

Kevin Windle

**‘The Achilles Heel of British Imperialism’:  
A Comintern agent reports on his mission to Australia  
1920–1922. An annotated translation.**

**Introduction**

The name of Aleksandr Mikhailovich Zuzenko (1884–1938) is not well known to students of the early history of Australian communism, despite a long period of residence and activism (1911–1922). His remarkable career has been largely overshadowed by that of his fellow-countryman and contemporary Artem (Fedor Andreevich Sergeev). For many decades, Zuzenko was virtually absent from historical writing on the Communist Party of Australia, whereas Artem, although he returned to Russia as soon as possible after the February revolution, was long remembered as a key figure in shaping the Australian Left in the years 1911–1917. In Soviet Russia too, Artem was feted and commemorated after his premature death in 1921 by having towns, streets and mining institutes named in his honour. Zuzenko, though a committed revolutionary and staunch Bolshevik, received no comparable honours, indeed his arrest and execution in 1938 by those whom his widow termed ‘Stalinist Fascists’ meant that for the next two decades his name could scarcely be mentioned at all.<sup>1</sup>

Zuzenko did, however, appear — though rarely under his real name — in a number of memoirs and works of fiction by Soviet writers, first in the 1920s after his return to Russia, and in the 1960s and ’70s following his posthumous rehabilitation.<sup>2</sup> Again the number of works devoted

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<sup>1</sup> For a useful concise account of Artem’s life, and his views on Australia, see Tom Poole and Eric Fried, ‘Artem. A Bolshevik in Brisbane’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 31/2 (1985), 243–54. I am grateful to Eric Fried for kindly providing video-recordings of interviews made in 1990 with Zuzenko’s widow Tsetsiliia Mikhailovna Rozenberg (Civa Rosenberg), then aged 92, their daughter Kseniia, and Sergeev’s son, Artem Fedorovich Sergeev.

<sup>2</sup> See my article ‘Konstantin Paustovsky, Iurii Klimenchenko and Aleksandr Zuzenko: Literary reflections of a revolutionary life’, (forthcoming).

to him or featuring him even as a minor character is far smaller than the literature on Artem.

In Australia it took the archival researches of Eric Fried and Raymond Evans in the 1980s and early '90s, making extensive use of period newspapers and Australian documents, to shed light on the role of Zuzenko, his wife and his Russian comrades in Australian political life. Fried's investigations identified key personalities and groupings at the period in question and indicated the scope of their activity. Evans in his *Red Flag Riots* limned in the broader picture of the socio-political context and the extent of government action to quash 'disloyalty' and socialist agitation by Russian radicals and their Australian allies in the years 1918–1922.<sup>3</sup>

These researches, invaluable though they were, took no account of the Russian memoirs and fiction mentioned above, or of Zuzenko's articles in the Russian and US press, and came too early to benefit from another vital source which did not become accessible until the USSR was on the point of collapse. This is the archive of the Third International, held in Moscow in what is now (2004) known as the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI). A substantial selection of Australia-related material was microfilmed in 1990 at the request of Barbara Curthoys and deposited in the State Library of NSW (Mitchell Library).<sup>4</sup> This collection has provided much valuable documentary material for historical investigation. It is, however, in some respects less extensive than the separate collection held since 2000 — also on microfilm — at the Australian Defence Force Academy (University

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Fried, *Russians in Queensland*, (BA Hons Thesis, University of Queensland, 1980); 'The First Russian Consul: Peter Simonoff and the Formation of the Australian Communist Party', in *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian–Australian Relations*, ed. by John McNair and Thomas Poole, St Lucia, 1992, pp. 110–25. See also Fried's articles 'Simonov, Peter' and 'Sergeyev, Fedor Andreyevich' in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11, Melbourne, 1988. Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance*, St Lucia, London, New York, 1988; also his "'Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation": Russian Radicals in Australia and the Red Flag Riots', in McNair and Poole 1992.

<sup>4</sup> See Kerry Taylor, 'Archive Notes: The Comintern Archives, Moscow', *Labour History*, No. 64, May 1993, 139–42; Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds*, Sydney, 1998, p. 420.

of NSW) in Canberra. The latter collection includes a number of reports by Zuzenko from the period 1920-23, as well as some by the Bolshevik consul Petr Simonov (Peter Simonoff) and Paul Freeman, which do not appear to figure in the Mitchell collection.<sup>5</sup>

The ADFA collection includes the document translated here, a detailed report which Zuzenko submitted to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) a few weeks after being deported from Britain, where he was held for three months in Brixton Prison and subjected to two extended sessions of interrogation in December 1922. This came at the conclusion of his 27-month clandestine circumnavigation of the globe, from Murmansk to Britain, the USA, New Zealand and Australia, as a Comintern operative whose task it was, in his words, 'to form a Communist Party of Australia'. He was not to know that by the time he eventually reached Australia (July 1922) such a party would already be in existence, thanks largely to the efforts of Simonov, but its twin factions had fallen out and more work was needed to forge a unified and cohesive party on which Moscow could count. Zuzenko claims that during his short period at liberty in Australia before his arrest in August 1922, he played an important role in bringing about unification between the 'Trades Hall' or 'Sussex Street' CP (i.e. the faction of Jock Garden and Bill Earsman, which had Simonov's backing), and the 'Liverpool Street' CP (the former Australian Socialist Party, led by Arthur and Marcia Reardon and Ray Everitt, favoured by Freeman). This was achieved by marginalizing the latter faction to the advantage of the former, who were known to be more inclined to fall in with Moscow's designs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The academic sponsor of the ADFA collection is Associate Professor David Lovell, to whom I am grateful for permission to publish this document, part of which will appear in a forthcoming survey of the collection. The ADFA collection was drawn from RGASPI, and acknowledgements are due to its main sponsors, Dr. Kirill Anderson and Mr. Chris Mitchell, and to those who first identified the relevant materials, Dr. Konstantin Samarin and the late Professor Patrick O'Brien.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the present report, see my articles, 'Round the World for the Revolution: A Bolshevik agent's mission to Australia 1920-22 and his interrogation by Scotland Yard' (*Revolutionary Russia*, December 2004, pp. 90-118); 'A Troika of Agitators: Three Comintern Liaison Agents in Australia, 1920-22', (forthcoming in the *Australian Journal of Politics and History*); and

The views expressed in this report, indeed the whole rationale for Zuzenko's mission, are predicated on the premise that the Australian proletariat is ready to rise up and throw off the capitalist yoke, and that the shock wave of revolution will travel half-way round the globe and topple the British monarchy. If this seems an unlikely scenario, it needs to be remembered that it was consistent with the world-view of senior Bolsheviks of the day, who held that empires such as those of Britain and France lay open to attack through their far-flung colonial possessions. Zuzenko, who had for many years aligned himself with the proponents of anarchism, at last found himself fully in tune with the party he had joined in 1920, and the fact that he quickly secured Comintern backing for his Australian Odyssey shows that, in 1920, at least, 'historical inevitability' was a powerful argument. Back at home in 1923 and undaunted by the experience, he is confident that he alone has the expertise to take charge of Australian affairs in the ECCI, and fervently hopes to return to Australia when the revolution triumphs, 'as the standard-bearer of the socialist revolution'.

In this account for the ECCI and the prefatory piece — his 'reminder of his existence' — Zuzenko provides some detail (albeit sketchy) of his earlier life as a sailor, mentioning his activities as a member of the Socialist Revolutionary party in Russia and as an anarchist and member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Australia, including his part in the Brisbane disturbances known as the Red Flag Riots (March 1919). Documentary material on his early life is scant, as is that dealing with his later years, following his deportation from Britain. It is known, however, that he returned to the sea as early as 1924, as master of the merchantman 'Vladimir Rusanov', plying the route between Leningrad and British ports.<sup>7</sup> He later held command of the SS 'Roshal', and finally of the 'Smol'nyi', of which he was master

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'Журналист и революционер на трех континентах: А. М. Зузенко и его журналистская деятельность в 1916–24 гг.'. Forthcoming in *Тыняновский сборник*, No. 19, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> In Britain he was not allowed to go ashore. PRO: FO 371 11019 (1925), esp. pp. 31 and 55. See also Юрий Клименченко, *Корабль идет дальше*, Leningrad, 1973.

when arrested on 10 April 1938. He was charged with espionage and executed on 25 August of that year.<sup>8</sup>

The annotation provided here is intended to supply contextual and background information on personalities, organizations and events which may not be widely known, and occasionally to illuminate Zuzenko's account by reference to others dealing with the same events. In addition to published works, the sources for these notes include the National Archives of Australia (NAA), the British Public Record Office (PRO), the University of Queensland's Fryer Library (the Poole-Fried Collection), and the Oral History and manuscript collections at the National Library of Australia (NLA).

Wherever possible, non-Russian personal names are given in their attested original form, but in many cases this cannot be established. In such cases the form used is marked *phon.* [phonetic] on first occurrence, indicating that it is a possibly inaccurate reconstruction based on the Cyrillic form, which may itself be inaccurate. Zuzenko's spelling was at best erratic and he took no great care to render names accurately, whether of people or places. If the reconstruction carries little or no risk of error (e.g. John Braddock, Jack White), *phon.* is not added.

### **To the Executive Committee of the Third Communist International<sup>9</sup>**

28 February 1923

from Aleksandr Mikhailovich Zuzenko, Comintern official.

### **Foreword**

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.memo.ru/memory/communarka>

<sup>9</sup> 'Third Communist International': Zuzenko should have known that this title was inaccurate. The International could be referred to as 'the Third' or 'the Communist', but not 'the Third Communist', since there had been no previous 'communist international'. The 'Zinoviev letter' of 1924, later declared a forgery, contained the same mistake, which by itself aroused the suspicion of some experts. Zuzenko's wording demonstrates that even a Comintern agent could get it wrong. The Russian original is located at RGASPI *fond* 495, *opis'* 94, *delo* 18, pp. 1–17. It is on Reel B1 of the microfilmed collection at ADFA.

In the summer of last year, 1922, I learned to my astonishment from a letter from my wife that nobody on the Comintern Executive Committee remembers me, knows me or thinks they sent me on any assignment at all. In view of this I consider it my duty to supply the Comintern Executive Committee, at the beginning of my report, with a brief reminder of my existence.

I became a party worker in 1904. In mid-1905 I was discharged as unreliable from the training vessel ‘Velikaia Kniaginia Kseniia Aleksandrovna’ [Grand Duchess Kseniia Aleksandrovna] and expelled from the Magnushof Maritime Training College. In autumn 1905 I joined the combat organization of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. For organizing a political strike I was expelled from the Riga Maritime Training College in early 1906. I took part in a number of terrorist acts in Riga and in southern Russia. I experienced Tsarist prisons twice — in Riga in early 1906 and in Nikolaev in 1908.

I fled Russia to avoid an investigation and trial in 1911. By my work I assisted in the organization of the Union of Russia Seamen Abroad (in Antwerp, Belgium). Having lost faith in the Socialist Revolutionary Party I broke with it and worked in Australia as an organizer of IWW(‘Industrialist’) groups and as a proponent of anarchic communism. While working in Australia as a sugar-cane cutter, I organized and conducted a number of strikes in the sugar industry and the industry’s first general strike to do away with contract labour.

After the departure from Australia of Comrade Artem Sergeev and others, I acted as secretary of the Union of Russian Workers in Australia, edited the paper *Znanie i edinenie* [Knowledge and Unity] in Russian and founded and edited *Knowledge and Unity* in English. Three times the Australian authorities ordered me to cease my campaigning and organizational work. I continued. *Znanie i edinenie* was closed down. I set about publishing an illegal newspaper, *Deviatyi val* [The Ninth Wave].<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Znanie i edinenie* was closed down in December 1918. The English-language version began to appear at the end of December 1918 and continued long after Zuzenko’s deportation in April. *Deviatyi val*, on the other hand, had a very short life. See the papers of William Morris Hughes, National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection (1538/21, p. 202; Director, Investigation Branch, on Alexander Michael Zuzenko, 16 August 1922).

For general propaganda work I drew together the more revolutionary element of the socialists and 'Industrialists', arranging revolutionary demonstrations by the unemployed and by revolutionary groups of soldiers. A revolutionary demonstration on 25 March 1919 led to a clash with the police and the temporary success of the demonstrators, but then to the rout of the Union of Russian Workers in Australia and the arrest of its most active members.<sup>11</sup> On 27 March 1919 I was arrested and at the end of April the same year deported from Australia. It was the intention of the Australian authorities to deliver me into the torture chambers of the 'true Russian authorities', that is, of Denikin.<sup>12</sup> Having passed through several prisons, in October 1919, thanks to the insistence of my sick wife, who was also deported from Australia,<sup>13</sup> I was released under police supervision from a Turkish prison in Constantinople, and at the end of that month made my way to Odessa, where I remained until the Red forces arrived.

While working in Tiraspol' (Odessa region) as editor of *Izvestiia tiraspol'skago revkoma* [News of the Tiraspol' Revolutionary Committee], I joined the Ukrainian Bolshevik Communist Party. In March 1920, as a delegate from Tiraspol', I was sent to the Third All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions in Moscow. Comrades Artem Sergeev and Berzin (the Comintern Secretary) sent me to Petrograd to report to the Small Bureau of the Comintern on the situation in Australia.<sup>14</sup> In May 1920, by

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<sup>11</sup> '25 March 1919': date as given. All Australian archive and press sources give Sunday 23 March as the date of the red flag procession in Brisbane. Street clashes occurred over the following few days.

<sup>12</sup> General Anton Ivanovich Denikin, commander of the anti-Bolshevik Volunteer Army in southern Russia in 1918–20, which was finally expelled by the Bolshevik forces in March 1920.

'Torture chambers': a free translation of a word for which English has no exact equivalent — *rasprava*, denoting extremes of torture, commonly ending in death, usually without legal sanction. Zuzenko later told of being under sentence of death during this period, but it is clear that no Australian or British court passed such a sentence, and he escaped the clutches of Denikin.

<sup>13</sup> Zuzenko's wife was not, in fact, deported, but left Australia voluntarily to follow her husband back to Russia in May 1919. Her father, Michael Rosenberg, was deported in September.

<sup>14</sup> 'Artem': the revolutionary alias of Fedor Andreevich Sergeev (in Australia, 'Big Tom' Sergeeff/Sergaeff, 1884–1921), the well-known Bolshevik who was

a decision of the Large Bureau, I was taken into the employment of the Comintern and directed to Australia to form a Communist Party of Australia.

Aleksandr Zuzenko, alias A. Nargen

### Memorandum

In early May 1920, by a decision of the Large Bureau of the Comintern, I was taken into the employment of the Comintern and directed to Australia to form a Communist Party of Australia. I was ordered to go to Tiraspol' (Odessa region), hand over the editorship of the newspaper to my deputy, and to be in Moscow with my family by the opening of the Second Congress of the Comintern.

At the Second Congress of the Comintern I represented the communist group of Queensland, Australia, without voting rights. In mid-October I left Soviet Russia by way of Murmansk and Vardö, in Norway, having received 150 pounds sterling for travel expenses and 500 pounds for agitation and propaganda in Australia. I had to leave behind in Murmansk a suitcase full of selected literature for Australia, on the advice of Comrade Vasten.<sup>15</sup> Travelling light, with no luggage, with a seaman's documents in the name of Alexander Holmst [*phon.*], I set off, accepting the assurances of comrades that I would receive all that I needed in Norway and England. In Christiania [Oslo] Comrade Latimer [*phon.*] (also known as Jurgis) and in England the Communist Party would supply all necessary documents and render comradely assistance. In Vaida-guba I was just two hours too late to catch the group of

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active in Queensland 1911–1917. Berzin: Jan Antonovich Berzin (1881–1938), secretary of the ECCI in 1919 and later Soviet representative in Britain. He would be executed in the same week as Zuzenko for membership of a 'terrorist organization'. See <http://www.memo.ru/memory/communarka>

<sup>15</sup> Aleksandr Petrovich Vasten was for a period in charge of Soviet intelligence in the Murmansk area. He was later thought to have visited Britain on Soviet ships. PRO KV 3/15 (SF 450-0302-2/ Vol. 2) Appendix H.



French comrades, and the storm which sank them held us prisoner for about a week in the fishing settlement of Zemlianoi.<sup>16</sup>

In Vardö I had my first opportunity to experience the 'brilliant' international liaison arrangements that we had heard so much about in Moscow. A certain Bodin [*phon.*], a louche-looking eighteen-year old with the air of a criminal, was working there. He was engaged in secret work, but the 'secrets' were known to the entire population of Vardö, including the police.

I reached Christiania without incident. (Before my arrival they had been arresting every delegate who passed through.) I had to spend ten aimless days in Christiania before, with the aid of some strong language, managing to see the other 'Comintern boy', the forty-year-old Latimer (otherwise Jurgis), the organizer of the Comintern's international liaison. The storage he had set up for communist literature was stunning in its childishness. Comrade Latimer had established this in the middle of Christiania, in the building which housed the Folkets Hus or cultural centre, permanently ringed by police. Here in broad daylight bundles of literature were delivered and packets of books carried out, before the eyes of the police and their informers. The dispatch of every pound in weight of literature cost almost ten English shillings. It was plain to me that disaster awaited the product of Latimer's endeavours.

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<sup>16</sup> 'Too late to catch the French comrades.' Accounts of this episode differ, and the dates vary. According to Victor Serge (*Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901–1941*, translated by Peter Sedgwick, London, 1963, p. 112), Serge's friend Sasha Tubin and three French socialists making for Vardö in a fishing smack perished in a storm, in 'August or September 1920'. A warning had been sent by a party of British delegates, including William Gallacher, Sylvia Pankhurst and John Clarke, who had struggled through the storm to Vardö by the same route only days earlier, but the warning came too late (William Gallacher, *The Last Memoirs*, London, 1966, p. 155 ff.). *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, however, (under Lefebvre) dates the disaster as occurring on 1 October, and Zuzenko's list of expenses (National Archives of Australia: A6122/40 111, Summary of Communism, p. 151) also indicates the beginning of October, rather than the mid-October date he gives in this report.

The French casualties were Raymond Lefebvre, François (Jules) Lepetit (Louis Bertho), and Jean (Marcel) Vergeat. Sasha Tubin, also from France, was acting as their interpreter. See also Pierre Broué, *Histoire de l'Internationale communiste 1919–1943*, Paris, 1997, p. 183.

I shared my concerns with him and received the reply that that was his business. With this I hastened to agree. I read of the seizure of the Comintern store, the arrest of Comrade Kurre-Grep [*phon.*] and Latimer's flight from Norway when I was in Liverpool, and the news came as no surprise. Latimer refused to give me any help at all, so with the help of Kurre-Grep I set off for Bergen, and from there stowed away to Newcastle-upon-Tyne and on to London. The suitcase of literature that I left behind in Murmansk with Comrade Vasten is probably still there, even though they promised to deliver it to Christiania before I got there.

### In England

In London I successfully made contact with Jack Tanner,<sup>17</sup> the editor of *Solidarity*, but he was unable to render any assistance as he had no links at all with the seamen's union. He did not know the address of a shop that sold false passports, and for some reason he regarded Tom Barker, the IWW 'industrialist' whom I knew from Australia, as untrustworthy so refused to put me in touch with him.<sup>18</sup> On learning that I was carrying about a hundred pounds destined for Australia, Comrade Tanner spent hours trying to persuade me to leave the money with him.<sup>19</sup> He would send it to me in Australia, he said, as it might be confiscated if I was arrested, and so on. But, knowing the financial situation of *Solidarity*, I declined these comradely favours.

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<sup>17</sup> Jack Tanner: active member of the shop stewards' movement. With Gallacher he attended the 1920 Comintern congress. Later suspected by British security of industrial espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. PRO KV 3/15 (SF 450-0302-2/ Vol. 2); KV4/124.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Barker: British radical and IWW activist in New Zealand and Australia. With other IWW members, he was deported from Australia to Chile in 1918. He reached London in 1920, so would have been a logical contact for Zuzenko. He later spent much time in the USSR, but ended his working life as a town councillor, and at one time Lord Mayor, of St Pancras in London. See E. C. Fry (ed.), *Tom Barker and the I.W.W.*, Canberra, 1965. I am grateful to Professor Ann Curthoys for providing a copy of this rare book.

<sup>19</sup> 'About a hundred pounds': as given, although Zuzenko has stated above that he was carrying £500 for agitation and propaganda in Australia.

Armed with a letter from Comrade Tanner to the Braddock brothers, I set off for Liverpool to take up the place arranged for me as a sailor on a steamer sailing for Australia. The comrades Jack and Wilfred Braddock introduced me to a sailor called Jack White, (a thief with a series of convictions), and through him to some representatives of the seamen's union. I was to pay two representatives ten pounds each for their time, and the same to the Braddock brothers and other comrades who had arranged my departure.

Owing to the incompetence of those who had undertaken to help me, I was arrested while signing my contract on the ship, for presenting a British unemployment registration card instead of the card issued to foreigners. After questioning me at length at the Aliens' Office, they seized my documents but released me, accepting my assurances that I would be in Southampton the next day and would obtain a passport from my consul, that is, the American consul [sic]. With my papers I lost any opportunity to join the crew of a ship. I could not obtain false papers because the British were unfamiliar with methods of clandestine work. The Communist Party of Great Britain at that time turned out to be the same as it very likely is now, not a united, centralized party of communists, but scattered and uncoordinated communizing crowds. There were crowds following Maclean, Sylvia Pankhurst and Gallacher; there was Jack Tanner's crowd and John Clarke's crowd, grouped around *The Worker*, — a total of about a thousand people.<sup>20</sup> In a city like Liverpool, the communist cell numbered just over fifty. Having lost hope of obtaining documents, I decided to make my way to America and count on Russian comrades there to help me manufacture the necessary papers.

In mid-December 1920, on board the steamer 'Baltic', I was arrested again, and released only after a three-hour interrogation, saved this time by the rosary I had in my pocket and my exaggerated good manners. In Liverpool raids had started to catch Irishmen, so I had to decamp to Stoke-on-Trent and stay there until the middle of January 1921. Helped by a stoker, I made my way to Saint John, New Brunswick, as a stowaway on the steamer 'The Queen of Ireland', posing as a stoker by night and a passenger by day throughout the ten-day crossing.

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<sup>20</sup> John Maclean (1879–1923): prominent Scottish socialist at this period.

### **In Canada**

I found a place in the Salvation Army hostel in Saint John and made the acquaintance of Carland [*phon.*], a fugitive Sinn Feiner from Ireland and persuaded him to cross the American border with me. I would provide financial help to pay his way to Boston, while he undertook to use the Irish route to get me across the border in the guise of a fellow Sinn Fein fighter. Helped by Irish priests, we crossed the border between Saint Stephen in Canada and Calais in the United States. I had to leave my things in Saint Stephen with a tailor named Higgins. We were given an autumn coat and felt hat each, so as to look like Americans, and crossed the border bridge by night. Then we travelled about twenty-five miles by car before taking a train to Boston. We arrived safely in New York, where I immediately tried to contact the American Communist Party through the Soviet bureau.

### **In America**

I arrived in New York in late January 1921. After a week of daily visits to the office of Isaac Hourwich,<sup>21</sup> I was fortunate enough to see Comrade Cherny,<sup>22</sup> a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party, and ask him for the favour I needed. I asked him to help me get some papers forged and advise me — at least — on how I might proceed from there. I gave Comrade Cherny a photograph of myself to show to Alexander Bilan or any other delegates to the Second Comintern Congress, so that they could recognize me. He promised to see me again in one week, for which I was grateful.

On the appointed day there was nobody there to see me, and only after seven weeks of continually pestering I. Hourwich did I receive a reply, through Hourwich, which said, ‘Zuzenko is staying with Korneev the sailor in his flat, so let Karneev help him.’<sup>23</sup> I was not amused by the wisdom of this advice. I was in no mood for it. I had left Russia in

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<sup>21</sup> Hourwich: this is the spelling used by the Hourwich family in the USA. A closer transcription of the Russian form is ‘Gurvich’.

<sup>22</sup> Cherny: possibly Chernago, Chernogo or Czerny.

<sup>23</sup> Korneev/Karneev: Zuzenko uses both spellings. It has not been possible to determine which is correct.

poor health. After those stormy times in Brisbane, after a voyage in chains round the world through the prisons of Australia, Tasmania, Ceylon, India, Egypt and Turkey, after a hunger strike and scurvy in Bombay and all the charms of the condemned cell, after the inferno of the underground during Denikin's rule and sometimes over-demanding work in the Soviet Ukraine, it is not surprising that my nerves were in shreds. 'Pray tell the authors of this wise advice, Jesus Christ's sky-pilots,<sup>24</sup> that I am not begging but demanding,' I said to Hourwich, 'that one of them comes down from the Olympian heights of the party to my level.' I wrote a memo demanding a meeting, as was my right under Paragraph 11 of the Comintern Statute concerning party discipline.

A week later I had a meeting with Alexander Bilan, who explained that all that time each of two American communist parties had been trying to pass me into the care of the other. As a consequence of the meeting with Bilan, I was sent a letter of introduction to William Costley, the organizer of the united Communist Party in San Francisco.

I spent more than ten weeks in New York altogether. During this time I established the following: since the October Revolution of 1917 the overwhelming majority of the Russian colony in America (all the proletarian part of it, which has discovered the charms of American capitalism by bitter experience) has followed all the events in Soviet Russia with hope and faith in the ultimate victory of the Russian proletariat. This whole toiling mass which calls itself communist represents a milieu from which it was easy to form the cadres of a proletarian party and on this solid foundation begin to build the Communist Party of America. This was all too easy and straightforward. The creators of the Communist Party of America opted for a thornier, more difficult path. From the very first steps of their 'activity' they started splitting and dividing the community, repelling it by their sordid stratagems, and by the vile odour of Chichikov's servant Petrushka expelling from their ranks all that was best in them.<sup>25</sup> This, I repeat, was extremely difficult

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<sup>24</sup> '*Etim aeroplanam Iisusa Khrista*', more literally 'Jesus Christ's aeroplanes', a figure of speech of a kind regularly found in Zuzenko's prose.

<sup>25</sup> Chichikov and Petrushka: the hero of Gogol's novel *Dead Souls*, and his servant. Chichikov occasionally tells Petrushka that he should 'go to the baths once in a while'.

to do. At the first colony-wide congress, the colony held firm, in spite of all attempts by the leaders of the American Bolsheviks to break the Russian colony down into smaller units. Love for Soviet Russia proved stronger than disgust with home-grown Bolsheviks of the American type. Only at the second colony-wide congress did Nicholas Hourwich (the son of quite a clever father), Aleksandr Stoklitsky and others from the American Communist Party, aided by Perkus and Bianchi (anarchists), succeed in dividing the masses of Russian emigrants finally and irrevocably. At the third congress, in spring 1921, anti-Soviet, anarchist elements in the colony held sway. I do not wish to suggest that this unworthy deed was planned to undermine the high prestige of the Great Russian Revolution, far from it. There is also intellectual poverty, lack of organizational ability among those interfering in affairs other than their own, and total political illiteracy. It is sad and comical to hear or read in reports how the Russian colony has been divided. The stumbling block was the much-lamented 'oath to the commissars', invented by Nicholas Hourwich, A. Stoklitsky and their ilk. They demanded recognition of the 'Russian Government of People's Commissars', and by this means aroused the opposition of the anarchists, who upheld the principle 'All power to the Soviets'. It may easily be deduced that neither side had the slightest idea of the Constitution of the RSFSR. They had simply never read it. I had to write an article entitled 'Criminal Quixotry' to explain to the 'leaders' the structure of power in Soviet Russia.<sup>26</sup> My article, which explained the RSFSR Constitution, was nothing less than a new 'discovery of America'. Readers were surprised that things were so simple. Up to the second colony-wide congress, in all American towns where there were groups of Russian workers, Soviets had been appearing and all kinds of committees, self-help circles, schools, and societies of aid to Soviet Russia had been springing up. All this was wasted. The theft of sums of money from the Society for Medical Aid to Soviet Russia made the names of Colonel Rustam-Bek and Dr. Mikhailovsky common currency. The work of the Society for Medical Aid to Soviet Russia immediately ceased because the whole colony learned of the shabby deeds of the New York centrists, of their carousing, bouquets for chorus-girls and other sordid goings-on.

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<sup>26</sup> А. Матуличенко, 'Преступное донкихотство', *Новое русское слово* 28/2/1921. Matulichenko was one of Zuzenko's many aliases.

Not wishing to spend my time in New York to no good purpose, I attended several meetings, where I managed to discredit groundless anarchist criticism and explain the significance of the Kronstadt mutiny as a counter-revolutionary conspiracy.<sup>27</sup> For the newspaper *Novoe russkoe slovo* I wrote a number of articles and feuilletons. This was the first attack on the anarchists, whose influence had by then become particularly strong among the masses. The leadership of both parties felt no inclination to work in the masses. One Khlestakov of the revolution would happily devour the next for the chance to claim the higher ground.<sup>28</sup> All the American CP's past rifts have resulted not from ideological differences, but because of the wish of some to lord it over the others. If there was a need for a purge of the ranks of the RKP to rid it of hangers-on, a purge of the leadership of the CP of America is a matter of urgency for the Comintern. Not a purge of the whole party — the rank and file are in good health — but the leadership is infecting the whole organism.

Before leaving New York I managed to persuade M. Karneev, Iumshanov and Zubovich, who held control of the typesetting equipment acquired for the newspaper *Rabochii i krestianin* [Worker and Peasant], to send this equipment to Soviet Russia as a gift from the Russian community in America. By this single manoeuvre I killed two birds: the latest typesetting equipment, a most valuable present for the Profintern, was sent to Soviet Russia; and the cheap little anarchist rag *Amerikanskie izvestiia* [American News], which was printed on it, was destroyed.<sup>29</sup> Karneev, Iumshanov and Zubovich gave an undertaking to the Soviet Bureau in New York that they would take the equipment after paying about \$3,000 to the factory. I held talks with Dr. Dubrovsky. He assured me that he would do everything the next day and that he

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<sup>27</sup> Kronstadt mutiny: in February 1921 the sailors of the Kronstadt island naval base in the Gulf of Finland, hitherto staunchly in support of the Bolshevik government, rebelled and demanded free speech and secret ballots in the elections to the Soviets. The mutinous garrison was suppressed by government troops sent across the ice to storm the fortress.

<sup>28</sup> Khlestakov: the vain and boastful central character of Gogol's play *The Government Inspector*.

<sup>29</sup> It is not clear whether the newspapers mentioned here appeared in English or Russian.

had just received an order from the Soviet government for type-setting equipment, then grovelled and whined . . . and didn't lift a finger. Through an influential communist, the anarchist *Amerikanskie izvestiia* put pressure on Dr. Dubrovsky, and the matter of dispatching the equipment to Soviet Russia came to a halt. Thus, with the aid of 'influential' communists, *Amerikanskie izvestiia*, printed on machinery that does not belong to the anarchists, flings right-wing lies and slush at Soviet Russia.

I arrived in San Francisco in mid-April 1921 and straight away got in touch with William Costley, the organizer of the United Communist Party, and with his assistance expected to leave San Francisco on 25 April 1921.

As I was expecting a reply to a letter sent to the Comintern in Moscow (encoded and sent to Artur Iuzenius, at Tombtabagatten [phon.] 24, Stockholm, Sweden), I asked William Costley to enquire of the Executive Committee of the American Communist Party whether there was any mail for me from Moscow. I also asked him to pass on the fact that I was leaving for Australia on 25 April. A reply came three days before my planned departure, in the form of a telegram saying, 'If Nargen is an Australian he is now undeserving of any trust at all. Do not give him anything,' signed 'ARDEN'.<sup>30</sup> On receiving this cable, Comrade Costley flatly refused to give me any help at all. 'How do I know?' he asked. 'You might be an *agent provocateur* for all I know.'

I did not succeed in departing on 25 April. On 1 May 1921 a seamen's strike began and for several months any possibility of proceeding to my destination was removed. At the end of June, over two months after the cable virtually accusing me of being a provocateur, I met William Costley, who said that he had just received a letter from New York advising him to help me leave America. He proposed that I embark as a strike-breaker and jump ship on arrival, but refused to render any assistance.

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<sup>30</sup> Zuzenko cites this telegram in Russian but it was most probably sent to Costley in English. When Zuzenko was arrested in Melbourne in August 1922, among the material found on him was a telegram in English which read: 'If Nargen is Australian then now unreliable give nothing Arden.' NAA A6122/40 111 p. 147.



William Costley filled me with physical revulsion, made stronger by the incident of the telegram. Costley is the organizer of the United Communist Party of America for the whole of America's and Canada's west coast, the Philippines and the Hawaiian islands. In addition to the high calling of communist and party organizer, he holds the title of 'bootlegger' or 'moonshiner', that is, a liquor-smuggler and even manufacturer of home-brewed alcohol. 'How could I live on my party pay?' he said to me by way of explanation. 'It's only moonshine that gets me by.' Although he asserts that he can swim in liquor, he can be seen asleep at every meeting. I protested and pointed out that the presence of such gentlemen in the party was intolerable. It was only fear of publicity that compelled the centre to send another organizer, although Costley remained in the party. Dog does not eat dog. There are more such Costleys in the centre. The CP of America has many of them. They are a familiar phenomenon in America. Not long before I arrived in San Francisco, the chairman of the recently organized Workers' Party of America, (the legal CP), a certain DUNNE,<sup>31</sup> the former editor of the newspaper *Butte Montana Miner*, gave a lecture which will not be quickly forgotten by those who heard it. By taking collections and selling tickets they raised a pitiful sum, sufficient to cover the use of the hall, but DUNNE demanded \$700 for his efforts. This figure included a first-class hotel and travel expenses — his rail fare practically all the way from New York. 'If you don't pay me the full amount I'll sue you to get it,' threatened this American communist when asked to make concessions. It was necessary to raise funds by subscription to satisfy this 'comrade'. 'It's your own fault. Why didn't you draw up an agreement in advance?'

So as not to waste time in idleness, as soon as the strike made it impossible for me to continue on my way, I at once set to work in a mi-

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<sup>31</sup> Zuzenko has DAN (in Cyrillic, his capitals). The context points to William F. Dunne, who, according to Theodore Draper, edited the *Butte Daily Bulletin* and was a leading member of the party in question. See Draper's *The Roots of American Communism*, New York, 1957, p. 316. Dunne went on to represent the CPUSA in Moscow, and was at one point the Comintern representative in Outer Mongolia. See Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes and Kyrill M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism*, New Haven and London, 1998, pp. 360-61, and Broué, *Histoire . . .*, p. 991.

lieu that nobody had managed to do anything with, the Californian sects. I succeeded in establishing groups of the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia in Chico, Sebastopol, Sheridan, Sacramento and Elmira. Farming communes began to take shape, with a view to re-emigrating to Soviet Russia, but in late June 1921 I had to abandon all that work. When the first cables arrived about the famine in the Volga region, I realized the scale of the disaster and focused all my energies on establishing a society of aid to the starving in Soviet Russia. The criminal policy of the petty thieves with regard to the sums of money belonging to the Society for Medical Aid to Soviet Russia had undermined any faith the masses might have had that any aid at all was possible as long as the New York jackals existed. To fall in with the popular mood it was necessary to insert paragraphs such as this into the constitution of the Society: all aid raised by the Society is to be dispatched directly from San Francisco to Soviet Russia. Not a single dollar from the amount collected may be spent on expenses or as salary for staff. All such expenses are to be met by subscriptions raised with this express purpose and no other, and so on.

In mid-September a Society of Friends of Soviet Russia was set up in New York, and on orders from the centre the San Francisco communists appeared in order to take over our aid organization. We had had time to raise only \$3,000. It must be admitted that the seizure was carried out according to a meticulous plan. From non-existent organizations, delegates came to our aid committee with mandates in hand. They were cordially welcomed and granted a casting vote. By their voting majority they secured the relocation of the organization into the city, and their next manoeuvre was to change the constitution and the name from 'the Society of Aid to the Starving' to 'the Society of Friends of Soviet Russia'. I requested that this should not be done, since by the seizure of \$3,000 one can only drive away the whole body of sect members from the business of rendering aid. In the time I had worked among them I had discovered their nature. They will not argue with you but get up and depart without a word, leaving you their \$3,000 but you will never see them again and they won't give you so much as a brass farthing in aid. I wrote to the new CP organizer, the deputy of the bootlegger Costley, and asked to see him, but he did not see fit to make any reply. At a meeting of the aid committee, during discussion of the matter of the amendment of the constitution and

name of our society to the Society of Friends of Soviet Russia, I asked the 'friends' if they had contributed as much as one dollar to the miserable total of \$3,000, in order to have the right to decide the fate of the Society of Aid with their contrived majority. Why should they not set up their own Society of Friends of Soviet Russia and run a parallel operation to ours? A commotion erupted. Shrieks and cries of 'Kolchakite' and 'counter-revolutionary' etc. were directed at me.<sup>32</sup> But I was well aware of my duty as a communist and revolutionary. The speeches of the American Bolsheviks (if one can call them that) boil down to the fact that they feel no need to collect aid in cash or kind for the starving. They don't care a fig for the starving Volga peasants who once even shot communists. All they care about is being able to exploit the business of aid for purposes of agitation. (Such speeches are copies of the speeches of the leaders of American communism at mass meetings in New York, and have clearly shown the moral character of my opponents and the path I have to take.)

I addressed the sectarian delegates and said to them, 'Comrade sectarians, you can see for yourselves that we're wasting our time here. Let's leave all these shabby politicians to their own devices and go back to the Hill to get on with our own work.' (The Hill is where the sectarians live.) All of them rose as one man and left the meeting hall. Those who remained set up their Society of Friends of Soviet Russia and collected contributions by using our subscription papers. By this means I saved the cause of aid, which led to the dispatch of three loads of grain, clothing, women's and children's underwear, medicine and workshop equipment to the value of over \$100,000. The choir that we set up produced a clear profit of \$40,000 for the society of aid organized by the Quakers in a few days of touring in California. We established workshops in San Francisco and Los Angeles to repair worn footwear, as well as women's workshops to produce underwear and children's clothes. While I was working among the sectarians, they treated my word as law and did everything I advised them to do. It was a pleasure for me to work with those people.

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<sup>32</sup> Kolchakite: follower of Admiral A. V. Kolchak, the leader of the anti-Bolshevik forces which controlled much of Siberia in 1918-19. Following his capture by the Bolsheviks, he was executed in early 1920.

But perhaps none of this work that I was doing had any connection to the Comintern. Perhaps I should have sat on my hands and done nothing while waiting for the chance to sail for Australia. This is what some in the Comintern were saying to my wife. Concerning these suggestions I will reply in person to each comrade.

Summing up my work in California, I would like to say that in my opinion the aid that I raised (approximately \$150,000) was aid to the Comintern since it consolidated the basis on which the Comintern rests, that is, Soviet Russia. The communes I have established with tractors and agricultural machinery have been tilling the soil of Soviet Russia for months now. These are communes of practising idealist communists, and the propaganda work they do by showing communism in action is also of benefit to the Comintern. By means of discussions and lectures and by using technical groups and societies of aid we have succeeded in instilling in the sectarians a spirit of awareness of themselves as a class, making many of them 'former sectarians' and communist sympathizers. The communists who later take over my work will have an easier job.

In connection with my aid work I visited Los Angeles and the Russian colonies of Southern California, Northern Mexico (the colony of Molokane in Guadalupe), but in all that time I never forgot that my main work lay in Australia.<sup>33</sup>

For the first few months after the strike it was absolutely impossible to find work on any ship bound for Australia. With the aid of Comrades Edrik B. Smith [*phon.*] and M. J. [G.?] Smith and some other comrades from the Auckland section of the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia, I tried several times to leave America, without success. The most important thing I lacked in order to sign on as a crew member was identity papers, and I had no opportunity to acquire any.

In October 1921, on the advice of some comrades, I enlisted Comrade William Sheehan, from Seattle, an influential seaman and IWW 'Industrialist', who could use his contacts to help me embark for Australia. Comrade Sheehan tried until mid-December and found me a place as a galley hand on an Australian ship, but the port authorities

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<sup>33</sup> Molokane: a Russian religious pacifist sect which shares some beliefs and customs with the Dukhobors (see following note), rejecting authority and the priesthood and adhering to a vegetarian diet. The Guadalupe in question is near Monterrey in Nuevo León, Mexico.

refused to let me sail without a passport. Frustrated by this failure, Comrade Sheehan departed for Chicago, leaving me to find my own way out of the situation.

While I was looking for work on a ship, my face caught the attention of spies in the customs service, who started regarding me with suspicion. I made one more attempt, and with the help of the left wing of Sinn Fein obtained a letter of recommendation to the manager of a shipping company (to secure employment), and even to the Serbian consul (to procure a passport) from the Roman Catholic archbishop Monsignor Rodgers [*phon.*]. When this too failed, there was nothing for it but to go to Seattle or return to Soviet Russia. I had no right to return without being recalled by the Comintern, so in early January 1922 I left for Seattle (Washington).

While working in California and talking to comrades who were good workers and communist in their convictions, I asked why they were not party members. Comrade Kavenoki [*phon.*], a doctor in a Los Angeles city hospital, whose organization of medical aid and aid for the starving had done much for Soviet Russia, replied bitterly, 'See for yourself; how can we work with people like that? Short, the editor of the paper *Rank and File* and a non-party communist, assured me that if party organizer Costley, Talantair and Feingold [all *phon.*] left the party many good honest workers would join it. The case of the San Francisco section is typical: Comrades Feingold and Victor Boft [*phon.*] — good friends both — are comfortably ensconced in the party. No work gets done at all. There is nobody to deliver lectures. Meetings are soporific. Terminal tedium reigns. V. Boft decides to give a report on the rebellion by the Czechs and Slovaks in Vladivostok and Feingold immediately becomes his worst enemy. Asked why he is so against Boft, Feingold replies that 'if we don't stop him, Boft will use his reports to get above himself and make a career for himself when he gets back to Soviet Russia.' This is probably the only reason why Heinrich Schepte [*phon.*], the only person capable of conducting organizational work in San Francisco, was expelled from the party. Schepte was an old party worker. Probably for this reason alone squalid little denunciations of me were sent to Australia, Moscow and the newspaper *Novoe russkoe slovo*.

In Seattle I went to see Vandevir [*phon.*] and Carpenter (lawyers in charge of giving legal advice to workers), and they put me in touch with the secretary and president of the Seattle branch of the Workers'

Party of America, to whom I recounted my misadventures. In Seattle, far from the seat of infection, I first encountered people from the party who undertook to help me, instead of squabbling and mutual backbiting. While there I delivered several lectures and a report for the Workers' Party of America. An agricultural group was set up under the auspices of the Seattle branch.

After one unsuccessful attempt to find a place on a ship leaving for Australia, I decided to leave Seattle, since the head of the port authority had issued an order to employ only those who were 100 percent American. In mid-February I took a train to Vancouver, British Columbia, as I had an appointment with Comrade Alfred Wells, the editor of the *British Columbia Federationist*. At White Rock station the Canadian border guards arrested me on Saturday and detained me until the Monday, when they released me. Comrade Alfred Wells put me in touch with the organizer of the Communist Party in British Columbia, Comrade William Bennett and Julius Stelp, who did more than anybody to help me find a way to get to Australia. I had to get documents, as without them all attempts to leave were doomed to failure. American and British passports were unsuitable for forgery because the consuls used a colourless punch to stamp the photographs, leaving raised lettering and the seal of the state on the photograph of the bearer. Only the Swedish and Norwegian consuls practised the old method of stamping them with a rubber stamp with dye. Having obtained a passport and even a birth certificate in the name of Toni Tollagsen Tjorn, a citizen of Norway, with Comrade Bennett's help I prepared a rubber stamp, inserted my photograph in place of that of the original bearer and carefully matched the seals on the photo to those on the passport. The result was a residence and travel document so well manufactured that not even the police sleuths of Australia and the British Scotland Yard could detect that it was forged.

Before sailing I had time to travel to the Dukhobor colony at Brilliant station in British Columbia. I spent only five days among the Dukhobors. We talked and I was given the opportunity to address two mass meetings and have an eight-hour debate with their leader, Petr Verigin, at a general assembly of Dukhobors.<sup>34</sup> This sly, imperious,

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<sup>34</sup> More detail on Petr Verigin (Peter Lordly) and the Dukhobor (Doukhobor) community at Brilliant at this period may be found at

proud old man realized that instead of reinforcing hatred for Soviet Russia in his flock he was merely displaying the weakness of his own philosophy and the justice of Russia's toiling masses who had risen up against their age-old oppressors. He also realized that my continued presence might render his spiritual flock less amenable to discipline, so he declared his brotherly love for me before the whole assembly and the very next day notified the police of the presence of a Soviet troublemaker. Three railway stations, including Brilliant, were cordoned off by the police. After a night-time meeting with some independent Dukhobors at Thrums station,<sup>35</sup> I had to make my way to a small remote station and change my clothes. Then, with the help of some Dukhobors, I took a train west in the early morning and reached Vancouver safely. A fifteen-thousand strong body of practising Dukhobor communards resettled in Soviet Russia would make a powerful contribution to the communization of the countryside and the cause of propagating communism by action. They use machinery to till the land, have splendid orchards and a cannery for fruit and vegetables, and a very well equipped sawmill. But in spite of all their current prosperity, the pull of the homeland, of Soviet Russia, is strong. Against the background of the decaying Socialist Party of Canada, which has become a sect of Marxist grasshoppers of a strongly conservative bent, the work of the Communist Party of Canada is a joy to behold. Everything that can be done with their slender resources they are doing. Their dependence on New York may be clearly sensed. If a leaflet produced by some schismatics who left the CP of America in autumn 1921 is to be believed, there are 30 idle comrades at the centre, receiving a party salary and doing nothing, while the BC party organiser Comrade William Bennett works without any pay at all, and works with utter dedication, and with next to no resources!!!

After so many years of work by the Comintern's International Liaison Department [O.M.S.], there are no photographs from Soviet Russia

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<http://www.michaelkluckner.com/bciw3doukhobor.html>. Verigin had been the spiritual leader of this community since his arrival in Canada from Siberian exile in 1902, and had established this community following an initial period in Saskatchewan. He was killed in a train bombing in 1924.

<sup>35</sup> Thrums: presumably this locality. Zuzenko's Russian form back-transliterates as 'Tramps'.

in Vancouver. They have to copy photos from magazines for lectures, to show by magic lantern. Only two days ago a letter I received from Canada, from Vancouver, told of a very successful lecture by Comrade Bennett about the Red Army. Their resources are limited. They need support, but where are they to find it? 'New York had promised to allocate part of the sum Louis Fraina was supposed to bring with him, but the scoundrel decamped to Mexico with the money and left us empty-handed,' Comrade Bennett complains.<sup>36</sup> The comrades in Canada know Bennett. He has to be dragged to the canteen to be fed, because otherwise, without work and fully engaged in party business, without money, he sometimes doesn't eat for days on end. The stratum<sup>37</sup> which is growing into a proletarian party which will topple capitalism in the New World is being built not by the jokers in New York, not by the pitiful politicians of the centre of the Communist Party of America, but by the great attraction of Soviet Russia and the Comintern, and by hungry enthusiasts like Bennett in the backwoods of America and Canada.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Louis Fraina: American radical, later known as Lewis Corey, who had visited Moscow in 1920 and acted as a Comintern courier. According to Paul Buhle, he was sent 'on a fool's errand to Mexico' to give guidance to 'a non-existent Communist movement'. See Paul Buhle, 'Louis C. Fraina/Lewis Corey and The Crisis of the Middle Class', *New Politics*, vol. 5, no. 1 (new series), whole no. 17, Summer 1994. According to Anthony Cave Brown and Charles MacDonald, the ECCI funds Fraina was conveying from Russia, US\$60 000, were not intended for the Canadian communists, but to establish a Mexico City bureau from which to operate against the USA. Nearly \$20,000 of that amount was lost in Britain en route, but Fraina was 'exonerated from all blame'. *On a Field of Red: The Communist International and the Coming of World War II*, London, 1982, p. 161.

<sup>37</sup> 'stratum': word partially obscured. Possibly 'force' (*sila* / *zhila*).

<sup>38</sup> Bennett seems to have proved a less reliable ally than Zuzenkov thought. In a memorandum dated 22 March 1924 and headed 'Re Mamon or Mammon [i.e. 'Mamin' or Zuzenkov]: Agent of Communist International', the Regina office of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police records that in 1923 'Wm. Bennett of Vancouver' passed on information that 'Mamon' (real name unknown) had stayed with him for three months while seeking to secure passage to Australia. Bennett described the process of falsifying the passport and told how the Comintern agent had successfully used it to travel to Australia, where he was arrested and deported. A copy of this memorandum is held in the Poole-Fried



The police spies who had infiltrated the membership of the Vancouver Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia stepped up their efforts when they discovered the address of Comrade Aleksandr Mamin. In order to avoid arrest I had to cross to Victoria, BC, for a while, and thence on the steamship 'Niagara' I sailed for New Zealand, so as to be able to slip into Australia unnoticed on a local tramp steamer rather than an immigrant ship. I left Canada in early May 1922 and in early June arrived in Auckland, where I stayed for one month and obtained the right to permanent residence in New Zealand and a police registration card. I then set off for Sydney, where I disembarked without hindrance at the beginning of July 1922.<sup>39</sup>

The American Communist Party, or rather some of its minions, had put about every conceivable vile story concerning me and sent these on to Australia. For example, much was written about my not wanting to go to jail in Australia again, about my cowardice, and about my going over to the anarchist camp. But none of these fabrications were believed. That I was not a coward was known. The silly fable about my anarchism was also rejected, since my article 'A Reply to Emma Goldman', published in *The British Columbia Federationist* and the American *Worker* and signed Aleksandr Nargen, had been received and read in Australia.<sup>40</sup> The extraordinarily energetic little tale-mongers from America had also written of my rabid anti-semitism, little knowing that I was married to a 'semiter' and had a 'semi-semiter' daughter.

### In Australia

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Collection at the University of Queensland's Fryer Library, UQFL 336, Box 8, Folder 9, Zuzenko.

<sup>39</sup> His date of arrival in Sydney was 11 July 1922.

<sup>40</sup> Emma Goldman (1869–1940): an exponent of radical feminist politics and anti-capitalist thought. Born in Lithuania, she spent most of her adult life in the USA, but was deported to Russia in 1920. She left Russia in late 1921 and wrote of her deep disillusionment with the revolution. The article referred to here was published in *The Worker* (New York), 15/7/1922, under the headline 'Russian Worker Delivers a Smashing reply to Emma Goldman's Lying and Misleading Articles'. The byline is 'Nargin' (without first name). (Zuzenko used the forms 'Nargin' and 'Nargen' interchangeably.)

'Silly fable': in fact Zuzenko had been a committed anarchist for many years, but had renounced his anarchism some time after the October revolution.

While I was travelling, a Communist Party had been formed in Australia and already a schism had developed over the question of who should lead it: members of the former Australian Socialist Party or members of the trade union movement. The two groups had managed to antagonize each other since the split, and by the time Comrade Freeman arrived there was a deep rift separating them. The late Comrade Freeman only had dealings with the socialist group.<sup>41</sup> During his short stay he had done nothing to foster the unification of the warring sides, and he had departed leaving a deeper division than before.

Shortly before my arrival the comrades grouped round the trade union movement had appropriated all the Communist Party's furniture at night and placed it on their own premises. They had also seized all their books. The Socialist Party (or rather Reardon, Everitt and Co.,<sup>42</sup> without the knowledge of the others) had responded by selling the party's printing equipment and type. My arrival, as an organizing comrade from Moscow, impelled them to re-examine the matters which had led to the rift. (In a quarrel the origins of the dispute are usually forgotten with time.) I had to listen to both sides, tell both of them that they were in the wrong and demand that a conference be called to unite them.

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<sup>41</sup> i.e. the Australian Socialist Party. Paul Freeman had been deported from Australia as an IWW activist in 1919 and had made his way to Moscow. He paid a clandestine visit to Australia in January–April 1921 to urge unity in the CPA on ASP terms, then returned to Russia, where he was killed in July in the same railway accident which took the life of Artem and some visiting foreign communists. See Raymond Evans, 'Radical Departures: Paul Freeman and Political Deportation from Australia following World War One', *Labour History*, No. 57, Nov. 1989, pp. 16–26; Frank Farrell, 'Freeman, Paul', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 8 (1891–1939), (Melbourne, 1981). A more detailed and severely critical account of Paul Freeman's return visit to Australia from Moscow (January–April 1921) is given by Petr Simonov. RGASPI (ADFA) *fond* 495, *opis'* 94, *delo* 6. Simonov refers to Freeman by his alias, 'Miller'.

<sup>42</sup> Reardon, Everitt: Arthur Reardon and Ray Everitt, leading figures in the 'Liverpool Street' (former ASP faction). Zuzenko has 'Riordan' and 'Everet'.

A report on the conference was sent from Sydney by me to the Executive Committee, in coded form.<sup>43</sup> I sent it as soon as the results of the proceedings became clear. The sides reunited on the basis of equal representation on the Communist Party's Executive Committee. As long as the Communist Party of Australia has existed it has not committed any tactical errors, if we discount the split. Its only organizational weakness was that it was not tightly interwoven with the masses. I informed the comrades of the details of the structure of the Russian Communist Party, and it was decided to devote more attention to the establishment of cells in the trade union membership.

During my stay in Sydney I gave twelve lectures about Soviet Russia and succeeded in dispelling the prejudice against Soviet Russia that was forming in the Russian community in Australia under the influence of anti-Soviet agitation by a group of Russians who had returned from Soviet Russia not long before I arrived.

After Reardon, Everitt and Co. had sold the party's printing equipment, printing of the newspaper *The Communist*, of pamphlets, appeals and the like had to be contracted out to private firms, which is very expensive. The lectures I gave in Sydney and Melbourne were for the benefit of the fund for agitation and propaganda. They yielded about 60. This laid the foundations of an agitation and propaganda fund. I handed over to the party's Executive Committee the 110 I had brought from Moscow (all that I had not expended on the journey). To the addresses of the North Queensland comrades I sent subscription notices, which by my reckoning should yield at least another 60 for the party's funds. All these contributions reinforced the party's financial position, but no more than that. There is much that we cannot do. It will take years to raise the funds to acquire typesetting and printing machinery, and time waits for no man.

Our request is that the Comintern assist us with the acquisition of this equipment. In another report, dealing exclusively with the situation

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<sup>43</sup> The conference was held on 15 July 1922. The 'report in coded form' is presumably the letter headed 'Дорогая жинка и дочка Ксюнча' and dated 21 July 1922, dealing exclusively with Australian CP matters. *Fond 495, opis' 94, delo 13*, p. 31ff.

in Australia,<sup>44</sup> I will try to give a clearer account of the need for such expenditure by the Comintern for the good of the communist movement in all the Anglo-Saxon countries, because the course of history is preparing a place for Australia as the first among the Anglo-Saxon countries to have a workers' government (I mean, one on the Soviet model).

In Sydney I laid the foundations for a Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia in Australia, and in early August the party sent me to Melbourne to set up a Melbourne Communist Party branch. While the party was divided, the Melbourne branch had come apart at the seams and ceased to exist. I managed to establish a Russian group, to which I intended to link some English cells. In Melbourne I delivered a few lectures and one evening, while on my way to my next lecture, I was arrested by the police and detained in Melbourne's central prison. I was arrested on 9 August 1922 and on 17 August I was tried for returning to Australia while being a prohibited immigrant.<sup>45</sup> There were photographs of me in all Australian ports, along with my fingerprints. The police were able to prove only that I was the person deported from Australia for organizing the Brisbane riots in March 1919. I insisted that my real name was Toni Tollagsen Tjorn, a Norwegian by birth and that my passport, issued by the Norwegian Consul General in Montreal through the consul in Vancouver, was my genuine passport. If the Australian authorities sought to deport me, they should send me to Norway.

There was little the authorities could do with me without calling forth a hue-and-cry against themselves. The Australian Seamen's Union, led by Tom Walsh, took up my case.<sup>46</sup> The leaders of the Labor Party, the proletarian member of Federal Parliament Considine, and others, set about causing a stir.<sup>47</sup> Two solicitors took on my defence. I

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<sup>44</sup> Presumably a reference to the document which follows this one at *fond* 495, *opis'* 94, *delo* 18, pp. 18–27, Zuzenko's report to the ECCI, 'О положении коммунистического движения в Австралии', 18/3/23.

<sup>45</sup> Zuzenko writes 'emigrant', meaning 'immigrant'.

<sup>46</sup> Tom Walsh: Walsh and his wife, Adela Pankhurst Walsh, the sister of Sylvia, were close friends of Zuzenko at this time. A short time later both defected from the cause and were reviled as traitors to the working class.

<sup>47</sup> Considine: Mick Considine, a socialist parliamentarian, was generally supportive of the Russian communist cause and had taken the unusual step of representing Soviet Russia as acting consul while Simonov was in prison in 1919.

was sentenced to three months in prison and deportation, but my comrades would not accept my serving out the prison sentence. I was released on bail and my comrades secured a promise from the authorities that if I paid my own fare the authorities in Britain would not impose their penal hospitality on me. The newly re-established Melbourne branch of the Communist Party raised about £65, paid my fare to London and gave me about £20 for personal expenses. The fare to London came to £48. I did not want this collection for myself, preferring to be deported at the Australian government's expense. I offered to put the money into the party's propaganda fund, but the comrades insisted.

I had no time to visit Brisbane or the North Queensland towns to which people kept inviting me.

Before I left Australia I wrote a series of articles in Russian for the Russian community, explaining everything that was happening in Russia. I published these in the form of a booklet of twenty printer's sheets. In Melbourne a bureau of the Society for Technical Aid to Soviet Russia was set up.

On the steamship 'Hobson's Bay', accompanied by Comrades Jock Garden and Tom Payne, two other delegates of the Communist Party of Australia, I departed Australia's inhospitable shores on 7 September 1922. In Fremantle Comrade Tom Payne was detained and his passport seized by the customs authorities. I insisted that he continue his journey to Moscow, heedless of all prohibitions, to show the rulers of Australia that we would take no notice of their caprices. In Colombo police officers arrested Comrade Payne on board the ship and brought him to my cabin to collect his things. A few minutes later he vanished from my cabin without trace. They searched the ship for two hours, to no avail.<sup>48</sup> By this time the ship's company were fully informed about the mission of communism. Every evening I led discussions with the deck hands and stokers.

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<sup>48</sup> Payne, who was travelling to Moscow with a passport borrowed from his comrade Stan (Gordon) Stettler, had been hidden from Fremantle to Colombo by Zuzenko in his own cabin. The British police found him in Colombo, but Payne managed to elude them, stow away in another part of the ship and continue his journey. See the tape-recorded interview with Payne conducted on 17 May 1976 by Ann Turner & Andrew Reeves and held in the National Library of Australia, (NLA ORAL TRC 700).

A famous Church of England preacher in Australia, Canon Watson, during an argument with me about the nationalization of women in Soviet Russia, challenged me to a debate on the theme 'Religion in the Light of Science and Philosophy'. Not being confident that with my foreign accent I could hold my own against the Holy Father [sic], I suggested to Comrade Garden that he should speak instead of me, but Comrade Garden refused. The Holy Father turned out to be not so strong as I expected. In a debate that lasted about four hours he was unable to overcome a single one of my arguments. The audience of several hundred passengers and over a hundred crew members were on my side, which shows a significant shift in Anglo-Saxon thinking. In 1915 or 1916 the same audience would have tossed me over the side. The debate went better than I had expected. Passengers clustered about in knots until two in the morning, discussing the matters we had raised. When we sailed from Australia, a large crowd packed the dockside in Melbourne, singing revolutionary songs. I delivered a farewell speech from the deck of the ship. We sailed to the strains of *The Internationale*.

Looking back over the events on the 'Hobson's Bay', the revolutionary send-off from Melbourne, the mysterious disappearance of Comrade Tom Payne, and our debate, I did not expect to be warmly welcomed in London. I was not mistaken. In London they were waiting for me. I was arrested on board the ship by two Scotland Yard men and flung into Brixton Prison.

In all the prisons I have been in, I have struggled with the prison authorities from the very first day. Knowing that subsequently many of my comrades-in-arms would find themselves in just such conditions, I made it my business to struggle against the brutal, intolerable British prison regime, which destroys not so much a person's body as his spirit, bringing him down to the level of an object: number so-and-so, cell so-and-so. In His Majesty's Brixton Prison I had to wage a prolonged struggle day by day to win one concession after another. I had to fight for the right not to wash the floors, the right to exercise where I felt like it (not round the yard like all the others), the right to smoke in my cell, not to attend parade, not to doff my cap to prison officers, etc. My last demand was to be informed immediately of the progress of my case. I demanded that my case be handed over to Scotland Yard to implement the deportation order, and demanded a change of diet. When the authorities refused to meet my demands, at the end of November I de-

clared a hunger strike. All this time I was being held without trial or investigation. They did not observe so much as a semblance of legality. According to English law, nobody can be detained for more than twenty-four hours without being sentenced by a judge.<sup>49</sup>

On the third day of my hunger strike I was transferred to hospital, and on the fifth they started feeding me by force. They choked me twice a day 'to save my life' (as a doctor put it) for eight days, and then informed me that my case had been transferred from the Home Office to Scotland Yard. I asked that both my demands be met, or else I would continue my hunger strike to the same conclusion as MacSwiney, who had been held in the same isolation cell.<sup>50</sup> The authorities gave in. As a result of the hunger strike I was twice summoned to Scotland Yard and questioned about my work in Australia. To the end I maintained that my name was Toni Tollagsen Tjorn, that I was a Norwegian and that I had nothing to do with the Third International, being an anarchist by conviction. I had worked, I said, only on technical assistance to Soviet Russia, setting up farming collectives.<sup>51</sup>

I was prepared to be deported to Norway or Latvia, or anywhere else, if only to avoid telling the enemy I was Russian and an emissary of the Comintern, so as not to give them the chance to speak of the bad faith of Soviet Russia, which was sending forth its propaganda agents in spite of undertakings not to do this. The conservative newspaper *The Times* printed a dispatch late last November, reporting a speech by the Australian Minister for Defence, [George Foster] Pearce, in which he

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<sup>49</sup> Zuzenko displays an imperfect understanding of English law.

<sup>50</sup> Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, starved to death on hunger strike in October 1920. His death provoked large demonstrations in London and elsewhere.

<sup>51</sup> Zuzenko was interrogated on 19 and 20 December 1922 by Captain Guy Liddell and Captain H. M. Miller. He admitted to sometimes using the name Zuzenko as a journalist's pen-name, while insisting that his real name was Tjorn, as shown in his passport. His interrogators made clear to him that they knew him to be Zuzenko and had ascertained that the passport was not his. He did not, as he claims here, state that he was 'an anarchist by conviction'. Rather, he declared that he had renounced anarchism and the IWW. He made no secret of being a socialist and a revolutionary. Copies of the transcripts of his interrogation are held in the NAA: A1 (A1/15) 1924/30649 Soosenko — Undesirable.

said that a Russian Bolshevik agent had recently been deported from Australia.

In spite of all Scotland Yard's ploys aimed at obtaining any information at all against Soviet Russia, they had to replace my Norwegian passport with an alien's travel document in the name of Toni Tollagsen Tjorn, — 'nationality unknown' — departing for Russia. From prison I wrote several letters to the Soviet mission in England, asking them to forward my things to my wife. I did not want the [British] sleuths rummaging through my things, which contained all issues of *Knowledge and Unity*, the Brisbane paper I had founded, two Australian statistical yearbooks and all published Australian books on agriculture. I wrote several letters to George Lansbury, the editor of the *Daily Herald*, and to Sylvia Pankhurst. (They are known to be opponents of the Comintern.) During my interrogation sessions at Scotland Yard, I was told several times that the actions of my friends, especially Sylvia Pankhurst, were terrible, that it was wrong to behave as they did, and that such behaviour was impermissible in any civilized society, and so on. I asked them several times how that 'poor defenceless lady' could possibly do them any harm, and received the evasive answer that her actions could have adverse effects upon my fate. From the hints and insinuations of the chief of police I deduced that in connection with my imprisonment the Scotland Yard sleuths wanted to charge Sylvia Pankhurst with poisoning the head of Scotland Yard by sending him some poisoned chocolate. With a comrade who was being released I sent a letter to the Soviet representative in London, asking him to warn Sylvia Pankhurst.<sup>52</sup> In the latter part of January this year I was transported to Newcastle, then Leith prisons and delivered to the SS Irtysh, which was sailing from Leith in Scotland to Petrograd, where it arrived on 31 January this year.<sup>53</sup>

If the comrades on the Comintern Executive Committee feel that any parts of my general report on my work over almost two and a half

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<sup>52</sup> No doubt Zuzenko's conspiratorial experience had made him suspicious, but it is difficult to see how a single question 'Do you know Miss Sylvia Pankhurst?', put to him by Capt. Miller in his interrogation on 19 Dec 1922 could have led to this elaborate construction.

<sup>53</sup> The Scottish prison and port is named by Zuzenko variously as 'Vleit' and 'Vleis' (in Cyrillic). It seems certain that he is referring to Leith.



years spent abroad seem imprecise, I will give a more detailed account in person. I will report on the state of affairs in Australia in a separate memorandum. I will try in a report to the ECCI to set forth my reflections on ways in which agitation and propaganda work might be conducted more successfully in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Edrik B. Smith, an American communist engineer, former member of the American Communist Party and now a member of the Russian Communist Party, will be spending two weeks in Moscow. His address will be: Gruzinsky pereulok 4/Staraiia ploshchad' 10, Apt. 40. He will be able to supply a clearer picture of the moral temper of the leadership of the American Communist Party.

In concluding my report, I would like to remind the ECCI that the Communist Party of Australia has empowered me to represent it at the ECCI until the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, and to represent it at the Fifth Congress if no other decision has been taken on the matter by that time. A person who has forged close ties with the revolutionary movement in Australia and knows what is going on there can have most success in establishing firm links, following the course of organizational work in the young party, reporting its achievements to the ECCI and sending news of the progress of organizational work. I beg the ECCI to recognize the validity of the mandate entrusted to me by the Communist Party of Australia and place the conduct of matters relating to the Australian communist movement in my care. I request that the ECCI accept my assurances that I am insisting on my right to continue working for the Comintern not for the sake of my career, but for the good of the revolutionary movement in Australia, which I regard as the Achilles heel of British imperialism. Working in Soviet Russia, by applying every effort perhaps I shall be able to assist the revolutionary forces of Australia in binding together. And when the period of organizational work comes to an end, the highest honour for me will be to be in Australia as the standard-bearer of the socialist revolution.

I realize that by my report I shall make many new enemies; I realize that such reports do not make 'careers', but my duty as a revolutionary commands me to call things by their proper names, to call a spade a spade.

With communist greetings,

[signed] Aleksandr Mikhailov[ich] Zuzenko (A. Nargen)  
Official of the Communist International

*[Lines below appended in handwriting]*I delivered a report similar to this one at the Unification Conference of the Australian Communist Party. My report was adopted and the resolution carried on this matter was communicated to the ECCI in July 1922. This conference entrusted to me the leadership of the Australian delegation to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Before I left Australia I was instructed by the party to work on the ECCI as the representative of the Australian Communist Party.

Aleksandr Zuzenko, alias Nargen.