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Fedor Sergeev (Tom Sergaeff, 'Artem', 1883–1921) has several claims to fame in both Russia and Australia. His varied career, his wide-ranging travels, his loyalty to the Bolshevik cause and his early accidental death made him a safe subject, and a popular one, for Soviet biographers, historians and novelists. He was a natural choice for the series entitled 'Lives of Remarkable People', to which Boris Mogilevskii contributed a substantial volume.[1] From the 1920s to the end of the Soviet period, other biographies and popular histories issued from the pens of writers such as V. Prokof´ev, I. N. Moshinskii , R. F. Polonskii and P. Zahors´kyy,[2] while historians assembled collections of his writings.[3] The following accolade by the Ukrainian scholar P. Zahors´kyy is not untypical:

> Fedor Andreevich Sergeev's (Artem's) life and revolutionary activity are a splendid model of boundless devotion to his Soviet Fatherland and the great ideas of the Communist Party. In the person of Artem the Party had an outstanding professional revolutionary, a true Marxist-Leninist, an

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The author wishes to record his gratitude to Dr Elena Govor for sharing her wide knowledge of the period and the personalities involved, and to Dr Marian Hill and *SEER*'s anonymous readers for their valuable comments on an earlier draft.

[1] Boris Mogilevskii, *Artem (Fedor Sergeev)*, Moscow, 1960.

[2] Boris Mogilevskii and Vadim Prokof´ev, *Nash Artem*, Moscow, 1980; N. Moshinskii (Iuz. Konarskii), *Artem: Biografiia Fedora Andreevicha Sergeeva*, Moscow, 1928; R. F. Polonskii, *Tol´ko by khvatila zhizni ... Povest´ ob Arteme*, Moscow, 1981; P. Zahors´kyy, *Revoliutsiyna diyal´nist´ Artema*, Kiev, 1957.

[3] For example, Artem (Sergeev, F. A.), *Stat´i, rechi, pis´ma*, Moscow, 1983; V. I. Astakhova et al. (eds), *Tovarishch Artem: Vospominaniia o Fedore Andreeviche Sergeeve (Arteme)*, Khar´kov, 1982.

> able organizer of the toiling masses, a gifted propagandist and agitator. The establishment of Soviet rule in Ukraine is indissolubly linked with the name of Artem. He was no mean orator and polemicist. In stormy public debates with Mensheviks and SRs and other enemies of the toilers he unfailingly prevailed and won the sympathies, trust and love of the workers.[4]

In a similar vein, the publisher's summary of Polonskii's novel *Tol´ko by khvatila zhizni* (As Long as There's Life in Us) spared few Soviet superlatives in characterizing the hero:

> A human legend, the pride and joy of the workers of Khar´kov and the Donbass, a highly popular leader of the Bolsheviks and toilers of Ukraine — such was Artem. […] He led strikes in 1905; as an emigrant he became one of the organizers of the workers' movement in Australia. Artem was a direct participant in the October Revolution, one of the leaders of the revolutionary movement in Ukraine, organizer and hero of the Red Army in the Civil War years, prominent figure in the world trade union movement, pupil and comrade-in-arms of Lenin.[5]

Sergeev was indeed on close terms with Lenin and an early member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP), and the fact that his orphaned son Artem Fedorovich Sergeev (1921–2008), the future major-general, was adopted by Stalin and grew up in his family suggests another close friendship. In twenty-first-century Australia, his memory has been revived in historical fiction by one of the country's most esteemed novelists.[6] In his Australian period (1911–17), at a time when the Russian immigrant population was very small, he was responsible for drawing it together in a body, the Union of Russian Emigrants (URE), and lending it a certain political weight, at first barely appreciable but sufficient to prove troublesome to state and federal governments after the October Revolution. Summarizing the aims of the organization, Sergeev wrote that it should 'educate and organize the masses in a spirit of the ideas of the international workers' movement'.[7] Further, it would provide 'a means of

[4] Zahors´kyy, *Revoliutsiyna diyal´nist´ Artema*, pp. 94–95.

[5] Polonskii, *Tol´ko by khvatila zhizni*, p. 223.

[6] Tom Keneally, *The People's Train*, Sydney, 2009. See also, Kevin Windle, 'Artem Sergeev Translated: The Image of a Russian Revolutionary in Tom Keneally's *People's Train*', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 45, 2011, pp. 29–43.

[7] 'Ot pravleniia S.R.E.', *Ekho Avstralii*, No. 5, 25 July 1912, p. 2. Further references to this newspaper will be given in the text.

unification', establish a mutual aid fund and create 'conditions in which the Russian workers in Australia could consciously relate to the world around them and find support when they needed it'.

As part of that endeavour, Sergeev would found a weekly Russian newspaper and launch a tradition of radical journalism which endured in one form or another for seven years. *Ekho Avstralii* (Echo of Australia, hereafter, *Ekho*) ran for only three months (twelve issues, June–September) in 1912, but that was enough for it to mark an important milestone in the history of Russian settlement and make a significant contribution to the development of the community. Today it is largely forgotten and copies are extremely scarce,[8] but it served as an essential source for a pioneering work by Aleksandr Savchenko, who devoted several pages to it in a study of the early émigré community.[9] Savchenko followed the then-obligatory Marxist-Leninist historical line, to show us a Bolshevik stalwart bringing Leninist thought and tactics to Australia. In the Soviet era, other students of Sergeev's legacy mined Australia's Russian newspapers, *Ekho* first among them, citing his editorials with the aim of portraying a true Marxist doing his best to Bolshevize Australia's toiling masses.[10] The present brief survey will not rehearse Sergeev's biography, which has been amply covered by the writers mentioned above. Nor will it question his role in the immigrant community of the day. Rather, it seeks to bring out other aspects of the first Russian weekly in Australia by reviewing its contents and drawing attention to some activists and journalists who in previous investigations of the field have dwelt in his shadow, or attracted little notice, though not undeserving of it.

The potential audience for Sergeev's newspaper would not be large. Estimates vary, and the margin of error is inevitably broad, but we owe to the last Imperial Russian Consul-General in Australia, Aleksandr Abaza, a well-informed attempt to calculate the number of Russians in Australia in the months preceding the outbreak of war. In a letter to the Foreign Ministry in St Petersburg in June 1914, Abaza set out in some detail the

[8] The State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia holds ten of the twelve issues. The author is very grateful to the Museum for kindly allowing access.

[9] Aleksandr Savchenko, 'V. I. Lenin, Bol′sheviki i rossiiskaia revoliutsionnaia emigratsiia', unpublished dissertation for Candidate of Historical Sciences, University of Dnepropetrovsk, 1987. See also, Aleksandr Savchenko, 'Pervye russkie gazety v Avstralii', *Avstraliada*, no. 15, 1998, pp. 12–13.

[10] A. M. Chernenko, *Rossiiskaia revoliutsionnaia emigratsiia v Avstralii (1900–1917 gg.)*, Dnepropetrovsk, 1978; K. V. Malakhovskii, 'Uchastie russkikh revoliutsionerov v rabochem dvizhenii Avstralii', in V. P. Kudinov (ed.), *Idei sotsializma i rabochee dvizhenie v Avstralii*, Moscow, 1981, pp. 67–85.

case for increased staffing in his overworked Melbourne consulate.[11] A rapid growth in the number of Russian nationals provided the basis for his argument. While stressing that his figures could only be approximate, he arrived at a total of some 12,000 in Australia and New Zealand, of whom one thousand were in New Zealand. Confining himself to the 11,000 in Australia, he provided a breakdown of their distribution by state and a further breakdown to show the centres of population where they were concentrated. The great majority of Russians, he stated, were in the state of Queensland: 5,000, of whom 3,000 were in the state capital, Brisbane.[12] Abaza added that he might have erred on the side of caution, as it was very difficult to obtain accurate figures: some immigrants might not be recorded as Russian if they had arrived via a third country; some had 'illegally' taken Australian (British) citizenship; and children born in Australia to Russian parents were not usually registered with the Russian authorities. There remained the complex matter of ethnic origin, which Abaza could not explore in detail. There is no doubt, however, that among the immigrants from the Russian Empire were many who preferred to describe themselves in other terms: Polish, Ukrainian, Latvian or Lithuanian, for example. Among these, Abaza noted a preponderance of Jews and Poles, but added that 'in broad terms' the 'dominant proportion' of the 11,000 were 'native Russians, mostly from Siberia'.

Social and political developments in the Russian Empire in the early years of the twentieth century had precipitated much eastward migration within the country, and the numbers seeking a new home far from Russia had risen dramatically. Australia proved to be the recipient of greatly increased numbers in the years 1905–14. Peasant farmers had been encouraged to move from their original homes in southern Russia to the sparsely populated lands of eastern Siberia and the Maritime Provinces (Primor′e), where not all had settled easily. Many had been drawn to Manchuria by the construction of the Russian-operated Chinese Eastern Railway, which ran from Chita through Harbin to Ussuriisk and Vladivostok, but here long-term employment could not be guaranteed.

[11] Letter dated 13 June 1914, in Alexander Massov, Marina Pollard and Kevin Windle (eds), *A New Rival State: Australia in Tsarist Diplomatic Communications*, Canberra, 2018, pp. 313–20.

[12] Estimates from three or four years later yielded smaller totals. After rising sharply in the pre-war years, the numbers fluctuated and declined during the war and following the events of 1917, when many emigrants returned to Russia. See G. Kanevskaia, 'Pervye russkie v Avstralii: Rossiiane v Avstralii do nachala 20-kh gg. XX veka' <http://ricolor.org/rz/avstralia/2/5/> [no date; accessed 1 November 2022].

In addition, political activists sentenced to internal exile following the upheavals of 1905 often left their designated Siberian places of exile and travelled further east, seeking refuge beyond Russia's borders. In Chinese or Japanese ports, considerable numbers boarded ships sailing southward and disembarked at the first Australian port, Brisbane, where their ranks were swelled by others arriving from Europe. The first issue of *Izvestiia Soiuza russkikh emigrantov* (News of the Union of Russian Emigrants), the second of Sergeev's Brisbane newspapers, spoke of dozens arriving on every steamer.[13] Lax passport controls at this period eased their passage. The files of the Queensland Police for June 1913 tell of large groups of Russians being accommodated in Brisbane's Immigration Depot, and discussion arose concerning the fact that some among them could not show the 'necessary papers'.[14]

It is clear that, from the Australian point of view, clusters of militant immigrants were in every sense a foreign body in the Anglophone socio-political fabric. The concerns of the authorities on this score are clearly apparent in police correspondence from that time: Detective Sergeant P. O'Hara wrote to his superiors on 4 June 1914 to say that there was 'little doubt that amongst the Russians here are many desperate criminals, principally escapees from Siberia'.[15] The Queensland Collector of Customs, W. H. Barkley, wrote of Russian immigrants arriving in Queensland 'from the East' to the Commissioner of Police in May 1913, observing in parenthesis that '75% of [them] are said to be of the criminal class'.[16] The source of that intelligence is not stated, but since the Customs Office had been in communication with Abaza, it is at least possible that the Russian Consul-General provided it. Abaza, in his letter to the Foreign Ministry, had made plain his anxiety about 'felons, political criminals and people of extreme socialist views who have fled Russia'.[17] Insufficient consular staff, he argued, made it very difficult to combat their influence

[13] P. Grei, *Izvestiia Soiuza russkikh emigrantov,* 29 November 1913, p. 1; Kevin Windle, *Undesirable: Captain Zuzenko and the Workers of Australia and the World*, Melbourne, 2012, p. 15.

[14] Brisbane, Queensland State Archives (QSA): ID A/45328 ID 318868, June 1913, Correspondence, Police, Russians.

[15] Brisbane, QSA, A/45329 ID3178879, 4 June 1914, Queensland Police, Criminal Investigation Branch, Russians.

[16] Brisbane, QSA, A/45328 ID 318868, 30 May 1913, Correspondence, Police, Russians. See also Windle, *Undesirable*, p. 16.

[17] Massov et al., *A New Rival State*, p. 316. See also, Kevin Windle, 'Australia's Early Russian-Language Press (1912–1919)', in Catherine Dewhirst and Richard Scully (eds), *The Transnational Voices of Australia's Migrant and Minority Press*, Basingstoke, 2020, pp. 61–79 (pp. 61–62).

on their peaceably-minded compatriots. One of the 'political criminal' class, Aleksandr Zuzenko, would later give an account to the Communist International of that community's activities in the period of World War One and its immediate aftermath, activities to which he himself had contributed much as an agitator and journalist.[18] However, there is no doubt that Queensland's small body of determined Russian activists was making its mark as early as 1912. In that year, the concentration of revolutionary socialists in Brisbane prompts a character in Keneally's *People's Train* to describe the city as 'the Zurich of the Southern Hemisphere'.[19]

Russian historians working in Soviet Russia produced studies of the community of Russians in Australia in the early twentieth century, stressing their Marxist militancy and determination to enlighten the backward 'English' workers and lead them into the socialist future.[20] A more balanced picture, and a fair assessment of the radicals, including Sergeev, may be found in the work of historians not subject to Soviet ideological control, such as Elena Govor, Galina Kanevskaia, Aleksandr Massov, Alla Petrikovskaia, A. Rudnitskii and Natal´ia Skorobogatykh.[21] In Australia, seminal work by Raymond Evans, Eric Fried and Thomas Poole, among others, on the events of 1918–19 in Brisbane, laid the ground for further exploration of the role of the Russian element in troubled times, as shown in Australian source material.[22]

[18] Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial´no-Politicheskoi Istorii (hereafter, RGASPI), f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Zuzenko A. M. Tret´emu Kommunisticheskomu Internatsionalu, 30 April 1920, in English in David Lovell and Kevin Windle (eds), *Our Unswerving Loyalty: A Documentary Survey of Relations between the Communist Party of Australia and Moscow 1920–1940*, Canberra, 2008 <http://epress.anu.edu.au/oul_citation.html> [accessed 4 June 2022], p. 66.

[19] Keneally, *The People's Train*, p. 22.

[20] For example, Chernenko, *Rossiiskaia revoliutsionnaia emigratsiia*; Malakhovskii, 'Uchastie russkikh revoliutsionerov …'.

[21] See, for example, Elena Govor, *Australia in the Russian Mirror: Changing Perceptions, 1770–1919*, Melbourne, 1997; idem, *My Dark Brother: The Story of the Illins, a Russian-Aboriginal Family*, Sydney, 2000; G. Kanevskaia, 'Pervye russkie v Avstralii'; idem, 'Istoriia russkoi immigratsii v Avstralii (konets XIXv. – vtoraia polovina 80-kh gg. XXv.)', unpublished PhD thesis, Far Eastern State University, Vladivostok, 2008; Aleksandr Massov, 'Introduction', to Massov at al., *A New Rival State*, pp. 1–21; A. I. Petrikovskaia, *Rossiiskoe ekho v kul´ture Avstralii*, Moscow, 2002; Iurii Artemov [A. Rudnitskii], *Russkaia revoliutsiia v Avstralii i seti shpionazha*, St Petersburg, 2017; N. S. Skorobogatykh, 'Avstraliiskie kommunisty i Komintern v 1930-ykh godakh', *Iugo-Vostochnaia Aziia: aktual´nye problemy razvitiia*, vol. 14, Moscow, 2010, pp. 295–311.

[22] See, for example, Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance*, St Lucia, 1988; idem, 'Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation', in John McNair and Thomas Poole (eds), *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian-Australian Relations*, St Lucia, 1992, pp. 126–71; Eric Fried, 'Russians in Queensland (1886–1925)', unpublished BA

Few would dispute that Sergeev, himself a political exile, who arrived in Queensland from Siberia via Shanghai in mid 1911, was the moving spirit who strove to give the small community of Russians a sense of communal identity and common purpose. Declaring himself unable to abide the 'spectacle of unorganized masses',[23] he promptly set to work to bring unity and cohesion where these were conspicuously lacking, with mixed results. A newspaper was central to that effort, and it is fair to say that, had it not been for Sergeev's energy and determination, there might have been no Russian newspaper in Brisbane or anywhere else in Australia. Not only was he the source of the initiative to launch such a paper; in the early issues, at least, he was the principal author of the material which appeared in its pages. Soon after the publication of the first issue, on 3 July 1912, he wrote in a letter that he was the only person working on it. The work was, he said, 'murderously difficult' (*ubiistvenno tiazhelo*).[24] (Later he would have some limited assistance.)

He did not, however, neglect the role played by his printer, Iosif Mirgorodskii, whom he described as 'a martyr to his career, working day and night' (No. 6, 1 August 1912, p. 2). Occasionally Mirgorodskii felt moved or provoked to publish forthright statements of his own position and stress the need for commercial viability: 'Nobody works for nothing'; 'I am making no profit but earning a great deal of unpleasantness and misunderstandings' ('Khronika', No. 6, 1 August 1912, p. 3). He also made clear that he played no role in the editorial processes or the selection of material.

The weekly *Ekho* was a slim journal, usually consisting of only four pages. The cost of publication was partly defrayed by advertisements for local businesses. Most issues carried prominent advertisements in Russian for a local tailor and a jeweller, pointing out that a Russian interpreter was on hand to assist their customers, and providers of English lessons also announced their services. Since the front page was always occupied by a large advertisement, this did much to define the appearance of the paper. The advertisement was surmounted by an attractive masthead: the title 'Ekho Avstralii' was set in stylized lettering against a hand-drawn map, showing Australia in the central foreground, framed by tropical shores with palm trees, a lighthouse and a steamship at sea.

Honours dissertation, University of Queensland, 1980; Tom Poole and Eric Fried, 'Artem: A Bolshevik in Brisbane', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 31, 2, 1985, pp. 243–54.

[23] Letter dated 6 January 1912, in Artem, *Stat´i, rechi, pis´ma*, p. 97.

[24] Letter dated 3 July 1912, in ibid., p. 110.

Ekho was hardly a mass-circulation newspaper: the print run for the first issues was 300,[25] and there is no indication of any substantial increase later. Sergeev calculated rightly that the numbers receptive to his general line would remain a small proportion of the total immigrant body. He was aware of hostility from the better-educated classes, who would not be among his readers. In letters he spoke ironically of the 'local intellectuals' who turned the other way and considered *Ekho* 'too red'.[26]

Having few if any staff or contributors beyond the editor, the paper would rely heavily for copy on its readers, who were invited to become in effect its freelance volunteer reporters. This usually meant that they provided a picture of the situation of the worker, primarily the Russian immigrant worker, in various far-flung regions of the continent. The editor wrote in No. 1:

> The experience of people working in different places varies. It would be desirable to have everyone share his experience to the best of his ability. […] Assume that the editor is your close friend. You are writing to him about your life, your misfortunes, your hopes etc. The editor will be able to process it all for the paper. (No. 1, 27 June 1912, p. 1)

This makes for a very different kind of newspaper from the metropolitan Anglophone journals. In their early study of the foreign-language press in Australia, Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki captured this distinction well:

> A spirit of intimacy exists between the editors and the readers in immigrant newspapers which may be contrasted with the essentially impersonal manner in which a large national or metropolitan newspaper conducts its business.[27]

Given the difficulties, it is not surprising that the technical standard of the 'processing' and production was not high. There could be no provision for verification of factual matters, let alone for sub-editing or proofreading. Misprints are frequent, spelling is erratic, aberrant grammar sometimes compromises intelligibility, and errors occur in the dating of issues. Some

[25] B. S. Elepov and S. A. Paichadze, *Geopoliticheskii kharakter rasprostraneniia russkoi knigi: k postanovke voprosa*, Novosibirsk, 2001, p. 56.

[26] Letter dated 22 July 1912, in Artem, *Stat´i, rechi, pis´ma*, p. 111.

[27] Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki, *The Foreign-Language Press in Australia*, Canberra, 1967, p. 157.

Russian names are spelt inconsistently, and where words, names or phrases are transcribed or translated from English, or cited in English (whether in Latin or Cyrillic script), some degree of corruption is to be expected.

The cultural gulf between the new immigrants and the English-speakers around them was so wide as to seem unbridgeable, largely because few Russians had more than a limited command of English and little opportunity to study it, while few Australians had any familiarity with Russian. On this question Vasilii Pikunov (Tom Pikunoff) wrote in No. 9:

> the worst thing is that we do not know the language (English), and so even if we find a job we slave for all we are worth for fear of being laid off. If we find ourselves jobless in Russia, at least we know how to ask for a job and can orient ourselves in the situation. We are not living among people, but merely alongside them, […] for the sole reason that we do not know their language. ('Koe-chto, o nashem polozhenii v Avstralii', No. 9, 23 August 1912, p. 2)

The new nation saw itself as basically monocultural; governments did little to promote the assimilation of immigrants of non-English background, and the demographics of the time allowed their social integration to remain a matter of low priority. Newcomers with the initiative, leisure and energy to study could peruse primers of English and increase their knowledge by reading and conversation. The journalists among the immigrants — Sergeev, Petr Simonov (Peter Simonoff) and Aleksandr Zuzenko, for example — developed communicative competence in English and the ability to read fluently, but would continue to need assistance when writing. Many others did not progress beyond the rudiments — a deficiency acutely felt and frequently lamented by writers in *Ekho*: 'Pristanskii' ('wharf-worker') wrote, 'If only we knew English better we could organize the young', meaning young Australian workers, judged by some Russians to be lacking in political awareness (untitled, No. 6, 1 August 1912, p. 4).

The task of organizing the workers, young and old, Russian and Australian, and imbuing the correct spirit in them, was one of Sergeev's highest priorities, and the Russian newspaper would be a powerful instrument. Unlike some Russian émigré publications in other parts of the world, *Ekho* was never intended to find an audience in the home country or provide a platform from which to agitate on the home front. Its readership would be in Australia and perhaps New Zealand, and comprise expatriates who were making their home there and in need of moral support. Sergeev

set forth his vision for *Ekho* in the first leading article, while clearly staking out his position:

> As we launch this newspaper, we give no assurances of our impartiality. We have nobody to deceive. We state at the outset that our task is to explain and uphold the interests of the Russian-speaking worker in Australia. Our newspaper has been launched at the initiative of the workers; the Brisbane Russian workers' club has taken the paper under its control; the workers of Queensland have provided the funds and their labour to found and run it. And it would make no sense for us ourselves to be silent about what we need to know, and loudly proclaim what is useless to us; or even worse, if we were to become spokesmen for the enemies of the working class. They have many hired hacks. They have no need of our services. (Untitled editorial, No. 1, 27 June 1912, p. 1)

That declaration would define the content and direction to be followed. If any doubts remained about these, a pithy statement in an editorial (No. 4, 18 July 1912, p. 2) would suffice to dismiss them. Drawing a parallel between the use of troops against the Lena goldfield workers and calls by some for military support against Brisbane's strikers in February 1912, the writer asserts that, whether in the taiga or in 'Free Australia', 'capital is equally athirst for the worker's blood'. One imagines that he would not have been unhappy with P. Zahors´kyy's ideological picture of Australia and his work there, written forty-five years later: 'Artem pitilessly exposes the true essence of Australian democracy and reveals the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie, who proclaimed democracy on every street corner while oppressing the workers.'[28]

Surveying the history of Australia's 'minority' press, Catherine Dewhirst and Richard Scully discern a thematic distinction separating two categories of foreign-language newspaper, or two 'voices'. The first they term 'defiant voices', exemplifying 'resistance against some form of pressure, which may be defined as cultural, social, or political'; the second is 'narrating voices', which encompass 'discourses of conflicting ideologies', literary feuilletons, life stories and the like. While elements of the latter may be found in *Ekho* and its successors, the bulk of their contents places them squarely among the 'defiant'.[29]

[28] Zahors´kyy, *Revoliutsiyna diyal´nist´ Artema*, p. 46.

[29] Catherine Dewhirst and Richard Scully, 'Australia's Minority Community Printed Press History in Global Context: An Introduction', in Catherine Dewhirst and Richard Scully (eds), *The Transnational Voices of Australia's Migrant and Minority Press*,

Although Sergeev was a Bolshevik of long standing, and despite his acknowledgement that *Ekho* was 'too red' for some in the community, the word 'Bolshevik' rarely occurs in his writing for it or his subsequent Brisbane newspapers. He appears to have been genuine in his stated aim of giving a voice to all struggling immigrants, as long as they were not minded to lend their sympathies to the class enemy. Their over-riding concerns in a new country were mundane matters such as jobs, pay, conditions and accommodation, along with the attitudes they met with from the 'English' population. The majority of the material supplied by readers deals with precisely these matters, and shows no party affiliation, while sometimes complaining of the failure of the Australian authorities, for example the Brisbane Immigration Depot, to provide for their needs.

Some Russian citizens had come to Australia in the hope of acquiring land of their own — and many would be disappointed. Here mention must be made of Nikolai Il′in (Nicholas Illin), the one-time Tolstoyan, who had arrived in Queensland from Argentina in 1910, bringing with him his family and his Arcadian project of an egalitarian Russian farming colony. Elena Govor has written the definitive account of Il′in's life and the Queensland colonies known as 'Little Siberia', on the Atherton Tablelands, and Wallumbilla, near Roma.[30] Pikunov wrote of them that they had achieved limited success at best; only a few Russians were continuing to work their properties, while most had returned to a life of day-labouring ('Koe-chto …', No. 9, 23 August 1912, p. 2).[31] An unsigned report from Cairns (No. 4, 18 July 1912, p. 3) states that those Russians who have their own land are merely 'poor cockies' who earn their living elsewhere, because the land they have taken does not yet produce anything. Members of the Il′in family found themselves in precisely this situation.[32]

Writing in September 1912, 'Zekul' proposed a Russian co-operative to pool funds and take up land in the Northern Territory. He appears to have been aware that an investigation for a related project was then in train. In late 1911, Leandr Il′in (Leandro Illin), son of Nikolai, was delegated by the URE, with Konstantin Vladimirov, a scientist and specialist in agricultural practice, to make an exploratory journey to the Northern Territory and compile a report, funded by the Federal Government, on the suitability of the sparsely populated region for Russian settlement. The Minister for External Affairs, Josiah Thomas, favoured the idea and

Basingstoke, 2020, pp. 1–17 (p. 9).

[30] Govor, *My Dark Brother*.

[31] See also S-v, F. [Sergeev], 'Russkie v Avstralii', *Novyi mir*, 10 January 1913, p. 7.

[32] Govor, *My Dark Brother*, p. 103.

made arrangements for such a delegation, to 'spy out the land, with a view to getting as many Russians as would come to settle there'.[33] Zekul would certainly have approved. He wrote in No. 11:

> In a year or two the land would start returning an income, and if it were planted with sugar cane there would be work for all during the sugar season on our own plantation. Then there would be no need to complain about the bosses and waste ink and paper in *The Echo of Australia* describing the autocratic actions of English farmers. ('Pis´mo v redaktsiiu', No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 4)

The editor responded warily, with an ideological caveat:

> only in close unity with the organized workers' movement can we fight the barons of capital. […] The working co-operative member and non-member alike will always be slaves of capital. […] Join with the workers to exert joint pressure on the barons of capital. (No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 4)

Pikunov, who was clearly well informed, was dismissive: the government wants to send Russian immigrants to settle there, 'in the most tropical heat, where only Blacks live' ('Koe-chto …', No. 9, 23 August 1912, p. 2). In the event the plan came to nothing, not because of any scepticism from Sergeev or Pikunov, but because Thomas left his post and the Federal Government lost interest,[34] although Leandr Il´in and Vladimirov had reported favourably and the plan had aroused interest among the Russian community. *Ekho* carried a brief report of Leandr delivering a talk to the Brisbane (Russian) Workers' Club, where the audience plied him with questions of detail and asked him to establish whether the Federal Government would provide funding to subsidize travel and re-settlement (No. 4, 18 July 1912, p. 3).

Pikunov writes more broadly on the situation of Russian immigrants: jobs are scarce, and those in work fear losing it. Many take day-labouring jobs on railway lines and plantations: 'Who among us has not had to tramp the roads for dozens of miles seeking work, with a bundle of possessions, under the pitiless burning sun or pouring rain.' Emigrants continue to come, *ne ot khoroshikh delov*, as Pikunov puts it, but rather fleeing the tyranny of tsardom at home. Prospective settlers need to be warned that

[33] Ibid., pp. 121–34, quoting Thomas, p. 124; Elena Govor, *Australia in the Russian Mirror: Changing Perceptions, 1770–1919*, Melbourne, 1997, p. 214.

[34] Govor, *My Dark Brother*, p. 135.

'Australian freedoms' will be a disappointment to them ('Koe-chto …', No. 9, 23 August 1912, p. 2).[35] Ivan Marushchak in Melbourne had made the same point in an earlier issue: the paper must 'forewarn those who are thinking of flying to this alien country, like moths to a flame, that here too slavery awaits them'. He went on:

> Here capital has laid its powerful paw on the heads of the unfortunate worker-slaves, trampled on them, degraded them, and — for all the freedom there is here — forces them to bend their backs silently and obediently and look pleadingly at the owner of capital, lest he deprive them of their slavery, which allows them not to die of starvation. ('g-n Sergeev!', No 3, 11 July 1912, p. 3)

If *Ekho* did reach any readers in Russia, the picture they would have formed of Australia was of a country inhospitable in all respects: Russian immigrants are culturally and linguistically isolated, forced to travel long distances to find seasonal or ephemeral work, and nowhere made welcome by the English-speaking majority. All potential places of work are uninviting and many are remote from any form of 'civilization': reports from various quarters bemoan 'the navvy's wretched lot in the godforsaken Australian bush' (Vasilii Smirnov, 'Duaringa', No. 10, 30 August 1912, p. 2); Gympie, in Queensland, is renowned for having 'the most dreadful railway line in Australia' ('Iz Gimpi', No. 2, 4 July 1912, p. 5): 'The work is as hard as penal servitude [*katorga*]. After eight hours' work with a one-hour break, the workers can only just drag their exhausted bodies home.' The Northern Territory, in the view of some writers, is ill suited to settlement by Whites (see above), owing to its climate, (though this was not a universal view). The state capitals suffer periodically from unemployment, at least in those sectors on which the immigrants rely.

As for the unity on which Sergeev placed such a premium, it would remain elusive. Others who prized it were not tempted by unity under the aegis of Sergeev or the URE. As late as No. 11 (5 September 1912, p. 2), he wrote in his editorial of 'about five or six' distinct groups. These included: 'a Jewish Club, an organization which has broken away from the Jewish Club, an intellectual circle, a socialist group and a promised literary circle'. He wondered why the Russian community had come to be 'divided into a mass of sects' and advocated working 'more harmoniously together'.

[35] For more on Pikunov, see Kevin Windle, '*Listok Gruppy rossiiskikh rabochikh*: A 1918 Brisbane Russian Newspaper, its Origins and Orientation', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 32, 1/2, 2018, pp. 53–78 (pp. 65f.); Windle, *Undesirable*, pp. 34ff., 196f.

A body which styled itself the Union of Russian Workers (Soiuz russkikh rabochikh), first mentioned by Sergeev as newly formed in No. 9 ('Zaiavlenie', 23 August 1912, p. 4), was of particular concern.[36] Later referred to as the 'Organization of Russian Workers', it called for the closure of *Ekho* because it had misappropriated the word 'socialist'. According to Vasilii Smirnov ('Duaringa', No. 10, 30 August 1912, p. 2), its leaders were urging new Russian immigrants to join it rather than the URE because the latter had outlived its usefulness and the new body, having links with employers, would help them find work. Led by Petr Minak, assisted by Mikhail Omel´kov, it appears to have involved Anatolii Mendrin, soon to become a figure of some notoriety in the Russian community. Few details are available, but the new organization clearly did not espouse the principles upheld by Sergeev and the URE. On the contrary, it appears to have been close to Consul-General Abaza. An intelligence report on Mendrin describes him as follows: 'comes of a high social family […] considered a very shifty individual and leads a fast life […] fond of high life and women.'[37] Known for his past links with the gendarmes in Russia,[38] he was eager to collaborate with the Australian authorities as an agent working against the revolutionary element, and to receive remuneration for the intelligence supplied.[39] An editorial note to Smirnov's report spoke of the difficulty of gaining further information from the group in question. The response when it came, signed by the Russian Workers' Organization in Australia, was blunt: Smirnov's piece and the editorial note were 'out-and-out lies and filth', and any further reports would be ignored ('Pis´mo v redaktsiiu', No. 12, 15 September 1912, p. 4).

[36] In 1916 the URE would later adopt a very similar name: *Soiuz rossiiskikh rabochikh*, signalling by *rossiiskii* that it welcomed emigrants from the Russian Empire regardless of their ethnic origins.

[37] Sydney, State Archives of NSW, NRS-10923-6-[7/5596], AC0329519, Alexis Popoff, Anatole Mendrin, undated (*c*.1920).

[38] Simonov, in a report to the Comintern's Executive Committee, described Mendrin as a tsarist agent provocateur or police informer: Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial´no Politicheskoi Istorii, f. 495, op. 94, d. 6, Petr Simonov IK Tret´ego Internatsionala, 8 April 1921, in English in Lovell and Windle (eds), *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, p. 85. Mendrin figures in Keneally's *People's Train* as 'Menschkin', an opponent of 'Samsurov' (Sergeev); see Windle, *Undesirable*, p. 20.

[39] Detective O'Hara favoured the idea: 'Personally I believe Mr Mendrin would be a most helpful man […] and his services could be secured at a reasonable remuneration,' but his superior did not think it necessary to employ a 'special Russian Agent' for police purposes; Brisbane, QSA, Police Department, Criminal Investigation Branch, A/45329, ID317879, Detective O'Hara to Commissioner of Police, 4 June 1916. The same file shows Mendrin denouncing 'disloyal Russians' and reporting a physical assault in June 1914 by armed members of the community, who called him a 'police spy'.

Another organization, the Jewish Club, formed in January 1912, brought together Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire. The pages of *Ekho* remind us how sensitive this matter was, while demonstrating that sensitivity was in short supply, and contumely abundant. A contribution from 'M.' [S. Medvedev] entitled 'Conscious Judeophobia or ignorance?' ('Soznatel´noe iudofobstvo ili nevezhestvo', No. 9, 23 August 1912, p. 3) complained bitterly of antisemitism among Russian immigrants, who, it avers, 'mock Jewish speech and gestures crudely and tactlessly on the stage, in public and in the street'. The rejoinder ('Pis´mo v redaktsiiu', No. 10, 30 August 1912, p. 3), over the signatures of Sergeev and twelve others, was indignant and uncompromising: Medvedev had provided no evidence of such mockery, and if it did indeed occur Ukrainians and provincials had to endure comparable indignities. The Jewish Club, it seems, had not admitted URE members to its meetings, and made free with terms such as *pogromshchik* when referring to them. Medvedev is misquoted twice as complaining of *natsionalisticheskaia travlia* (nationalistic persecution) by Russians, when he actually spoke of *natsional´naia neterpimost´* (more akin to 'racial intolerance'). Clearly such a response was not conducive to harmonious inter-communal relations.

In the editorial of the following issue (No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 2), Sergeev returned to the theme of the 'Jewish national club' and its internal divisions. He was well informed about the Russian Jewish community and its factions since in *Ekho* No. 3 he had published an incendiary piece by Chaim Traitl, representing the younger generation, and an intemperate response in No. 4 from Mirgorodskii, the printer, who had served on its first committee. In Sergeev's view, the organization drew together the 'more backward among the Jewish workers' and promoted a militant form of nationalism, attracting no support from the English Jews. This picture does not fully accord with Sergeev's statements a year later. In a letter to E. Mechnikova he wrote that Russian Jews in Queensland, unlike those in Russia, 'lead such quiet lives and are such law-abiding citizens and undemanding workers'.[40]

Sergeev and his allies naturally disapproved of 'undemanding' workers. Bolsheviks required 'political awareness' and activism, and it was *Ekho*'s role to encourage and sustain these. An important point of reference, to which the writers frequently return, was provided by the Brisbane general strike of early 1912. Sergeev had made every effort to ensure active participation by Russian workers, having disparaged the 'sheepishness

[40] Letter dated 14 October 1913, in Artem, *Stat´i, rechi, pis´ma*, p. 126.

and tameness' of the local strikers.[41] To the latter's protestations of their helplessness against armed police, he retorted, according to (then) Acting Sergeant O'Hara, 'In Russia we are all equally as well prepared and armed as the Police'.[42] To Sergeev and his comrades, the Brisbane strike and the sugar strike of the previous year provided the clearest proof of the hollowness of Australian democracy, which the newspaper customarily placed in quotation marks. In those strikes, said Sergeev, Russian workers had shown their mettle and by their sterling fighting qualities gained wide recognition. Taking stock of the URE's first year ('Ot pravleniia S.R.E.', No 5, 25 July 1912, p. 3), he found much to be proud of: Russian immigrants, he claimed, were no longer regarded by the Australians as an 'inferior race'. They had won respect from local workers and bosses alike; no longer were they 'obedient playthings' in the hands of capital, unlike the willing strike-breakers drawn from the ranks of the 'local peasantry' (*mestnoe krest'ianstvo*), along with sundry 'clerks, lackeys etc.'. This was a significant advance, although a cautionary unsigned article in the same issue warns sternly that all workers have to fight for their rights and cannot allow themselves to become 'unwilling or willing traitors to the workers' cause' ('Neudavshiisia zagovor', No. 5, 25 July 1912, p. 2).

Pikunov developed the theme in No. 9 ('Koe-chto …', No. 9, 23 August 1912, p. 2), recalling the day earlier in the year which came to be known as 'Black Friday' (2 February 1912), when the Queensland police and vigilantes beat strikers in the street with batons. This, according to the writer, showed how ready the authorities were to apply harsh repressive measures to keep the workers in thrall, and revealed the limits on freedom in Australia.

Ammunition for that argument came in numerous reports from the 'industrial' front in response to the editor's call for readers' accounts of their experience. Letters to the editor and the regular 'Chronicle', a round-up of industrial news, recount a miscellany of adventures and misadventures, strikes, lock-outs and warnings of ruthless employers. Several such reports appeared in the second issue (No. 2, 4 July 1912): Terentii Kalaida writes of the smelters in Port Pirie, South Australia; Tarutin reports working

[41] Leader writers in later newspapers, such as Aleksandr Zuzenko and German Bykov (Herman Bykoff, A. Rezanoff), would take up this theme, deploring with greater vehemence the Australian workers' lack of firm commitment. See Windle, *Undesirable*, p. 73, and idem, 'Voices Crying in the Wilderness: Revolutionary Editorials in the Brisbane Russian Press of 1919', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 34, 1/2, 2020, pp. 1–26.

[42] Brisbane, University of Queensland Fryer Library, Criminal Investigation Branch, 28 February 1912, 'Russian Society and their connection with the Strike', Poole-Fried Collection, UQFL 336, Box 3 Folder 7, Queensland Police Reports.

conditions for track-layers at Benarkin, Queensland; 'Mikhail' writes from Charleville about labouring jobs and prospects there. Other reports in later issues, sometimes unsigned, give details of the availability of work; one describes Australia's farmers as 'the new enemies of the workers', collaborating with capital against them in South Australia, Toowoomba and Brisbane ('Novye nedrugi rabochikh v Avstralii', No. 6, 1 August 1912, p. 4). The same issue carries a short report describing the Catholic Church as 'always an enemy of the people', operating hand in glove with the monopolistic Colonial Sugar Refining Company ('Bandaberg', p. 4).

One piece which stands out in the work-seeking genre is by Vasilii Smirnov, whose report in No. 10 had thrown light on the rival 'Union of Russian Workers'. A sailor by trade, he tells of travelling the country's seaports in search of work in cabotage (coastal shipping) ('Pis´mo Smirnova', No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 3 and No. 12, 15 September 1912, p. 3). Such work is in high demand owing to the favourable pay and conditions, greatly to be preferred, he explains, to ocean-going shipping lines. He relates at some length how he travelled from Queensland to Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne, Port Adelaide and back to Brisbane, meeting with no success. In the course of these travels, he is delighted to come upon a curiously titled 'Office for Intellectuals' (Biuro dlia intelligentov) in Melbourne. He does not provide the English title of this institution or explain why he thought it might place a sailor in suitable employment, but is pleased to find in it an obliging Russian-speaking Serb who helps arrange a position as a farm labourer. When this proves not to his liking, Smirnov continues on his way to South Australia and eventually returns to Queensland. There he forgets his recent aspirations and settles for 'a pick-and-shovel job on the railway line near Rockhampton'. His travels have convinced him that 'Queensland is the very best part of Australia for work, and the English who have been here longer say it is the "best country".' (This phrase quoted in English.)

Ekho No. 3 contains the first press contribution by Petr Simonov (p. 3), who had arrived in Australia from Harbin in March 1912. Writing as he often did later over the byline 'A. Simens', he tells of jobs and conditions on the sugar plantations at Bingera and Fairymead and smaller farms near Bundaberg, Queensland, where he claims that the workers are ruthlessly exploited. Simonov would go on to assume greater responsibilities and higher visibility when Sergeev sailed for Russia after the February revolution: he edited the third of Brisbane's Russian newspapers, *Rabochaia zhizn´* (The Worker's Life) and served as secretary of the renamed URE/URW (Union of Russian Workers), before taking up the post of Soviet

consul in January 1918, a post which he held without Australian or British recognition until mid 1921.[43] In early 1918 he also organized the publication of the fourth Russian newspaper, *Znanie i edinenie* (Knowledge and Unity). As the unrecognized consul, he would find himself the focus of much official attention for his 'pernicious activities',[44] which included the dissemination of 'his mischievous and dangerous propaganda'.[45] With Zuzenko, in September 1918 he received notice prohibiting him from publishing or speaking in public, and went to prison for six months for flouting it, becoming something of a national *cause célèbre*. At this early date (July 1912), when he had yet to stake a claim to notoriety, he offered a brief description of the life of Russian cane-cutters near Bundaberg. Living in tents, in their spare time:

> some study English, and some kill time by playing cards or chess or draughts. To their credit, it must be said that no Russians are to be found among those propping up the bars. Unfortunately there are too many Englishmen there. From 7.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. there are whole crowds at the bars. ('Chto nam pishut', No. 3, 11 July 1912, p. 3)

This accords with what Sergeev wrote in a letter in October 1913 to Mechnikova: 'Here most of the Russians don't drink, or if they do they rarely lose control. Almost all of them study and almost all join the politically aware workers' movement at once.'[46] With regard to the consumption of alcohol, reports in some later newspapers, including one by Simonov, indicate that exceptions were not unknown,[47] and Leandr Il´in claimed that 'if I were a drinking man I could be permanently drunk in Brisbane at the Russians' expense' ('Pis´mo v redaktsiiu, No. 10, 30 August 1912, p. 4). As for their 'all joining the workers' movement', V. Konozov reports a very

[43] See Artemov, *Russkaia revoliutsiia v Avstralii*; Kevin Windle, 'Trotskii's Consul: Peter Simonoff's Account of His Years as Soviet Representative in Australia (1918–1921)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 93, 3, 2015, pp. 493–524; idem, 'Pervyi konsul Sovetskoi Rossii v Avstralii P. F. Simonov i ego druz´ia i nedrugi', *Klio*, 6, 114, 2016, pp. 176–88; idem, 'Of Diplomats and Spies: A New Book on the First Soviet Consul in Australia and the Petrov Affair', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 31, 1/2, 2017, pp. 271–88.

[44] Canberra, National Archives of Australia, First Military District Intelligence Report, A6286 3/61, MF 1740, 4 August 1918.

[45] Canberra, National Archives of Australia, First Military District Intelligence Report, A6286 3/45, MF 1319, 11 July 1918.

[46] Letter of 14 October, 1913, in Artem, *Stat´i, rechi, pis´ma*, p. 126; in English in Kevin Windle, 'Brisbane Prison: Artem Sergeev describes Boggo Road', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 38, 2004, pp. 159–80 (p. 164).

[47] P. Simonov, 'Babinda', *Izvestiia Soiuza russkikh emigrantov*, No. 92, 23 September 1915, p. 2.

different state of affairs: in Queensland the Russians are 'neither united nor organized', and in Melbourne:

> things are much worse. There are relatively few Russians, and they have absolutely nothing to do with one another. […] When they meet, not only those slightly acquainted […], but even those who know each other well pass by, trying not to notice. I do not know why but the Russians here seem to loathe one another. (No. 3, 11 July 1912, p. 3)

Over a year later, 'K-v' (most likely the same Konozov) would report that in Melbourne, 'There are over a hundred Russians living here, but among them politically aware workers number only about twenty'.[48]

Surveying the political landscape of Australia, Sergeev naturally sought a party which might mount the most effective resistance to the 'barons of capital'. This could not come from the Australian Labor Party, he thought, because that party was more concerned to maintain the status quo than to stand up for the rights of working people. By 1917 he was referring to the 'reactionary militarist Labor Party' and the party of 'petty bourgeois political horse-trading'.[49] In No. 4 he wrote:

> Any union member who votes Labor and not Socialist, or takes no part at all in union affairs, will be helping Labor lead the workers to the precipice which they have unintentionally and suddenly, when forced by an attack from their Liberal opponents, revealed before our eyes. (Editorial, No. 4, 18 July 1912, p. 2)

His recommended course of action for the new immigrants was that they join the Australian Socialist Party (ASP), as he himself had done (see No. 11 editorial, No. 12 editorial, and others). Here, he thought, was a party that shared his political aims and implacable opposition to the domination of 'capital', and would willingly give a hearing to a self-declared Marxist with long experience as a revolutionary in Russia and Western Europe.

Some among the Russians would soon gravitate to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which found much support among radical and anarchistically-inclined Australian workers in the years of the World War, and much of Sergeev's energy would be spent combating their influence, denouncing anarcho-syndicalists (such as Zuzenko)

[48] *Izvestiia SRE*, No. 9, 7 February 1914, p. 3.

[49] T. S. [Sergeev], 'Bankrotstvo anarkho-sindikalizma', *Rabochaia zhizn'*, No. 54, 9 March 1917, p. 4.

and agitating for the ASP. Eight years later, soon after the formation of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA, founded largely at Simonov's initiative),[50] some of his comrades would recommend a very different course and take a less favourable view of Sergeev's preferred party. In an angry memo to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, dated 8 April 1921, Simonov, the Bolshevik Consul, described the ASP as more akin to a 'religious sect' than a political party. Moreover, it was 'dying because of its greyness, vacuity and personal squabbles that had absolutely nothing to do with an ideological movement'.[51] The Communist Party of Australia, once established, owed little to the ASP or any of its individual members.

In addition to news and commentary contributed by its readers, *Ekho* welcomed literary feuilletons of suitable content. Nikolai Il´in, a gifted writer and versifier, congenial to *Ekho* in his political leanings, could be counted upon to produce appropriate material and reflect the mood of the moment. No. 4 (18 July 1912, p. 2) contains his anti-militarist poem 'Militarizm', in which the unthinking soldier Vania, proud of his uniform and true to his oath to the tsar, will if ordered drive his bayonet into his brother's chest. The closing stanza runs:

> Что-ж, Ванюша, на работничка
> Строем сомкнутым вперед!
> Ведь на службе государственной,
> Знаешь, совесть не живет.
>
> (So, Vania, close ranks and advance on the worker! / When one's in the service of the state / One's conscience does not stir, you know.)

The poem was written in Argentina, no later than 1910, but events in 1912 heightened its relevance, as shown by the editor's references to the Lena goldfield massacre and the Brisbane strike in the same issue (see above). The anti-militarist theme would grow in prominence in later Russian newspapers when the URE opposed conscription during the First World War.

Another poem by the same author ('Mnogo peto pro nebo …', No. 9, 23 August 1912, p. 2) is a spirited assault on those poets who have preferred to

[50] See Artemov, *Russkaia revoliutsiia v Avstralii*; Windle, 'Pervyi konsul'; Windle, 'Trotskii's Consul'; Windle, 'Of Diplomats and Spies'.

[51] RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 6, in English in Lovell and Windle, *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, p. 87; Kevin Windle, 'A Troika of Agitators: Three Comintern Liaison Agents in Australia, 1920–22', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 52, 1, 2006, pp. 30–47.

sing of violets, roses and enchanting eyes; they must turn their attention to the burning questions of the day, as the last stanza makes clear:

Где-ж вы, барды? Спешите! Событья не ждут.
Разве слышны вам только лишь стоны?
Уж массы под звук марсельезы идут;
Уж трепещут подгнившие троны.

(Bards, where are you? Make haste! Events do not wait. / Do you really hear only groaning? / The masses are already marching to the strains of the Marseillaise, / and the tyrants' rotten thrones are trembling.)

Il´in's poem 'Aristokrat' (No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 3) is a caustic caricature of the attitudes of the unthinking gentry: a scion of the nobility expresses defiant pride in his privileged status and contempt for the less fortunate. One stanza runs:

Какое дело мне до новых поколений,
До счастья масс, до будущих веков!
Я бровью поведу и на колени
Смету безсчету дураков.

(What care I for future generations, / the masses' happiness or centuries to come! / I have only to lift an eyebrow and countless dullards fall on their knees.)

Il´in had been among Lev Tolstoi's most ardent acolytes at a time when the new Tolstoyan faith was posing a serious threat to traditional Orthodoxy, but he had fallen out with the writer and abandoned that faith before emigrating in 1892. His apostasy was made the more memorable by the publication of his *Diary of a Tolstoyan*,[52] in reality less a diary than an anti-Tolstoyan diatribe, which left an abiding legacy of ill feeling: Il´in called Tolstoi a bigot and a hypocrite who failed to practise what he preached. Tolstoi questioned Ilin's sanity, while a brief characterization by Il´ia Repin applied a range of epithets, none of them complimentary. They included 'cardsharp', 'psychopath', 'naive dreamer' and 'scum' (*mraz´*).[53] Nor was Il´in in any way mollified by the news of Tolstoi's death in 1910.[54]

[52] N. D. Il´in, *Dnevnik tolstovtsa*, St Petersburg, 1892.

[53] I. E. Repin, *Pis´ma k pisateliam i literaturnym deiateliam*, Moscow, 1950, p. 89; Govor, *My Dark Brother*, pp. 52–53.

[54] For more detail on Il´in and his relations with Tolstoi, see Govor, *My Dark Brother*,

In *Ekho* Nos. 4–5, the former Tolstoyan takes merciless revenge on his departed idol in an allegorical feuilleton denouncing the philosophy of non-resistance to evil. The writer describes a reverie in which an unnamed 'sage' (*starets*) arrives at the pearly gates seeking admission to the Kingdom of Heaven. Judgment Day for him starts badly ('Neprotivlenie pered sudom vyshnim', No. 5, pp. 2–3):

> 'Do not resist evil and you will be blessed,' said he to those whose brothers and sons were languishing and dying in prisons and on the gallows. And many, being weak, covered their timidity and indecisiveness with this homily, and discord took hold in the ranks of the fighters for justice, and their ranks thinned because the moment was lost and the torturers murdered the prisoners and martyrs. And justice perished and its enemies grew in strength.

Hostile questioning follows, bearing on the sage's philosophy and its application in practice:

> Why did he feed the hungry using funds collected, and not at his own expense? Why did he not use his own estates for that purpose? Why did he not stand in the way of the torturers and murderers, cross in hand, during Dubasov's beatings in Moscow, or during one of the innumerable pogroms?[55]
>
> Where was he and where were his stooges at that time and what were they doing? They were comfortably writing and chattering on their estates.
>
> Not one of those close to him, the supporters of his fame, ever exposed himself to any risk, standing up for the insulted and injured; not once did any of them endure any suffering for the cause of justice.
>
> All of them calmly extol their teacher while enjoying life's comforts.
>
> Could he have failed to understand that non-resistance is the sand on which he raises the temple of his teaching? […]
>
> What does his work amount to? To the essence of the secret dream of his great pride. In his lifetime, in the capital, a museum has been erected in his name and is visited by the same foreigners who visit the Bridge of Sighs

pp. 35ff.; Elena Govor and Kevin Windle, 'Dva neobychnykh tolstovtsa v Avstralii', *Literaturnaia Amerika*, 2, 2016, pp. 375–95; Elena Govor and Kevin Windle, 'The Dreamer and the Destroyer: Two Unconventional Tolstoians and their Impact in Australia', in Robert Reid and Joe Andrew (eds), *Tolstoi: Art and Influence*, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2023, pp. 161–78.

[55] Vice-Admiral F. V. Dubasov: Governor-General of Moscow, responsible for the violent repression of disturbances in December 1905.

> and the Eiffel Tower, old maids who are involuntarily complicit in the reality he created, supporters and representatives of the torturers whom he abetted by preaching non-resistance. […]
>
> What have the oppressed gained by his homilies?
>
> Have they shamed the torturer?
>
> Has he not consciously gone against the universal law, the right to fight for justice? […] And for those who place obstacles in the way of that law there is no place in the Vaults of Heaven.
>
> A prolonged silence followed. […]
>
> Does he agree to moderate his pride and his vanity? Is he prepared to acknowledge his error? Does he agree to summon all fighters by an inspired speech, take a firm stand in the way of rampant violence, and overcome it or suffer?

To these questions the sage has no answer. The feuilletonist gleefully reports that admission to Heaven is denied. Here Il′in's rejection of Tolstoyan non-resistance is fully consonant with Bolshevik thought.[56] He could not, of course, foresee that six years later he would break with the radicals of the Russian community by publicly expressing his horror at the murder of the Romanovs in Ekaterinburg.[57]

Nikolai Il′in's son Leandr, who went on to found a Russian-Aboriginal dynasty and uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples in Australia,[58] was not given to belletristic endeavours, or to commentary on Tolstoyan thought. His sole contribution to *Ekho* is a response to a letter from one (Vladimir) Voevodin, a Russian who had written of the kindness shown to him by ordinary Australians in rural Queensland. In Kilcoy, a chance acquaintance had offered him work clearing bush for eights shillings a day, saying, as Voevodin relates it: 'Kom an mi plenti dzhop' ('Pis′ma v redaktsiiu', No. 2, 4 July 1912, p. 8). Local people found him a night's lodging and paid for it, with the words, 'Komon otel′ spat′'. By contrast, the Russian immigrants in Brisbane did little to help a new arrival. In a prolix and somewhat diffuse piece, Leandr rebukes Voevodin for 'spitting in the face' of the Brisbane Russians (No. 10, 30 August 1912, p. 4; No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 3). If all Russians there joined the URE and paid their dues, he claims, it would be able to take care of hapless newcomers like

[56] Sergeev would attack Tolstoyans and anarchists in subsequent newspapers, for example, 'Zashchita strany', part 2, *Rabochaia zhizn′*, No. 30, 5 September 1916, p. 2.

[57] See Govor and Windle, 'Dva neobychnykh tolstovtsa'; Govor and Windle, 'The Dreamer and the Destroyer'.

[58] Govor, *My Dark Brother*.

Voevodin: 'We are in a foreign country. When we achieve unity, we will feel ourselves at home' (No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 3). Unity would remain a remote prospect, and appeals for it would resound in other newspapers long after the demise of *Ekho*.

Not all were persuaded of the importance of unity, and it is clear that some of the intended audience spurned the only Russian newspaper and remained stoutly unreceptive to its promoters and the URE. Tarutin in Benarkin reports trying in vain to awaken some interest in *Ekho* among other Russian track-layers: one replies that he 'can't read'; another asks, 'What use is it to me?' ('Tovarishchi', No. 2, 4 July 1912, p. 5) To Russians such as these, socio-political awareness and class solidarity are alien concepts. Tarutin writes that they have come to Australia in pursuit of the 'long rouble' (*dlinnyi rubl'*), that is, to earn as much money as possible. He further reports that, when the management reduced pay rates and the workers stopped work in protest, there were eight 'scabs', four of them Russian. The editorial in No. 11 also reiterates the point that some among the immigrants have little interest in matters of principle or politics, having come only in search of a better life. These 'unenlightened masses', who like to be sure that 'there is a master (*barin*) who will take care of everything', are the ones most in need of further education, and at the same time the hardest to reach. However, the editor writes, 'It would not be at all socialist to turn our backs on the working masses solely on account of their inadequate social education' (No. 11, 5 September 1912, p. 2). *Ekho* and the URE must redouble their efforts to cultivate class consciousness and remedy these deficiencies.

In No. 6 (1 August 1912, p. 2) Sergeev gave his response to critical comments from readers.[59] These concerned a variety of matters: the price (at fourpence, deemed excessive in some quarters), the amount of text (evidently judged by some to be too little), the advertisements, and difficulties of production, delivery and distribution. These latter are out of his hands, he writes: the law 'permits postmasters not to distribute newspapers in which they find anything unseemly or improper. Those concepts are not defined in law, so they may be interpreted very freely'. Here the postmasters must of course rely on translators, and 'since the contents of our paper are translated by translators who are hostile to us, or lack experience, all kinds of things may be found in it'.

Those hostile translators, with their clients the postmasters, may have been instrumental in securing the demise of *Ekho* in September 1912,

[59] See also Savchenko, 'Pervye russkie gazety', p. 12.

although the reasons officially stated were more bureaucratic in nature, having to do with registration. The relevant police correspondence files contain a note headed 'Russian Newspaper (Echo Australia [*sic*])', dated 6 September 1912: 'Publication of this newspaper NOT registered. For authority of Attorney-General for prosecution.'[60] The Brisbane *Telegraph* (27 September 1912, p. 4) reported under the headline 'Breach of Printers Act':

> In the City Summons Court yesterday before Mr. T. Mowbray, P. M. [Presiding Magistrate], a Russian named I. Mirgorodsky was proceeded against on a charge that between 11th July and 23rd August he printed for sale a newspaper, 'Echo Australia' without having entered into a recognisance before one of the judges of the Supreme Court, together with two or three sufficient securities to the satisfaction of the judge taking such recognisance as required in Section 16 of the Printing Act of 1827. It was explained on behalf of the defendant that he was a Russian, and was ignorant of the law. He was fined £1, with 3s. 6d. costs.[61]

Sergeev's widely-cited report of this episode, in a letter dated 2 December 1912, does not contradict this; he refers to a 'convict-era' law and explains the legal action as follows: 'we had made so bold as to say what actually happens in Australia, not what the gentlemen in control of public life in Queensland would like.'[62] However, in an account of Russian life in Australia written at about the same time, his brief explanation of the termination makes no mention of that law or any other, or of the nature of *Ekho*'s contents: 'There was even an attempt to publish a newspaper, but it was cut short owing to the crisis which Russian public life was undergoing.'[63] Pikunov, in an account written some forty-eight years later, suggested factional strife within the organization: 'non-proletarian elements', he claimed, temporarily seized control of *Ekho* from Sergeev.[64] He does not state how long this control lasted, but it is notable that the rejoinder to 'M.' in No. 10 (see above), signed by Sergeev and twelve others, is a 'letter to the editor', which indicates that at that point Sergeev was not in full command.

[60] Brisbane, Queensland State Archives: POLJ37; PRV10729/1/105, Correspondence, Police, 6 September 1912.
[61] *Telegraph*, 27 September 1912, p. 4.
[62] Artem, *Stat´i, rechi, pis´ma*, p. 114.
[63] S-v, F. [Sergeev], 'Russkie v Avstralii', p. 7.
[64] V. I. Pikunov, 'Soiuz russkikh rabochikh v Avstralii', *Voprosy istorii KPSS*, 1, 1960, pp. 167–74 (p. 169).

Here it should be noted that the erstwhile anarchist Aleksandr Zuzenko, reviewing the history of the Russian community for the benefit of the Communist International in April 1920, was of the view that *Ekho* 'enjoyed little success', implying that here lay the reason for its closure. Like some of its successor newspapers (edited by Sergeev), Zuzenko wrote, it was not 'popular among the workers, owing to the marked Menshevik tendency' of some articles, which were 'larded with foreign words'.[65] He gives no examples in support of that contention, motivated perhaps by a desire to distinguish his own radical newspapers *Znanie i edinenie* (1918) and *Deviatyi val* (The Ninth Wave, 1918–19)[66] from the earlier publications. Never one to be awed by Sergeev's authority, Zuzenko had earlier dismissed his anti-anarchist articles in *Rabochaia zhizn′* as 'Black Hundredist' (*chernosotennogo kharaktera*, that is, extremely reactionary), again without setting forth the grounds for this description.[67]

Zuzenko's critical view notwithstanding, and despite its short life, *Ekho* laid down a template for a number of successors and set a tone which, along with the dominant themes, would reverberate over the next seven years in later Brisbane Russian newspapers. Some, like *Izvestiia Soiuza russkikh emigrantov* and *Rabochaia zhizn′*, which enjoyed a longer life, would be published by Sergeev and his URE/URW allies such as Simonov, Petr Utkin and Pavel Grei; others — shorter-lived — by rivals or antagonists such as Zuzenko, but all would occupy a position on the Left, all were anti-government, all opposed conscription and the war effort, and all enthusiastically welcomed the overthrow of tsarist rule and the installation of a new revolutionary regime. All were closely scrutinized — with help from informants acting as translators — by the censor, who not infrequently intervened to delete objectionable material or close them down in a generally successful drive to contain the spread of what was termed 'pro-Bolshevik mischief'.[68] Determined government action in the wake of the serious disturbances of March 1919 in Brisbane, known as the Red Flag Riots,[69] would put an end to the 'mischief' and see the

[65] RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, Zuzenko, 30 April 1920; in English in Lovell and Windle, *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, p. 66.

[66] See Elena Govor and Kevin Windle (eds), *Voices in the Wilderness: A Digest of the Russian-Language Press in Australia 1912–1919*, Melbourne (forthcoming).

[67] A. M-ko [Matulichenko = Zuzenko], 'Otvet na stat′iu "Eshche o Sidnee"', *Rabochaia zhizn′*, No. 30, 5 September 1916, p. 3.

[68] Canberra, National Archives of Australia, First Military District Intelligence Report, A6286 1/149, QF4813, 21 August 1919.

[69] See Evans, *The Red Flag Riots*; idem, 'Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation', in John McNair and Thomas Poole (eds), *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian-Australian*

principal activists deported, if they had not already left (like Sergeev). *Ekho*, a pioneering venture in a new field, has much to tell us about an early cohort of Russian immigrants in Australia, the community's leaders and the rank and file, their difficulties in a new country, and their thinking as the world drew closer to the twin cataclysms of war and revolution, which would so radically alter the course of twentieth-century history, and with it the complexion of Russian settlement in Australia. The Russian-language press of later decades would reflect a very different view of the country the immigrants had left, by then firmly under Soviet rule, and of the country they had adopted as their own.

Relations, St Lucia, 1992, pp. 126–71; Windle, *Undesirable*, pp. 50–67.