Georgii Chicherin took over the foreign affairs portfolio in March 1918, soon after the appointment of Simonoff.

The new consul could scarcely be unaware of a degree of mistrust in the host community, where the Federal government, like the British government, was in no hurry to recognize the Bolshevik regime. At the time of his appointment it was in the process of defecting from the Entente and would soon proceed to murder the deposed emperor, thus rendering its alienation complete. Paul Robert Adams in his excellent biography of Simonoff's good friend and ally Percy Brookfield calls his subject 'the best hated man in Australia',¹¹ but had there been an unpopularity contest in 1918 or 1919, Brookfield might have had to content himself with second place. Many ordinary citizens of Australia, especially those with family members in uniform, looked on Bolshevism and its representatives with horror, and the coverage of alien agitators in the mainstream press was coloured by much animus. Latent xenophobia also found expression in denunciations such as that sent by Arthur Vogan, 'a patriot', to the office of the Prime Minister: 'I recognise in Simonoff the superior-criminal type, the suavity, the "Jew-eye", the delicate "thief-hands", the modulated voice of persuasion, and the look with which he regards one as a possible dupe.'¹²

Biographical details concerning Simonoff are incomplete, and some confusion has surrounded both his earliest life and his death. There is, in fact, no reason to doubt the date or place of birth which he gave in a statutory declaration in April 1915, in connection with an abortive application for naturalization: 23 June 1883 in Novaia Iablon'ka, a village in the province of Saratov.¹³ That application shows him landing in Brisbane from Japan on

the military authorities took care to make the contents known to the Russian community. 'The First Consul', p. 114. The name of Loktin (not 'Lotkin') appears at intervals in the Brisbane newspapers *Izvestiia Soiuz russkikh emigrantov* and *Raboचाia zhizn'* between January 1915 and October 1916.

¹⁰ Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', p. 11.

¹¹ Paul Robert Adams, *The Best Hated Man in Australia: The Life and Death of Percy Brookfield (1875–1921)*, Sydney, 2010.

¹² Canberra, NAA, A3932 SC294, 'Bolshevism, Sedition and Disloyalty', Vogan to PM's Private Secretary, 30 August 1920. See Kevin Windle, 'A Troika of Agitators: Three Comintern Liaison Agents in Australia, 1920–22', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 52, 2006, 1, pp. 30–47, (p. 34).

¹³ Canberra, NAA, A1 1915/20956, 'Peter K. Fomich Simonoff, Naturalization'. The

4 March 1912. Rudnitskii has given the fullest account to date of Simonoff's early years: of humble origins, he received a sound school education, completing the *gimnaziia* in his home town, then went to work in a boiler-works and qualified as a book-keeper. He served in the army in Baku and central Ukraine during the period of the 1905 revolution, reaching junior officer's rank (ensign), and on leaving the army moved to Harbin, where he worked in a bank.¹⁴ What impelled him to leave Harbin for Australia is unknown, but he did not set out as an apostle of revolution. By his own admission, on arrival he was politically backward (*zaskoruzlyi*) and firmly set in his ways (*zacherstvevshii*), and developed political awareness (*soznatel'nost'*) only in mid 1912, when he fell in with some young fugitives from Siberia in the cane-fields of North Queensland.¹⁵ Working at manual labour, he travelled widely and is known to have resided at numerous Queensland addresses, and later in New South Wales (Broken Hill, Sydney) and Melbourne. When he applied for naturalization, he received the reply, after a long delay, that 'certificates of naturalization are not being issued, at the present time, to Russians under fifty years of age'.¹⁶ According to Aleksandr Massov, Abaza, the then consul, had successfully lobbied the Australian government to deny naturalization to Russians in the age group eighteen to fifty.¹⁷

In this period, Russians formed a conspicuous ethnic minority in Australia, especially in the state of Queensland, where they were concentrated and where their political activism was seen as most troublesome.¹⁸ According to Abaza, in May 1914 they numbered about

ADB and works relying on it give more than one date and place of birth. The alternative data, however, are drawn from the file of the similarly named Petro Simenoff, a Bulgarian naturalized in Australia in June 1916 (NAA, A1 20/2935, 'Petro Simenoff, Naturalization'). See also Adams, p. 342.

¹⁴ Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', pp. 7–8.

¹⁵ A. Simens [Simonoff], *Raboचाia zhizn'*, No. 47, 12 January 1917, p. 4. In Soviet Russia many years later, his claim to have participated in revolutionary activity in 1905 was in all likelihood dictated by political necessity. See Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', p. 7.

¹⁶ NAA, A1 1915/20956.

¹⁷ A. Ia. Massov, 'Deiatel'nost' russkikh konsulov v Avstralii po zashchite interesov rossiiskikh poddannyykh i immigrantov (1857–1917gg.)', *Oikumena*, 2011, no. 1, pp. 32–42, (p. 40).

¹⁸ On early Russian settlement in Australia see, for example, Elena Govor, 'Russians in Australia 1804–1920', in Alexander Massov, John McNair, Thomas Poole (eds), *Encounters under the Southern Cross*, Adelaide, 2007, pp. 116–40; A. S. Petrikovskaia, *Rossiiskoe ekho v kul'ture Avstralii*, Moscow, 2002; A. Iu. Rudnitskii, *Drugaia zhizn' i bereg dal'nii: russkie v avstraliiskoi istorii*, Moscow, 1991; Kevin Windle, 'Russian Australia', in Windle, *Undesirable: Captain Zuzenko and the Workers of Australia and the World*, Melbourne, 2012, pp. 14–31.

11,000.¹⁹ Simonoff, quoted on the day his appointment was announced, gave a lower total, adding that they were 'all Bolsheviks except a few boneheads and scoundrels'.²⁰ Among them Simonoff found his métier. If, as his critics pointed out, his record of activism was not a long one, he did his best to make up for it by regular contributions to the Brisbane newspaper, *Rabochaia zhizn'*, collaboration with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) to foment industrial unrest, and participation in the anti-conscription campaign. He developed close ties with other radicals in the Queensland Russian community and its organizational hub, the URW, including Fedor Sergeeff ('Artem'), the prominent Bolshevik who had fashioned the URW into a militant body and launched its first newspapers, and Alexander Zuzenko, who in March 1919 brought it into open conflict with the authorities in the Brisbane Red Flag demonstration.

Following the departure of Sergeeff for Russia after the February Revolution, Simonoff became Secretary of the URW and editor of its newspaper, but within a year his elevation to diplomatic office compelled him to shed these responsibilities. He went on to a heightened public profile as representative of Soviet Russia in Australia, and his writings were widely published in the press, although diplomatic privileges were denied him as his government was not recognized, and like Lockhart and Litvinoff he did not escape imprisonment. After the closure of his consulate in August 1921 and his departure from Australia in September of that year, he was less visible: his article 'Three and a Half Years as Soviet Diplomatic Representative' is one of his few publications in the Soviet press.

When word reached the URW in January 1918 that Simonoff was to be Moscow's official representative, it was immediately riven into two bitterly antagonistic factions: his supporters and his opponents. A report in the Brisbane *Daily Standard*, under the headline 'Trotsky's Consul', described the scene in the URW rooms in South Brisbane when the news came in a Reuters cablegram:

the room was enveloped in smoke and in the haze dim figures could be discerned waving their arms and roaring at one another. The scene resembled the description of the famous Convention of '93, when Danton, Marat, and Robespierre stormed and railed in the stirring days of the French Revolution.²¹

¹⁹ 'A. N. Abaza Direktor Vtorogo departamenta MID Rossii', in Massov and Pollard, p. 234.

²⁰ 'Trotsky's Consul', *Daily Standard*, 29 January 1918, p. 2.

²¹ Ibid.

At this point Simonoff had received neither Loktin's letter from Petrograd (written only the previous day) nor any official notice of his appointment, and complained of finding himself in the 'absurd situation' of being 'Consul-General only in name'.²² However, that notice was not long in coming, by cable from Litvinoff.²³ Nor was the reaction from some of his compatriots. In mid February the *Daily Standard* reported further serious trouble: the Woolloongabba police were called when 'riotous scenes occurred' at a meeting convened by Simonoff's opponents, who were, however, worsted by his supporters.²⁴

A vocal minority in the Russian community felt that Simonoff was an unsuitable candidate for the high office, having been less active than some others and lacking any clear allegiance to a party. A. Tupicoff wrote that Simonoff lacked education and was insufficiently familiar with the revolution in Russia or the 'ideas of the Bolsheviki in Australia'.²⁵ When Herman Bykoff (Bykov, Rezanoff) visited Ipswich from Brisbane on 4 May 1918 to address a gathering of like-minded comrades, he placed the blame for the deep division in the community squarely on Simonoff, whose opponents formed an independent 'Group of Russian Workers' (Gruppa Rossiiskikh Rabochikh), which, according to Bykoff, would not rejoin the URW except on its own terms.²⁶ However, the mainstream URW retained the advantage in numbers and stood by Simonoff, first under Nikolai Lagutin and later under the energetic leadership of the redoubtable Alexander Zuzenko, who secured the posts of Secretary of the URW and editor of its newspaper in August 1918. Zuzenko maintained a good working relationship with Simonoff, and the surviving correspondence between them is friendly, although his reports to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) sometimes contain acerbic criticism of Simonoff's actions.²⁷

²² NAA, A6286 2/15, Simonoff to Volkovsky, 13 February 1918, RE732.

²³ NAA, BP4/2 Q2801-Q2902, Litvinoff to Post Office Box Ten Sth Brisbane, 19 February 1918, Q2839.

²⁴ 'Russian Disorder: Local Residents Disagree', *Daily Standard*, 14 February 1918, p. 5. See also NAA, A6286 1/9, Censor's Notes, 21 February 1918, QF623.

²⁵ NAA, A6286 3/21, A. Tupicoff to D. Chepurnoff, 5 February 1918, MF693. Other mail intercepts echo this view, e.g. A. Rezanoff [Bykoff] to V. Petruchenia, 18 March 1918, MF694; A6286 3/15, A. Lenin to Petruchenia, n.d. [Feb. 1918], MF553.

²⁶ Moscow, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'noi i politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), f. 495, op. 94, d. 4, Protokol'naia kniga Otdela Soiuza rossiiskikh rabochikh v Ipsviche, 4 May 1918.

²⁷ See Windle, 'A Troika of Agitators', in *Undesirable*, pp. 126–45 (p. 134). In March 1918, five months before taking office, Zuzenko had voted in favour of Simonoff: NAA, A6286 1/18, Zuzenko to Simonoff, 21 March 1918, QF819.

The term 'Group-ites' (*Gruppovtsy*), in Simonoff's first paragraph, denotes the members of the breakaway organization, with branches in Brisbane and Ipswich, although the reference is somewhat premature, as the dissident faction had not yet crystallized. When formally constituted as a separate body, the Group claimed as many as seventy-five members.²⁸ Its moving spirit was Konstantin Klushin (Kliushin, Orloff), who was regarded in the URW as an intellectual and given to publishing donnish disquisitions of inordinate prolixity on current affairs, replete with historical analogies and recondite references. He was strongly supported at first by Bykoff, Alexei Lenin and Tom Pikunoff (Vasilii Pikunov) — it is noteworthy that Simonoff's report mentions none of these by name.

Hostility to Simonoff was the Group's *raison d'être*, and when Klushin gave it its own typescript newspaper, *Listok Gruppy rossiiskikh rabochikh*, containing little news but a great deal of comment, much space was devoted to 'The Simonoff Affair'. The first issue (23 June 1918), consisting of a single unsigned, untitled, four-page article, emphatically repeated the Group's earlier protests against the choice of consul-general.²⁹ That article then appeared in English in the *Daily Standard* over the signature of 'V. Pikunoff, Secretary, Russian Workers' Group'.³⁰ In a determined attempt to secure Simonoff's removal and replacement, Klushin and Bykoff wrote to Chicherin and Litvinoff to protest at the appointment, but it appears that no reply was received.³¹

The Group kept up its attack with an article by Klushin under the headline 'Bolshevism: Reply to Consul-General Simonoff' (first published in English in the *Daily Standard*, 17–18 July, then in Russian in *Listok* as 'The Simonoff Affair'), but with diminishing momentum.³² In a satirical play written six months later, Bykoff would depict Klushin as 'the Bald Philosopher' who took great pride in his role of 'editor and composer

²⁸ Brisbane, NAA, BP4/1, Box 4, 66/4/2165, 'Russian Bykoff H.', 'Rus' avstraliiskaia'; Kevin Windle, 'Hades or Eden? Herman Bykoff's "Russian Australia" (1919)', *Australian Slavonic and East European Review*, 26, 2012, 1–2, pp. 1–25 (p. 20).

²⁹ *Listok*, No. 1, 23 June 1918, esp. pp. 3–4. I am grateful to Ms Nataliya Samokhina for supplying copies of some issues of *Listok*, found in the Beckingham Family and Lane Family Papers, (Boxes 7044–7046, Heritage Collections, TR 2035), Brisbane, State Library of Queensland.

³⁰ V. Pikunoff, 'Russian Affairs: Cause of New Group in Brisbane', *Daily Standard*, 27 June 1918. Though signed by Pikunoff, there are striking similarities in content and style with articles signed by Klushin. Some material in the original version of 'Russian Affairs' reappears verbatim in 'Delo Simonova', *Listok*, No. 5, 24 August 1918, over Klushin's signature.

³¹ K. Kliushin, 'Delo Simonova', *Listok*, 24 August 1918, p. 2; Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', p. 11.

³² K. Klushin, 'Bolshevism: Reply to Consul-General Simonoff', *Daily Standard*, 17–18 July 1918; 'Delo Simonova'.

of anti-Simonoff literature',³³ but by September Klushin was finding it more difficult to maintain the rage in the Russian community. *Listok* No. 6 (15 September 1918) was almost entirely his work, and five of its eight large pages were given over to fulminations against Simonoff's unsuitable character, with epithets more colourful than those previously deployed and a concentration of personal invective which suggests the author's increasing desperation: the 'consul' (Klushin's quotation marks) is, he declares, an unprincipled, insolent and mendacious politician, a 'political juggler', a chameleon, a poseur (p. 5) and a weathercock (*tip prisposobliaiushchiisia*, p. 7), suffering from 'complete political deformity', a lack of any talent, delusions of grandeur (p. 8) and 'ignorance of social questions' (pp. 4, 8), whose utterances are 'nonsense', 'gibberish', 'muddle-headedness' (*bestolkovshchina*), 'twaddle', 'outrageous', 'comical' and a 'pack of lies' (p. 4). Klushin proceeds to heap derision upon Simonoff's various published articles and in particular his forthcoming 'big and profound' book (*bol'shaia glubokaia BUK*, p. 6) on the Russian Revolution. How, he asks, can the 'consul' produce a book in English when in that language he 'jabbers like one of our Harbin hawkers' (*bormochet kak nash 'kharbinskii khodia'*, p. 4), and 'cannot speak Russian' either (p. 4)?³⁴ Klushin's campaign might perhaps have enjoyed greater success if he had had access to Simonoff's oath of allegiance to the King ('true allegiance to His Majesty King George V, His heirs and successors'), sworn at Avondale, Queensland, on 7 April 1915, when he lodged his unsuccessful application for naturalization.³⁵

By September 1918, however, the Group was losing such cohesion as it could previously boast. Its one-time secretary, Pikunoff, wrote forty-

³³ NAA, BP4/1, Box 4, 66/4/2165, 'Russian Bykoff H.', 'O tom, kak my uchimsia samoupravleniu i kontroliu'. See Kevin Windle, '"Unmajestic Bombast": The Brisbane Union of Russian Workers as Shown in a 1919 Play', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 19, 2005, 1–2, pp. 29–51.

³⁴ The evidence of Simonoff's writing in Russian, here and in his reports to the Comintern, does not support Klushin's claims of incompetence in his native language, though Rudnitskii ('Sud'ba', p. 12) states that he wrote inelegantly (*neskol'ko koriavo*). In written English, he made no claim to proficiency; some of his unedited correspondence, e.g. in his naturalization file, points to great difficulty, and Baracchi commented on his 'leaving out all articles' in speech (Canberra, Noel Butlin Archives Centre [NBAC] at the Australian National University, Normington-Rawling Collection, N57/299, 'Guido Baracchi Remembers'). Brookfield commented that Simonoff was 'handicapped by being compelled to speak in "broken English": 'The Bolshevik Consul-General: Mr P. Simonoff's Career', *Barrier Miner*, 3 February 1918, p. 2. Simonoff's book, *What is Russia?*, was carefully edited by Arthur Rae, and it is clear that he had editorial assistance from native speakers while producing *Soviet Russia*.

³⁵ NAA, A1 1915/20956.

two years later that the schism, which arose when some members of the URW 'imbued with petty-bourgeois views refused to recognize the consul appointed by the Soviet government', proved short-lived, because 'the workers understood the need for unity'.³⁶ On 18 September Zuzenko wrote in a letter intercepted by military intelligence that 'the Group is beginning to fall to pieces' and 'giving up its rooms'.³⁷ Bykoff, its former secretary, had defected and parted company with Klushin on bad terms;³⁸ he would soon refer to him as a 'former revolutionary'³⁹ and lampoon him as an effete individualist and self-regarding 'genius', contemptuous of 'the crowd'.⁴⁰ Other members had left the Group and rejoined the URW, leaving Klushin almost a lone voice in a rearguard action, himself coming under attack in terms no more elevated than those in which he had attacked Simonoff. Some clearly felt that he was no less culpable than his opponent for the discord in the community, as may be seen in an unsigned letter addressed to Zuzenko in Darlinghurst Detention Barracks on 26 April 1919. Noting that Klushin is among those detained for deportation, the writer claims that Klushin has much to be thankful for, because only thus can he

cleanse himself of the filth he has enjoyed wallowing in, like a mangy piglet in mud. I personally cannot forgive him the division he caused in the Russian organization. This opportunity will be his salvation for the trouble he caused [*natvorimykh im delishek*] the Russians as a whole and you and Simonoff in particular.⁴¹

Many agreed, and most former 'Group-ites' now seemed to have accepted that, if Simonoff was not ideal, he was at least preferable to Abaza, and better Simonoff than no consular representation at all.

Bykoff was one who, though now estranged from Klushin, still abhorred the Consul and what he termed *simonovshchina*. In an unpublished article

³⁶ V. I. Pikunov, 'Soiuz russkikh rabochikh v Avstralii', *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, no. 1, 1960, pp. 167–74, (p. 172). The author seems to forget his own leading role among those with 'petty-bourgeois views', as Secretary of the Group.

³⁷ NAA, A6286 1/64, Zuzenko to Bolotnikoff, 18 September 1918, QF1894.

³⁸ NAA, A6286 1/46, A. Lenin to A. Zuzenko, 15 July 1918. 'Full copy of translated extracts referred to in QF1473'.

³⁹ NAA, BP4/1, Box 4, 66/4/2165, 'Rus' avstraliiskaia'; Windle, 'Hades', p. 11.

⁴⁰ NAA, BP4/1, Box 4, 66/4/2165, 'O tom...'; Windle, 'Bombast'.

⁴¹ Sydney, NAA, SP 43/2 N59/21/962, 'Alexander M. Zuzenko', Unsigned to Zuzenko, 26 April 1919. This intercept is unusual in as much as the original, sent from Kuridala in Queensland, was not forwarded to the addressee. Zuzenko had been deported nine days before it was written and was en route to Bombay on the SS *Bakara*. The handwritten original is accompanied by the censor's incomplete and unreliable English translation, in type. It omits mention of Simonoff and reads 'Klushin' as 'Kmoshin'.

written for the URW's *Znanie i edinenie* in early 1919, he asserted that Simonoff had discredited himself by his own actions, and opined that the URW should pass a resolution stripping him of his consular responsibilities and transferring them into the hands of the Union.⁴²

While hostility to Simonoff from the Russian community gradually gave way to more immediate concerns in the course of 1918, the attitude of Australian officialdom was another matter entirely. If the Soviets were right to view Robert Bruce Lockhart as an agent of subversion, much the same can be said of the Australian government's view of Simonoff. His position, as he saw it, required him to proselytize, rally supporters to the cause, explain the 'true' nature of the new regime which he represented, and help establish a local Communist party loyal to that regime, a task to which he applied himself with vigour. When he wrote to Lagutin that 'secret groups are being organized for the propagation of revolutionary ideas', he left little doubt that he himself was the organizer.⁴³ This he viewed as central to the role of a Soviet diplomat, a new breed, and a very different one from the traditional 'bourgeois' diplomat. At an early date he wrote, 'So far as I understand the reason for my appointment, it is purely as [an] Agitator. I would then have a freer hand to agitate and spread revolutionary ideas among the English.'⁴⁴ Here he was fully in tune with Trotskii, who in December 1917 had written in *Izvestiia*: 'Soviet power considers it essential to maintain diplomatic relations not only with governments, but also with revolutionary socialist parties which are striving to overthrow governments.'⁴⁵

Inevitably, therefore, Simonoff came into conflict with those charged with maintaining the order he sought to undermine. On 30 October 1918 the federal government, determined to neutralize the Bolshevik bacillus, moved to muzzle him and Zuzenko by invoking the Aliens Restriction Order, which prohibited aliens from addressing meetings and engaging in propaganda.⁴⁶ Zuzenko, who was then editing the fortnightly *Znanie i edinenie*, resorted to subterfuge, transferring the nominal editorship

⁴² NAA, BP4/1, Box 4, 66/4/2165, 'Rus' avstraliiskaia'; Windle, 'Hades', p. 22.

⁴³ NAA, A6286 1/15, Simonoff to Lagutin, 22 March 1918, QF704. This sentence was cited by H. E. Jones in a detailed intelligence report to the Prime Minister's office, but misquoted, with 'protection' in place of 'propagation'. NAA, A981, SOV 42 Part 1, 'Soviet Union. Russia — Russians in Australia'. To Secretary, PM's Dept., 9 May 1918.

⁴⁴ NAA, A6286 2/15, Simonoff to Volkovsky, 13 February 1918, RE732. The censor took due note and underlined this passage heavily.

⁴⁵ L. Trotskii, 'Ot narodnogo komissariata po inostrannym delam', *Izvestiia*, 3 December 1917.

⁴⁶ Melbourne, NAA, MP16/1 18/2146, Commandant, 3rd Military District, to Peter Simonoff, 30 October 1918.

to his fiancée; Simonoff declared that he did not intend to comply and was prepared to suffer the consequences. Continuous surveillance and perustration of 'disloyalist' communications supplied abundant evidence for the prosecution, and among the army intelligence officers responsible for it a visceral aversion to Simonoff — 'this unspeakable Russian'⁴⁷ — and all his works was never concealed, as may be seen in the censor's far from dispassionate notes on his correspondence. Commenting on Simonoff's predicament as the threat of incarceration drew nearer in October 1918, the censor wrote: 'probably his miserable mischief-brewing temperament will gain that seclusion which will provide free board and lodging at the expense of the Government which he affects to despise and defy.'⁴⁸

When his appeal had run its course and he had 'categorically refused' to pay a fine, as he relates in his report, Simonoff was duly consigned to prison for four months. When released from Maitland Gaol in July 1919 and accommodated in Brookfield's Sydney home, he resumed most of his previous activities with redoubled energy, and government surveillance continued. In April 1920 he launched the monthly *Soviet Russia*, 'Official Organ of the Russian Soviet Government Bureau'. The Sydney *Sun* described it as 'Bolshevik propaganda of the most dangerous kind',⁴⁹ and the Attorney-General's Department, seeking grounds to re-arrest the publisher, scrutinized it closely, but in the end refrained from further legal action.

Simonoff's account of himself in a Soviet journal only a year after his return to Soviet Russia could not contain any mention of his less diplomatic work for the government and party he represented. While his public statements and articles written in Australia show that he was not by nature cautious, he would not have been permitted to mention in a public forum any personal connection with the Communist International (Third International, Comintern) or to claim any role in bringing organization and direction to the workers' movement in Australia. His efforts to represent the new Soviet state in print and in addressing Australian audiences were broadly consistent with the duties of a diplomat as hitherto understood and needed no denial, but his less public activities, declared by Trotskii to be

⁴⁷ NAA, A6286 3/71, Censor's notes on Simonoff to Ross, 13 October 1918, MF2036.

⁴⁸ NAA, A6286 1/68, Censor's Notes, 5 October 1918, QF2024. See also Curtis, pp. 137–46.

⁴⁹ 'The Quest that Spells Ruin', *Sun*, 19 April 1920. Captain Longfield Lloyd, Intelligence Section, General Staff, 2nd Military District, endorsed this view: 'cunning and specious propaganda'. Canberra, NAA, A456, W26/241/84, Simonoff, 'Soviet Russia', Lloyd to Director, Military Intelligence, 21 April 1920.

of vital importance, demanded greater circumspection. Excluded from the published report below, they are central to his communications with the ECCI, which from the outset shrouded its foreign operations in a cloak of secrecy.

The achievement which Simonoff saw in retrospect as his most important, and the one which gave him greatest satisfaction, was his role in establishing the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) as a section of the Communist International. The early history of the CPA, its founding, its feuds and its factions, has been ably recounted in detail elsewhere,⁵⁰ and the part played by Simonoff and Zuzenko has been the subject of some study,⁵¹ but it is worth emphasizing that, had it not been for Simonoff, a very different Communist Party might have emerged, and perhaps one less amenable to direction from Moscow.

When the Comintern was established in Moscow in 1919, it was widely assumed that the natural claimant to the title of Communist Party of Australia and 'Australian Section' of the Comintern was the Australian Socialist Party (ASP), long the focus of radical sentiment and action on the Left. This was the party to which Artem Sergeeff had belonged during his years in Queensland, and therefore the Australian party best known to the Comintern executive in Moscow, even when others had staked strong claims. In mid 1920, when a proposal was approved for two emissaries, Zuzenko and Paul Freeman, to return to Australia to 'establish a Communist party', there is little doubt that the ASP, thanks to Sergeeff, was still seen as the nucleus. However, Simonoff, the man on the ground, was developing a different opinion and following an agenda of his own: he had concluded that the ASP as currently constituted was ill suited to the role. In a letter of August 1920 he is ambivalent about it, apportioning praise to its newspaper, the *International Socialist*, but stating:

Their efforts amount to no more than the distribution of European and American revolutionary literature and organizing rallies [...]. They do not even understand organizational work and one could hardly expect them to understand since they think organizational work is necessary only in countries like Russia.⁵²

⁵⁰ See, especially, NBAC, N57/1, James Normington-Rawling, 'Communism Comes to Australia', and Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds*, Sydney, 1998.

⁵¹ Fried, 'The First Consul'; ADB; Windle, 'Troika'; idem, *Undesirable*, pp. 126ff.

⁵² RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Drodzy towarzysze! 16 August 1920. The only known copy of this letter is in Polish. An English translation may be found in David Lovell and Kevin Windle (eds), *Our Unswerving Loyalty: A Documentary Survey of Relations Between*

A few months later, in a confidential report to the ECCI, no ambivalence remained: '[The ASP] should be seen more or less as a replica of British socialist organizations, that is, rather like a religious sect, worlds apart from the workers' movement as a whole.'⁵³ Having arrived at this view, Simonoff was filled with indignation when confronted in April 1921 by Moscow's first emissary Paul Freeman, who backed the ASP and knew little of any rivals.⁵⁴ Zuzenko, however, who arrived in 1922, after Simonoff's departure and the death of Sergeeff and Freeman, shared Simonoff's view: the ASP were merely 'sectarian Marxist grasshoppers'.⁵⁵ This view is echoed by some commentators of a much later date, such as Jeff Sparrow, the biographer of Guido Baracchi: 'a small sect of Marxist purists whose theoretical prowess went hand in hand with a lofty condescension towards actual working-class struggles.'⁵⁶

While remaining in close contact with Arthur Reardon and Ray Everitt, the leaders of the ASP, Simonoff had gone about cultivating their rivals, such as Jock Garden and Bill Earsman, and establishing small groups within the unions, with a view to welding them into a unified alternative body when the opportunity arose. In pursuit of this aim he also made efforts to establish periodical publications with a suitable editorial line. The *Proletarian Review* commenced publication in June 1920. Its editor was Guido Baracchi, a friend and supporter, soon to be a founder member of the CPA. In it Baracchi would occasionally publish articles by Simonoff under the pseudonym 'P. Finn'.⁵⁷ In private correspondence, Simonoff would claim — plausibly — that the initiative behind this publication was his own.⁵⁸ Having returned to Moscow, however, he found himself bound by secrecy on all such matters and able to write only about his 'diplomatic' endeavours.⁵⁹

the Communist Party of Australia and Moscow 1920–1940, (hereafter, *Loyalty*), Canberra, 2008 <http://epress.anu.edu.au/oul_citation.html>, pp. 75–79.

⁵³ RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 6, Ispoln. Kom-t Kommunist. Intern., 8 April 1921, p. 26. Lovell and Windle (eds), *Loyalty*, p. 87; Windle, 'Troika', p. 42; idem, *Undesirable*, p. 133.

⁵⁴ RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 6; *Loyalty*, pp. 83–94.

⁵⁵ RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 13, f. 32. Zuzenko: Dorogaia zhinka i dochka Ksiuncha! 21 July 1922. *Loyalty*, p. 138.

⁵⁶ Jeff Sparrow, *Communism: A Love Story*, Carlton, 2007, p. 112.

⁵⁷ Simonoff described 'G. Barecki' as 'a young man of great promise' (*wiele obiecujący młodzieniec*). RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Drodzy towarzysze! 16 August 1920. *Loyalty*, p. 76.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Simonoff explains in a report to the ECCI (RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 6; 8 April 1921) that this letter was not intended for publication, and its appearance in print was used against him. His opponents (unnamed) threatened to publish it in English. For English translations of the letter and the relevant report, see *Loyalty*, pp. 75–79 and 83–94.

⁵⁹ Zuzenko, like Simonoff, whether in conversation with friendly Soviet writers or

In the Australian radical community, as among the Russians, Simonoff was bound to appear a divisive figure, sowing dissension in the name of unity while single-mindedly backing Earsman, Garden and their allies against Reardon and Everitt of the ASP (none of them named in his article). He was, in Stuart Macintyre's words, 'chronically conspiratorial'.⁶⁰ Alexei Lenin had also written of 'the deceptions practised by Simonoff among the masses of the Australian workers'.⁶¹ An ASP stalwart, W. P. Thomas, incensed by the proceedings at the conference convened to unite the factions in late October 1920, described them in a letter soon after that event.⁶² The ASP, he wrote, found itself outnumbered by the 'newcomers', and unity was achieved at its expense by the adroit manoeuvrings of a 'gang of opportunists', led by Simonoff. Thomas added, with heavy underlining, that this was 'a bunch of damned scoundrels whom I have been fighting for years, renegades and disappointed Labour politicians, job hunters and hooligans', and emphasized that 'the chief schemer in all of this dirty business was Simonoff'. He urged a comrade to go to the URW in Brisbane and 'expose the lies of Simonoff and his gang'.

There is no doubt of the importance of Simonoff's role in these events, a role which he had every reason to conceal. The diplomatic status which he claimed obliged him to avoid the limelight.⁶³ As the agent of a foreign power, he could not allow his name to be bandied freely in Party circles or linked by the government with the CPA or its predecessors, which is why the name of Simonoff appears only infrequently in internal Party documents of the time.⁶⁴ For the same reasons, his published article is notable as much for what it does not and could not say, as for what it does. In confidential communications with the ECCI, however, no such constraints applied: in two separate letters he stated that the CPA's

under interrogation by the British authorities, took care not to admit any connection with the Comintern or the nascent CPA. See Windle, 'Orpheus Expelled from the Underworld', in *Undesirable*, pp. 146–56 (pp. 150ff.).

⁶⁰ Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 57.

⁶¹ NAA, A6286 1/46, A. Lenin to Zuzenko, 15 July 1918.

⁶² RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 7, W. Thomas to Dear Comrades, [no date]; *Loyalty*, pp. 81–83.

⁶³ While planning a meeting of a 'militant group' in September 1918, Simonoff wrote, 'Of course, I myself will be somewhere in the background only'. NAA, A6286 3/61, Simonoff to Laidler, 4 September 1918, MF1740.

⁶⁴ For a survey of relevant library and archive holdings on the CPA, see Beverley Symons, with Andrew Wells and Stuart Macintyre, *Communism in Australia: A Resource Bibliography*, Canberra, 1994 (revised 2002). Its index contains only two references to Simonoff, neither of them to primary sources. For the years when Simonoff was active, the principal repositories are RGASPI, the Poole-Fried Papers at the University of Queensland, and the Normington-Rawling Collection at the Australian National University.

manifesto, which was crucial in laying the foundations of the united party in 1920, was written by him.⁶⁵ There is nothing in the known documents by either his allies or his detractors to contradict this, although he would almost certainly have needed editorial assistance in drafting the manifesto in English. It was Simonoff's firm view that the establishment of the CPA was his own doing, and some later historians have been inclined to agree. Normington-Rawling, writing in the 1960s without the evidence which emerged much later from the files of the Comintern and the NKID, stated that Simonoff 'worked secretly in the background in support of the Earsman-Garden combination' and provided financial support.⁶⁶ Rudnitskii, in possession of a more substantial body of evidence, writes that Simonoff laid the ground for revolution in Australia, 'by creating the Communist Party there'.⁶⁷

In this published report Simonoff could write only that 'the existence was uncovered of secret revolutionary circles'; 'a Communist party appeared as if out of nowhere, [...] with branches in all the major centres', and 'the financing and organization of this party was also attributed to me'.⁶⁸ In his communications with the ECCI and his letter to Polish comrades he was less guarded about his aims and his personal role:

Last year [1919], before I was arrested, I managed to set up some thirty groups in Sydney, each with ten members, but by the time I was released from prison I couldn't find them. My aim was to leave them the means of organization.⁶⁹

To the ECCI he wrote:

I spent much time trying to nurture the existing socialist organizations here before absolutely losing hope of achieving anything with them. I

⁶⁵ RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Dorogoi tov. Tolmachev, 2 November 1920; *Loyalty*, p. 80; f. 495, op. 94, d. 6, Ispoln. Kom-t Kommunist. Intern., 8 April 1921; *Loyalty*, p. 89.

⁶⁶ NBAC, N57/62, J. Normington-Rawling, seminar paper, 4 May 1962, 'The Communist Party of Australia, to 1930', p. 10; Baracchi, reading Normington-Rawling's draft in 1963, thought that he had underestimated Simonoff's role, NBAC, N57/353, 'Beginnings of Communism'.

⁶⁷ Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', p. 6.

⁶⁸ The extent of Soviet funding channelled through Simonoff, and that available to him for ongoing expenses, is unclear, but it appears to have been sporadic at best. Normington-Rawling, relying on acquaintances of Simonoff's such as W. Tuitene (V. Tiutin) and A. T. Brodney, believed that he enjoyed lavish funding. See Normington-Rawling, 'Communism Comes to Australia', pp. 48–49. If this was ever the case, it is clear that there were long periods when money was desperately short (see below).

⁶⁹ RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Drodzy towarzysze! 16 August 1920. *Loyalty*, p. 76.

then began selecting individual worker activists and bringing each of them individually to an understanding of Communism. These individual workers began selecting others in their turn, and in this way I managed to form clandestine groups in Sydney and Melbourne. These groups rapidly became more and more active.⁷⁰

These lines were written soon after the conference on 30 October 1920, at which unity seemed to have been achieved on Simonoff's terms, leaving the Earsman-Garden group firmly in command. Enduring unity, however, remained elusive and that 'unification conference' was far from the last. Conflict raged between the two 'Communist Parties', each coveting the title of Australian Section of the Communist International, for the better part of the next two years, long after Simonoff's departure. The ECCI eventually sent an ultimatum: either the parties unite or neither would be recognized by the Comintern, and only when Zuzenko returned in July 1922 and applied his forceful style of persuasion to Reardon and Everitt did their faction begin to accept defeat. Moscow's blessing was bestowed upon a CPA which was in essence the Simonoff-Earsman-Garden faction in all but name.

The resulting party would endure, despite periods of internal strife and the threat of being driven underground, for the better part of seven decades. At times it was viewed by governments and large segments of the public as a serious threat and its influence, especially in the trade unions, was cause for ongoing concern. The Party's existence was tolerated until 1940, when it was proscribed, then permitted again when the USSR became an ally. It enjoyed increased membership in the last years of the Second World War and the early post-war period, until decline set in in 1956. The government may of course have over-estimated the danger posed to the body politic by the CPA, but its prominence — owing to some of its leading figures, and the sympathies of some intellectuals — was often greater than its numerical membership might suggest.

As noted above, throughout his consulship Simonoff was obliged to conceal his work with Australia's Communists from the Australian government. This was very difficult, in view of the intelligence network established in wartime to monitor 'disloyalists', and geared since 1917 to the surveillance of 'dangerous' Russians. Simonoff had been firmly in its sights even before his promotion to consular office, and the 'Bolshevik trouble' of 1919 in Brisbane had sharpened the focus. Having no official diplomatic

⁷⁰ RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Dorogoi tov. Tolmachev, 2 November 1920; *Loyalty*, p. 80.

status in the eyes of the British and Australians only compounded his difficulties. Nonetheless, for want of any other Russian representation, the Australian government in the form of the Prime Minister, William Morris Hughes, and Deputy Prime Minister, William Watt, had little choice but treat him as *de facto* consul, as his account shows, for example when the question of Russians seeking repatriation arose. In response to a question in Parliament in June 1918, Watt stated that he had 'as far as possible' placed Simonoff 'in as good a position as that occupied by M. Litvinoff in London',⁷¹ though omitting to add that Litvinoff inhabited a somewhat uneasy limbo. In a sense, Simonoff's meetings with Watt and Hughes represented the high point of his diplomatic career, but those meetings did not imply any lasting change in his status.

The Consul was clearly acutely aware of his precarious situation, made the more uncertain by a lack of guidance from his own government and apparently diminishing interest. Whereas in 1918 and 1919 world revolution did not seem beyond the bounds of possibility, and Lenin, Trotskii and Zinov'ev could be persuaded that Australia offered an avenue by which to attack the British Empire, by 1921 any such prospect was receding and matters closer to home clamoured for more attention than Britain's distant dominions. Just as Zuzenko felt that his Comintern mission to Australia, initially supported in Moscow as having great strategic importance, was forgotten long before it was completed,⁷² so Simonoff had cause to feel that his endeavours were not receiving the recognition they deserved, and that world events were passing him by. On being appointed, he had plainly expected to receive instructions and support from the unrecognized Russian mission in London, where his immediate superiors were stationed, but no instructions or finance came. In August 1918, he wrote, 'As I am entirely cut off from the Russian Government I receive no salary at all. I depend on the help of some of the comrades'.⁷³ As time passed he felt

⁷¹ Watt, reply to Dr. W. Maloney, 14 June 1918, *Commonwealth of Australia. Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 85, 1918, p. 6093.

⁷² Windle, *Undesirable*, p. 159.

⁷³ NAA, A6286 1/58, Simonoff to Zarembo, 27 August 1918, QF1722. Simonoff accused the Australian government of withholding communications to him from Moscow, including a draft for £1,200 (see NAA, A981, SOV 42 Part 1, Simonoff to Acting PM, 11 and 25 February 1919; and *Commonwealth of Australia. Parliamentary Debates*, 13 October 1920, Michael Considine <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/hansard80/hansard80/1920-10-13/0041/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf>). However, the Australian records up to the termination of wartime postal censorship in September 1919 suggest that very few letters or telegrams were sent. See also Lt N. H. Dooley's report, NAA, A981, SOV 42 Part 1, Interview with Mr. Abramovitch Tomas, 20 February 1919. Some later correspondence is held with the NKID documents in the Russian Foreign

increasingly isolated. The Comintern, like the NKID, paid him scant attention, failing to forewarn him in 1921 that Freeman and Zuzenko would be returning to Australia as its agents.⁷⁴ Only Ludwig Martens, the Bolshevik representative in New York, lent support by forwarding his pleas to Moscow, with his earnest endorsement, and on occasion remitting financial assistance.⁷⁵

By accepting the post of consul-general in Australia, Simonoff had placed himself in a position which demanded far more than mere diplomatic skills. Rarely had a diplomat been required by his office to play a dual role such as that outlined by Trotskii, on the one hand treating with the government of the host country, and on the other working conspiratorially to bring about not merely the downfall of that government, but the overthrow of the system of governance itself.⁷⁶ Simonoff was fully aware of the contradiction, and conscientious in carrying out his duties in both areas. At the same time, as his report shows, he performed consular services for Russians in Australia, especially those who wished to return to Russia. Unlike the staff of more conventional diplomatic missions, he had duties which carried with them the threat of imprisonment by the host country, a threat he willingly accepted, refusing on principle the opportunity to pay a fine or leave Australia. Though his sentence was reduced, as he says, from six months to four, he enjoyed no diplomatic privileges while imprisoned in Long Bay and Maitland: 'I spent this period in the most dreadful conditions you can possibly imagine.'⁷⁷ All of this he did with very little support or direction from Moscow, with minimal resources, forced to rely on his own initiative and funding raised by Australian allies like Brookfield and Mick Considine, which he gratefully acknowledges.

By late 1920 his letters reflect frustration and some bitterness over the lack of contact, finance and support. Only occasionally was he gratified by a sympathetic reply from the People's Commissariat, such as that of January 1921, endorsing his conduct of affairs and apologizing for

Policy Archive. See Rudnitskii, 'Sud 'ba'.

⁷⁴ See Windle, *Undesirable*, pp. 134–36.

⁷⁵ Simonoff to ECCI, RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 6, 8 April 1921; *Loyalty*, p. 88.

⁷⁶ Fried, 'The First Consul', p. 121; Rudnitskii, 'Sud 'ba', p. 14.

⁷⁷ ('W najokropniejszych warunkach, jakie możecie sobie wyobrazić'), RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Drodzy towarzysze! 16 August 1920; *Loyalty*, p. 79. He was also quoted as saying that 'the New South Wales prisons are a disgrace, far worse than any prisons in Siberia', NAA, A6286 1/76, Censor's Notes, Week ended 6 November 1918, QF2255. He gave a detailed description of prison conditions in a press article: 'My Jail Experiences', *Australian Worker*, 31 July 1919, p. 17.

failures of communication.⁷⁸ His financial position, however, continued to deteriorate, and mounting desperation is evident in his subsequent pleas to the NKID.⁷⁹ He could hardly help sensing that to the makers of Soviet foreign policy Australia was coming to be of no more than peripheral relevance, needing no permanent Soviet representative, and that consequently his own importance, such as it was, was in steep decline. No doubt he would have derived much satisfaction from a remark attributed to Vladimir Il'ich Lenin in late 1922: an Australian intelligence report had it that, in an interview with Jock Garden, Lenin had observed that he 'would have liked Simonoff to have stayed longer' in Australia.⁸⁰ But this was long after the event, and Lenin is not known to have uttered any supportive comment before Simonoff sailed for Russia. Simonoff's suggestion, made while still in Sydney, that instead of a consulate a trade mission might be opened, which could also serve for political contacts, was ignored.⁸¹

In August 1921, decline became terminal; Simonoff received his recall notice, which, it may be said, he himself had prompted or provoked. Chicherin had assured him that he had instructed the London office, now headed by Krasin, to maintain direct contact with him and provide material support. This had brought no result. Simonoff received nothing from Krasin. Accordingly, in May 1921, he wrote to Chicherin, 'It is my wish to return to Russia as soon as possible',⁸² but only, as he made clear, if his situation could not be relieved. He had in effect been acting as an honorary consul, incurring expenses beyond his means ('I can't afford a decent typewriter, let alone a typist'), often going hungry, borrowing to pay his rent, and receiving no reimbursement, much less a salary. His greatest fear was of being cut adrift and left in Australia as an ex-diplomat, in the humiliating position of having to seek work and being turned down. If he was ignored by his employers and left without pay, this possibility was all

⁷⁸ This letter is cited in Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', p. 19. It was not, however, delivered by Zuzenko, as stated in that work. Zuzenko returned to Australia only once, in July–September 1922, by which time Simonoff was in Moscow. It is true that Zuzenko became a sea captain, but not until 1924, and Australia was never on his route. See Windle, 'Master and Alien', in *Undesirable*, pp. 172–85; Zuzenko's own detailed account of his Comintern mission to Australia may be found in RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 18, 'Ispolnitel'nomu komitetu 3-go kommunisticheskago internatsionala', in English in Kevin Windle, "'The Achilles Heel of British Imperialism': A Comintern Agent Reports on His Mission to Australia 1920–1922", *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 18, 2004, 1–2, pp. 143–76. An abridged version appears in *Loyalty*, pp. 158–71.

⁷⁹ Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', pp. 19–22.

⁸⁰ NAA, A6122 111, 'Summary of Communism', f. 273.

⁸¹ Rudnitskii, 'Sud'ba', p. 23.

⁸² *Ibid.*

too real. In August he received a reply: he was to close the consulate and prepare to leave Australia.⁸³ There seems never to have been any thought of replacing him. From Moscow's point of view, there was no need for a paid diplomatic representative, and contact with the CPA could be conducted through Comintern channels. He duly announced that he was ceasing to act as consul with effect from 12 August 1921.⁸⁴

By this time most of the participants in the 'Simonoff affair' of 1918 had left Australia: Zuzenko, Bykoff and Klushin had all been deported as a consequence of the Brisbane Red Flag disturbances, the latter two having been reunited in the cells of Darlinghurst Detention Barracks in August 1919, to be shipped with others to Italy, en route to Russia, in September. Simonoff himself took ship two years later, on 20 September 1921. According to Bertha Walker, when he vacated his consular premises in Sydney, 'This office consisted of some correspondence and piles of half-smoked cigarettes'.⁸⁵ Only Pikunoff remained behind, to return finally to the Soviet Union in 1959.

The Consul's report contains no reference to the Red Flag demonstration and riots, or to the deportations which followed — a striking omission, given the publicity these events received in Australia — and names none of the leading figures. It is also noteworthy that, while acknowledging the support he received from the other two members of the 'Broken Hill Three', Brookfield and Considine, he is silent about the events for which they are best remembered. Brookfield, who had been an indefatigable campaigner on behalf of Zuzenko and his wife while they awaited deportation in 1919, did not live to see Simonoff depart. He was killed on 22 March 1921 when a deranged Russian immigrant named Tomayeff (Tomaev) opened fire on passengers with a pistol at Tiverton station in South Australia, wounding four of them. Heedless of his own safety, Brookfield was fatally shot in the attempt to disarm him.⁸⁶ Nor does Simonoff mention that he had nominated Considine as Acting Consul for Soviet Russia during his own planned absence. Considine had willingly accepted the nomination, in spite of the widespread opprobrium he incurred by doing so while a Member of the Federal House of Representatives.⁸⁷

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ 'Simonoff Leaves for Russia', *Worker*, 18 August 1921.

⁸⁵ Bertha Walker, *Solidarity Forever!*, Melbourne, 1972, p. 163 <<http://www.cpa.org.au/resources/classics/solidarityforever.pdf>>.

⁸⁶ See Adams, pp. 285ff.

⁸⁷ Simonoff more than once made plans to return to Russia, urging Watt to assist his departure if he was not to be recognized as Consul. NAA, A981, SOV 42 Part 1, Simonoff

Of Simonoff's later life, little is known in detail after his departure from Australia on the SS *Orsova* in September 1921. An intelligence report to the Department of the Prime Minister in March 1922 cited a 'reliable source' which claimed that on his way to Russia he had met a New Zealand girl and 'married her at Naples'. As a result, he was 'returning to Australia with his wife'.⁸⁸ If he indeed entertained the idea of returning to Australia, he certainly did not act on it, and his later communications do not mention any marriage. Two years later the vigilant security services would issue a similarly spurious warning concerning Zuzenko: having been deported to Soviet Russia twice, he was said to be in Harbin and planning yet another return to Australia.⁸⁹

In Simonoff's brief passage through Europe, as he reports in his concluding paragraphs, he was at last able to experience the hospitality customarily accorded to diplomats but steadfastly denied him by Britain and Australia, which had seen him off with a prolonged and humiliating pre-embarkation search. In Rome, Vienna and Berlin he met Soviet diplomats, learned something of the extent of the Volga famine, and wrote about it in a letter published in the *Australian Worker*, stressing that while in Australia he 'had neither proper and timely information, nor any instructions from the Soviet Government'.⁹⁰

It seems clear that Simonoff nurtured hopes of a diplomatic career or of a permanent position in the Comintern.⁹¹ Like Zuzenko some eighteen months later, he was to be disappointed. It is possible that the denunciations sent from Brisbane by the 'Group' and entered in his personal dossier in the NKID told against him,⁹² even if the Australian censor's view of his 'miserable mischief-brewing temperament' — a poor recommendation for a diplomat — remained well out of Chicherin's reach. He did not, as some reports have it, take control of Comintern operations throughout the British Empire,⁹³ although he may have wished to. Nor did he undertake 'a

to Acting PM, 1 October 1918, 13 January 1919, 11 and 25 February 1919.

⁸⁸ Brisbane, University of Queensland, Fryer Library, Poole-Fried Collection, UQFL336, Box 8 Folder 7: Simonoff. H. Jones to PM's Department, 11 March 1922. See also, Frank Cain, *The Australian Security Intelligence Organization: An Unofficial History*, Richmond, 1994, p. 6, and a dubious press report: 'Jottings', *Wellington Times*, 12 January 1922, p. 6.

⁸⁹ Brisbane, NAA, J2773 713/1929, D. A. Mackiehan, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, to Collector of Customs, Brisbane, 3 December 1924. On Zuzenko's movements, see Note 78.

⁹⁰ 'Distress in Russia: letter from Mr Simonoff', *Australian Worker*, 11 January 1922.

⁹¹ Rudnitskii, 'Sud 'ba', p. 24.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 12.

⁹³ See Raymond Evans, 'Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation', in John McNair and Thomas Poole (eds), *Russia and the Fifth Continent*, St Lucia, 1992, pp. 126–71 (p. 162); *idem*, 'No

propaganda mission in India and Afghanistan', as a report reaching Major H. E. Jones, Director of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, claimed in July 1923.⁹⁴ In a letter from Moscow to the *Communist*, published in 1922, on the anniversary of the October Revolution, he wrote:

I am in charge of a party school for young workers at a factory, and my main work is to write political and economic reviews and articles about Anglo-Saxon countries (America, England and British colonies) so I am digging into the Anglo-Saxon papers, [...] feeling myself almost suffocated at times with the enormous amount of reading that has to be gone through, in the large American dailies, dozens of them.⁹⁵

Rudnitskii reports that in 1922 Simonoff was taken into the employment of the Red Trade Union International (Profintern) and, subsequently, in 1926, that of the export department of the Petroleum Syndicate.⁹⁶

He did not lose interest in Australian affairs. Indeed there is evidence that he followed them as closely as he could. When I. G. Kushnarev, an erstwhile activist in northern Australia, died in 1926 and *Pravda* published an obituary, Simonoff drafted a response, which is preserved in the Comintern archive. In it he took the opportunity to repeat his views on the ASP ('von den Massen vollständig getrennt' [completely divorced from the masses]) and speak of his own role in establishing a true Communist party.⁹⁷ As in his earlier communications, sent from Australia to the ECCI, he appears understandably anxious to see credit given where it is due. He had after all been an exemplary servant of the Soviet state in all his roles: he had represented it to the government of Australia, safeguarded the interests of expatriate Russians, and guided groups of local socialists towards the formation of a party which the Comintern could recognize as its own. He had shown himself to be energetic, determined and at times devious in pursuit of his aims. For one of modest educational attainments with no training in the diplomatic arts, he was very successful, particularly when we remember the conditions in which he worked, but he did not succeed in persuading Moscow that a full-time, paid representative in

Sympathy for You', in Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance*, St Lucia, 1988, pp. 149–82 (p. 206).

⁹⁴ NAA, A6122 111, 'Summary of Communism', f. 286, 31 July 1923.

⁹⁵ 'A Letter from Peter Simonoff', *Communist*, 7 November 1922, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Rudnitskii, 'Sud 'ba', p. 24.

⁹⁷ RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 28, P. Simonow, 'In dem Genossen I. G. Kuschnarjow gewidmeten Nekrolog ...' [no date]. The only extant copy found in the Comintern archive is in German. For an English translation, see *Loyalty*, pp. 201–03.

Australia was justified. Something of his underlying frustration may be seen in the article below.

In the USSR he enjoyed less prominence and publicity than in Australia. As to his ultimate fate, the widespread and self-perpetuating assumption that he was arrested at the height of the purges appears to have no foundation. According to Rudnitskii, the most authoritative treatment to date, he died in 1934, of natural causes.⁹⁸ Of three significant Russian radicals in Australia, all born in 1883–84, none lived to a great age. Simonoff was luckier than Sergeeff in living into his fifties, long after Sergeeff's death in a railway accident,⁹⁹ and in a sense luckier than Zuzenko, who lived four years longer, only to be executed and unpersoned in the Great Purge. Unlike Sergeeff and Zuzenko, he was not celebrated in Russian novels, memoirs and film.¹⁰⁰ The CPA, which was as much his legacy as that of his Australian comrades, would outlive them all, as well as its parent body, the Comintern. It survived despite great perturbations until its final extinction in 1991, when the Communist Party of the Soviet Union itself came to the end of its life. In the meantime, the USSR re-established diplomatic relations with Australia in 1942, during the Second World War, too late, however, to profit from the local knowledge and experience of Trotskii's first consul and his most prominent comrades.

⁹⁸ Rudnitskii, 'Sud 'ba', p. 24.

⁹⁹ The story of the crash of the *aerovagon* in July 1921 and the death in it of Sergeeff and Freeman has been told many times, e.g. Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 66; Windle, *Undesirable*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁰ On Zuzenko in Russian literature, see Windle, 'Afterlife', in *ibid.*, pp. 199–217; *idem*, 'Aleksandr Zuzenko i avstraliiskaia tema v sovetskoi literature', *Studia Rossica Posnaniensia*, 32, 2005, pp. 11–20.

Appendix

*Three and a Half Years as Soviet Diplomatic Representative*¹⁰¹

by Peter Simonoff

I

Early in the morning of 30 January 1918 a comrade came rushing in to see me and tell me that the ‘Group-ites’ were frantically running about the streets, all thrusting their newspapers at one another and swearing and exclaiming that it was all a cunning provocation by Simonoff to intimidate them.¹⁰²

‘What’s it all about? What am I supposed to have provoked?’ I asked my early-morning visitor.

‘What do you mean “what’s it all about”? About you being appointed consul in place of Abaza.’

I had not seen the newspapers, so did not know that they contained a telegram from Reuters in Petrograd saying that Abaza, the former tsarist-Kerenskyite consul, was being removed from his post, and by order of Comrade Trotskii, then People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, I was being appointed Consul for Soviet Russia in Australia.

In Australia at the beginning of the revolution there were over 3,000 Russian emigrants, free and unfree, that is, some who had emigrated of their own free will in search of better pay, and some political emigrants. I am not counting the old emigrants, mostly Jewish, to whom no less than half the country’s urban industry and trade belongs. There was no shortage even of tsarist *agents provocateurs* and dyed-in-the-wool Black Hundreds, including devoted tsarists, who united round the tsarist consul-general Abaza. We therefore experienced almost all the revolutionary struggle which took place in Russia itself.

In 1911 in Brisbane, the capital city of the state of Queensland, where most of the Russian emigrants landed, a mutual-aid group was established. In early 1912, in connection with a general strike, some political emigrants, largely owing to the initiative and active participation of Comrade Artem Sergeeff, turned that group into a political organization with the title ‘The Union of Russian Workers’. A Russian printing font was even ordered from America, and Artem launched a Russian newspaper which endured under

¹⁰¹ The original is Petr Simonov, ‘Tri s polovinoi goda sovetskogo diplomaticheskogo predstavitel’sstva’, *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, November 1922, No. 15 (133), pp. 61–66.

¹⁰² As noted above, Simonoff’s chronology is incorrect. The Group came into existence only later, in response to his appointment.

various names (it was closed down several times) until November 1917. It was terminated when I was editor, when I was accused by the military authorities, having been denounced by Abaza, of espionage on behalf of Germany, because of my propaganda in the paper against the imperialist war and for the Bolsheviks. I was able to extricate myself from the clutches of the military authorities, at least until the next time.

That was just before the October Revolution, and our newspaper was closed down almost on the very day of the Revolution.¹⁰³ During the first days of that revolution the local bourgeoisie and the authorities did not know what position they should adopt vis-à-vis the Revolution, and we Russians were therefore left to our own devices. A furious struggle broke out among us. There were stormy meetings for days and even nights on end, sometimes turning into fist-fights. At the beginning of the February Revolution, a majority of members of the Union, which by this time had branches in all the major cities of the country, had taken the side of the Provisional Government and even sent a telegram of congratulations to 'dear socialist comrade Kerenskii'.¹⁰⁴ However, the branch of which I was chairman (Broken Hill) rebelled against the centre and the majority, and sent its own telegram, wishing the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies complete victory.¹⁰⁵

I was soon summoned to the centre, to Brisbane, and elected secretary [of the URW — *trans.*] and editor of our newspaper.

By this time the Bolshevik slogans 'All Power to the Soviets' and 'Down with the Imperialist War' had reached us, and for disseminating and expounding these I was accused of being a German spy and the paper was closed down. All the 'dear comrades of dear comrade Kerenskii' protested against these slogans, in open alliance with the gang led by the tsarist *agent provocateur* Mendrin, the consul Abaza and the Harbin munitions merchant Popoff.¹⁰⁶ All these brethren did their best to push us out of the Union and

¹⁰³ The last issue of *Rabochaia zhizn'*, No. 92, appeared on 5 December 1917.

¹⁰⁴ The censor's copy of the cable, sent by Peter Utkin, does not include the words 'dear socialist comrade', and its main purpose was to press for the recall of Abaza. Melbourne, NAA, MP95/1 W/E 31/3/1917, Russian Association to Kerenskii, 23 March 1917, Q1652.

¹⁰⁵ Searches of intercepted cable traffic held in NAA have not so far located this message, but a brief dispatch by A. Simens [Simonoff] in *Rabochaia zhizn'*, No. 59, 18 April 1917, reports a decision by the Russian workers of Broken Hill to send a congratulatory telegram to Nikolai Chkhaidze, Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.

¹⁰⁶ Anatolii Mendrin: an ally of Abaza and enemy of the URW. He operated an import-export business and assisted the authorities in the drive to close down the radical Russian press. In Federal Parliament in November 1918, Considine, who may have received detailed information from Simonoff, asked the Acting Prime Minister whether Mendrin had served the Okhrana and later been used by the Commonwealth Police. *Commonwealth of Australia. Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 87, 1918, p. 9438–39. Mendrin is fictionalized as 'Menschkin' in Tom Keneally's novel about Sergeeff, *The People's Train*, Sydney, 2009. See also Kevin Windle, 'Artem Sergeev Translated: The Image of a Russian Revolutionary

take control over it. The difference in our positions led to fierce arguments at meetings of the colony [i.e. the Russian community — *trans.*] and wider public meetings, often resulting in fisticuffs.

One such meeting took place on 29 January. It adjourned because of the lateness of the hour and was to be resumed on 30 January. That was why the ‘Group-ites’, the bloc which had formed in opposition to the Union, presumed that the announcement of my appointment as consul came from me personally and was intended to lend me prestige and weight against them, that is, that it was a provocative move on my part. But when they sought confirmation in the editorial offices of the newspapers they were disappointed to be told that the unexpected news did not come from me — it really was an agency telegram.

For this reason all the opponents of the Union shifted the whole dispute to a new level. They declared me unfit to hold such a high office. The Socialist Revolutionaries shouted loudest. They now claimed to be ‘worthier’ supporters of Soviet rule than the Union, which I headed, and which they now termed ‘Simonoff’s Red Guard’. Of course, their claims had no foundation, as they were acting in concert with tsarist *agents provocateurs* and the tsarist Consul and confidence trickster.

Almost every day meetings were called of all Russian citizens to protest against Simonoff’s appointment as consul. However, all the meetings unflinchingly voted by an overwhelming majority to fully endorse and warmly welcome my appointment. Resolutions to this effect flowed in from every corner of Australia.

At the same time reporters flocked to me from all sides seeking interviews. I told them that I knew nothing at all about my being appointed consul, as I had heard nothing directly from Petrograd. Only two or three weeks later did I finally receive confirmation of my appointment from Comrade Litvinoff in London.

Abaza, on the other hand, had evidently received a direct order to hand over the post of consul to me. He therefore made haste to wind up all business, sold all his own property and that of the consulate, and secreted the archives somewhere.¹⁰⁷ Only then did he announce that he had received an order from Petrograd, while at the same time stating that he would not comply with it, that he was closing the consulate and offering his services to the Australian or British government. Then he departed.

in Tom Keneally’s *People’s Train*, *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 45, 2011, pp. 29–43 (pp. 40–41). Popoff brothers: business associates of Mendrin.

¹⁰⁷ The archives have never been found. Thomas Poole, personal communication. Iu. D. Aksenov, A. Ia. Massov, ‘O sud’be arkhiva general’nogo konsul’stva Rossiiskoi imperii v Mel’burne’, *Rossiiia v global’nom mire*, 11, 2006, pp. 236–40. Yuri Aksenov and Alexander Massov, ‘The Establishment of Consular Relations, 1857–1918’, in Massov et al. (eds), *Encounters*, pp. 76–95 (pp. 93–95).

Thus it happened that, after heated arguments in Brisbane, I left for Melbourne, the federal capital, and opened a new Russian consulate there. With the exception of the *Sydney Sun*, which is linked with Lord Northcliffe's enterprises, all the newspapers treated my appointment either with interest, as something sensational — 'Miner Replaces Prince with Rank of General'¹⁰⁸ — or very favourably, not even mentioning that I was a member of the banned Industrial Workers of the World.

II

My first task as consul was the passport question. After the departure of the last ship carrying political emigrants, in early November [1917], Abaza had stopped issuing passports to all whom he personally described as 'politically unreliable', that is, to all supporters of Soviet power. I myself was supposed to sail on that ship but did not, because Abaza, who was in charge of dispatching emigrants, had deprived me not only of the right to free passage, which was granted to me by the dispatch committee, but of the right to leave Australia for Russia at all, as I was an 'anarchist element not needed in Russia'. This applied to all members of our Union, which had now adopted the title 'the Union of Russian Communist Workers'. When Abaza closed the consulate, the issuing of passports ceased completely,¹⁰⁹ but at that time almost everybody wanted to leave, with the exception of the clique which was struggling against the Union, the Kerenskii clique, with the tsarists and Mendrin's gang.

This meant that letters and telegrams came flooding to me from every hand, asking for passports. Of course, any passports of mine would have no validity without official recognition from the federal government of Australia, as it was impossible to leave Australia with such a passport. That was the main reason for my appeal to the federal Prime Minister, or rather to his deputy [William] Watt, as the Prime Minister himself, [William Morris] Hughes, was in England at that time. Watt received me (unofficially) most kindly and we conversed for three quarters of an hour. He explained to me that, since Australia did not have its own ministry of foreign affairs, the question of my recognition or non-recognition could be decided only by the imperial Foreign Office in London, and he therefore promised to telegraph London. In my presence he dictated a telegram to his secretary and ordered that it be sent at once.

That meeting was arranged by the Labor Member of Parliament Considine, with whom I had worked in the mines and who was elected to Parliament

¹⁰⁸ Original headline untraced, here translated from Simonoff's Russian.

¹⁰⁹ According to Aksenov and Massov, in December 1917, 'the Australian authorities immediately refused to recognize the passports issued by the Russian Consul-General.' Aksenov and Massov, 'The Establishment of Consular Relations', p. 92.

at the same time as I was elected secretary of the Union and editor of its newspaper. About a month before that, Brookfield was elected to the New South Wales State Parliament from the same mines (Broken Hill), and the three of us became known as the 'Broken Hill Three'.

Whether Watt's telegram was sent to London or not I do not know, but in any case I received no reply. Later I saw Hughes himself about this matter. After a prolonged correspondence, I finally persuaded the federal government to issue permits, instead of passports, to allow Russians to leave Australia for Japan, and I obtained the Japanese consul's agreement to allow them to enter Japan in transit to Vladivostok.

However, after a while a campaign was launched against me in the bourgeois press. When Comrade Litvinoff was arrested in London, I was in Brisbane, and sympathizers in the military headquarters informed me that a warrant had been signed for my arrest. However, I was not arrested, but the bourgeois press stepped up its attacks on me more and more, asserting that I claimed to be a diplomatic representative only to assist my Bolshevik propaganda work, that my links with workers' organizations, my lectures and articles, supposedly to explain the Russian Revolution, were 'scandalous criminal propaganda against the war, against the British and Australian governments and against the existing order in the empire', and that such propaganda was impermissible and would be even more impermissible if I were really consul.

Finally a special decree was published under the War Precautions Act, stating that the military authorities had the right to prohibit completely any participation by any alien in public life. On the basis of that decree the military authorities presented me with a writ forbidding me to engage in any public activity. At the same time, printing shops and the periodical press were also banned from publishing anything that I wrote. Thus my book *What is Russia?* was blocked by the censor and only published later.¹¹⁰

I sent a protest to the [Acting] Prime Minister (Watt), pointing out that there was no basis in law for placing such restrictions on me as a diplomatic representative, that I therefore had no intention of complying, and that the only thing that his government could do was demand that I leave the country and force me to leave if I refused.¹¹¹

Pursuing the logic of my statement, I continued my work without any changes, and gave nine lectures in a short space of time, in various centres. Just before the tenth I was finally arrested in Melbourne on 3 November 1918 and conveyed to Sydney for trial. This meant that I spent the first anniversary of the Revolution as a guest of His Britannic Majesty.

¹¹⁰ It appeared in August 1919: Peter Simonoff, *What is Russia?*, Sydney [no date].

¹¹¹ See NAA, A981, SOV 42 Part 1, Simonoff to Acting PM, 1 October 1918.

III

In Sydney I was released pending trial on bail of £1,000 sterling, paid by Comrade Brookfield, of course, not from his own funds, but from what he had managed to raise. The case dragged on for about five months. First I was sentenced to a year of hard labour, then that sentence was halved. The case ran for so long because I was constantly exchanging letters with the Prime Minister, insisting that since I was a diplomatic representative they had no legal right to arrest or try me.¹¹² He of course denied that I had any right to diplomatic immunity as I was not officially recognized. Nonetheless he devised a way for me to evade punishment. He suggested that I write to request a suspension of sentence until I left Australia, without giving any date of departure. That would allow me to stay in Australia, and free of punishment for an indefinite period while waiting to leave. I categorically refused freedom on those terms, as it would have been tantamount to recognition of the legality of the court. I demanded unconditional release, as one not subject to Australian jurisdiction. Hard labour was commuted to a fine (the choice being mine), and some Labor Members of Parliament (mainly Brookfield, of course) wanted to pay it for me, but I again categorically refused to allow any payment. Without my agreement they could not pay, as I would have had to sign the relevant documents, which I categorically refused to do, and was therefore consigned to prison. Workers' organizations speedily arranged protests and the Union held a demonstration, while Brookfield and Considine persistently lobbied the government. At the end of the fourth month I was released by a special order from the Prime Minister. Some time later I again opened a consulate, this time in Sydney, and also began publishing an official information periodical called *Soviet Russia*.

While I was in prison, the existence was uncovered of secret revolutionary circles, called by the bourgeois and Menshevik press 'an organization of the black hand under the leadership of a Russian expert'. For this reason, I had no sooner been released from prison than a new campaign against me began. The Sydney *Sun* demanded that the government investigate the sources of funding to maintain my consulate and the funding of the journal, which in their words undoubtedly required immense reserves of cash.

At that time, a Communist party appeared as if out of nowhere, with three publications, a better hall for mass meetings and another for meetings of the party, the editorial board, the central committee, and other needs in Sydney, and with branches in all the major centres. The funding and organization of this party was also attributed to me, and the canard was put about that I had received £75,000 from Russia for propaganda purposes. The bourgeois press raised the cry that I was linked to an individual who turned out to be

¹¹² For Simonoff's letters, see note 87.

a German spy, and the *Sun* published an article with the title 'The Adroit Manoeuvring of a German Spy'.¹¹³

But from early 1921 even the bourgeoisie apparently ceased to attach any importance to the press campaign against me, and many business people sought out my consulate and came to me with all kinds of business propositions. I reported this regularly to Comrades Martens, Ström and Krasin.¹¹⁴ Regular contact was also established with the government, although all correspondence was addressed to me personally, and not officially to me as Consul. This applied not only to the replies I received to my enquiries concerning the departure of Russians to Russia, but also to communications from the government itself on various matters concerning Russians. Even identity papers issued by me were accepted.

Finally in September 1921 I left Australia, and my last contact with the Australian authorities was a search lasting one hour and five minutes at the port by six army personnel. From the nature of the search and their scrutiny of my documents, I realized that they wanted to find evidence for the charge that the Soviet government was funding and controlling the Communist Party of Australia through me, but since I could have nothing of that kind in my possession they found nothing.

Having spent the entire three and a half years of my consulship under constant police surveillance (I was first put under surveillance at the very beginning of the war for my active propaganda against the imperialist war), I was very surprised when I passed through Italy and Central Europe, where, instead of being hounded, I was treated as one in a position of privilege, protected by my diplomatic passport, issued by Comrade Vorovskii in Rome.¹¹⁵

Incidentally, the Italian consul in Australia was extremely kind to me and only with his help was I able to leave Australia, as he alone would give me permission (a visa) to enter Italy when no other country would allow me to land

¹¹³ Original headline untraced, here translated from Simonoff's Russian. Some sections of the press claimed that Simonoff had visited Ronald Gordon Graham, said to be a 'notorious spy' and alleged to have passed material to the German government. See 'A Spy's Plot', *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, 15 November 1919, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ Ludwig Martens (1875–1948): Soviet representative in New York from 1919 to 1921, when he was deported. He and Simonoff corresponded, and Martens urged the NKID to take more action in support of the consul in Australia (Rudnitskii, 'Sud 'ba', p. 19). Fredrick Ström (1880–1948): Swedish socialist; in charge of Comintern liaison with Western Europe from 1919 to 1920, frequent visitor to the Soviet Union, author of a history of the Russian revolution. Leonid Krasin (1870–1926): People's Commissar of Foreign Trade and plenipotentiary and trade representative in Great Britain from 1920 to 1923, signed the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement in March 1921.

¹¹⁵ Vatslav Vorovskii (Wacław Worowski, 1875–1923): Soviet diplomat and official of the ECCI, of Polish extraction; Soviet representative in Italy 1921–23; assassinated in Lausanne in March 1923.

on its territory.¹¹⁶ During my journey across Europe, I was especially struck by the kindness of the Germans and their readiness to assist all Russians, and me in particular. This contrasted unexpectedly with the attitude to Russians of the so-called 'allies'.

¹¹⁶ The Italian Consul-General in 1921 was Commendatore Antonio Nobile Grossardi.