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# ‘A Bolshevik Agent of Some Importance’: Aleksandr Zuzenko’s Autobiographical Notes and British Government Records

KEVIN WINDLE

SOME time before his arrest in Leningrad as a supposed British agent in April 1938, Aleksandr Zuzenko, veteran revolutionary, journalist, prize fighter, master mariner, ‘Soviet archpriest’,<sup>1</sup> hero figure in Soviet literature and instigator of the ‘Bolshevik trouble’ in Queensland, set down a brief ‘Autobiography’, dated 20 October 1936. Fourteen months later, on 2 January 1938, three months before the NKVD closed in, he wrote a separate account of his work for the Comintern in the years 1920–23, when he travelled from Moscow via Britain, the USA and Canada to Australia. That account, which is no less autobiographical than his ‘Autobiography’, tells of the many difficulties and dangers he faced during a long and arduous journey, and of his efforts to hasten the advent of the Socialist Revolution in the countries along his route, especially in his principal destination, Australia.

The surviving copies are handwritten in ink in a school exercise book.<sup>2</sup> The handwriting is not that of Zuzenko himself, as attested in other documents and letters known to be in his hand, so there is little

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<sup>1</sup> Writing from Arkhangel’sk to his friend Konstantin Paustovskii in September 1925, Zuzenko reported that the local peasants referred to him as ‘sovetskii protopop’. ‘Dorogoi družhe Paustovskii’, 25 September 1925, Zuzenko family papers. I am grateful to Galina Aleksandrovna Panova, Zuzenko’s grand-daughter, for allowing me access to the family documents described here, and to Aleksandr Massov for photographing them.

<sup>2</sup> Zuzenko family papers.

doubt that both documents were recopied by a member of the family. The 'Autobiography' is addressed to B. Shabunin, the Secretary of the Party Committee of the Baltic Maritime Shipping Line (BMSL), and both originals were held in the archives of the Baltic Line, Zuzenko's employer for many years, but shown to his widow and daughter in the 1960s, after his posthumous rehabilitation in 1956. The greater part of the handwritten copy appears to be in the same hand, and in the case of the 'Autobiography' the transcribing was the work of his daughter, the late Kseniia Aleksandrovna Zuzenko. All the indications are that the untitled account of his journey to Australia is of the same provenance and shared the same copyist. The fact that it has been recopied may explain certain errors, for example, in the transcription of proper names.

The 'Autobiography', which is little more than a curriculum vitae in some 500 words, provides minimal information about his family or his early life. While it records his youthful activism in the Socialist Revolutionary Party, his part in strikes in Riga in 1905 and subsequent imprisonment, and his training as a navigating officer, it gives no detail. There is no room in it for more than the briefest outline of his endeavours as an agitator and journalist in Queensland in 1911–19, or of the Brisbane red flag demonstration and riots, and his first deportation to Odessa in 1919. His work for the Comintern is summarized in eight short lines. The longer report, devoted entirely to that period, more than compensates for the summary treatment in the shorter document. Since the dedicated report, referred to here for convenience as Z/BMSL (Zuzenko to Baltic Maritime Shipping Line), covers matters of broader significance than the merely biographical, and to some extent complements existing accounts, it will provide the focus of the pages below. It is of interest in that it amplifies and enriches the story which emerges from other sources, and in places contradicts those sources.

In compiling his accounts of himself in 1936 and 1938, Zuzenko was in all likelihood motivated by a desire to make good a large gap in the record, for the benefit of posterity. In February 1923, immediately after being expelled from Britain, he had provided a detailed report to his employer, the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI).<sup>3</sup> That

<sup>3</sup> For Zuzenko's report to the ECCI on his journey, see Moscow, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'noi i politicheskoi istorii (hereafter, RGASPI), f. 495, op. 94, d. 18, dated 28 February 1923. A full translation has appeared in Kevin Windle, "'The Achilles Heel of British Imperialism': A Comintern Agent Reports on His Mission to Australia 1920–1922", *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 18, 2004, pp. 143–76. An edited version in English may be found in David Lovell and Kevin Windle (eds), *Our Unswerving Loyalty: A Documentary Survey of Relations Between the Communist Party of*

report, however, here called 'Z/ECCI 28/2/23', like all other Comintern documents, was secret; the handwritten copy remained in the Comintern files, along with the typescript produced by its secretarial staff. If, as seems clear, Zuzenko did not retain a draft, he would have had nothing to hand down. He may also have been conscious of certain creative accretions which had arisen in the anecdotes surrounding his exploits and taken hold by dint of frequent repetition, and wished to leave a record of events as he remembered them. Since, as he says towards the end of Z/BMSL, his work for the Comintern was his proudest achievement, it was natural that he should wish to leave an account which would not be subject to the strict secrecy on which the Comintern, like all other Soviet government agencies, insisted. It does not, however, follow that this report is accurate in every respect. Indeed, certain of his statements, especially those concerning his imprisonment in London, are open to question and at odds with other sources. A comparison of the various accounts provides corroboration for some of Zuzenko's claims, but also shows up some significant divergences, while shedding light on the origins of some of the more fanciful stories which became an integral part of the legend of Zuzenko as told by Russian writers, memoirists and television scriptwriters.

There may well have been an added motivating factor: in the climate of 1938 no citizen, least of all a Party member in a position of responsibility, could avoid being affected by what Igal Halfin has called the 'Stalinist auto-da-fé', the 'mass psychosis that turned Soviet society into a war of all against all'.<sup>4</sup> In the preceding years, Zuzenko had witnessed increasing numbers of fellow Party members and ships' officers removed from their posts, never to be seen again. He himself had addressed shipyard workers and warned them of the perfidy of 'the vile Trotskyites and Rightist renegades'.<sup>5</sup> In the prevailing atmosphere, it was prudent, where possible, to have in reserve an account of one's services to the Party and the revolutionary cause. A difficult and dangerous mission to carry the revolution to Australia, the USA, Canada and Britain might have been expected to stand a loyal Communist in good stead when the records were examined. Some of the variations, omissions and additions in Zuzenko's reports, and certain of the shifts in emphasis, become more readily understandable when viewed in that context.

*Australia and Moscow 1920-1940*, Canberra, 2008 <[http://epress.anu.edu.au/oul\\_citation.html](http://epress.anu.edu.au/oul_citation.html)>.

<sup>4</sup> Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul*, Cambridge MA, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Shibalov, 'Agitatory za rabotoi: Beseda tov. Ziuzenko [sic] s sochuvstvuiushchimi Kanonerskogo zavoda', *Sovetskaia Baltika*, no. 80 (410), 16/6/37, p. 2.

Zuzenko's reports to the Comintern on his travels in 1920–23 and much of the Australian documentation on his revolutionary activity in Queensland have been accessible in archives since the early 1990s. However, it has only recently become possible to consider certain aspects of Zuzenko's account of himself in the light of British government documents. The Home Office files dealing with his case became available in the National Archives only in 2011. Under the heading 'Aliens and Deportations: Alexander Mikhailovich Zuzenko', they contain much material from the time of his second deportation from Australia in October 1922 and cover his visits to British ports as a sea captain until the mid 1930s.<sup>6</sup> They constitute a vitally important source of information on the British perspective, and on British aims in the handling of his case. Some of the discrepancies in the sources and some of the new elements in them are reviewed below.

\* \* \*

Zuzenko had not previously mentioned that Lenin had any role in the prelude and planning for his return mission to Australia. In *Z/BMSL*, where he tells of his visit to Moscow in the spring of 1920, we learn of preliminary discussions with Lenin in the Kremlin. His first face-to-face meeting with the Soviet leader was arranged, he says, by 'Artem' Sergeev (Fedor Sergeev, Tom Sergaev, Big Tom), the veteran Bolshevik who had been close to Lenin in exile before the revolution of 1905. Zuzenko had known Artem in Queensland, where both had lived, proselytized, agitated and published Russian newspapers for many years. Artem had returned to Russia as soon as possible after the February revolution of 1917, in time to take an active role in the events of that October, and subsequently had little time for Australian affairs, being fully occupied with the civil war and establishment of the new Soviet regime. *Z/BMSL* relates that Artem noticed his name in the list of delegates to the Third All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions in May 1920, and was eager to meet him and learn about events in Australia in the three years since his departure, in particular those which had culminated in Zuzenko's arrest and deportation. In *Z/ECCI* 28/2/23 he had made only fleeting mention of Artem and given little detail on the immediate consequences of their reunion. From the information provided here, it is clear that the news of the disturbances in Brisbane and the Russian role in

<sup>6</sup> London, The National Archives (hereafter, TNA), HO382/88/1-4, Aliens' Department: Aliens' Personal Files, 'Alexander Zuzenko: alien denied admission to UK'. Those documents of which copies were sent to the Australian government or Governor-General were released earlier through the National Archives of Australia (hereafter, NAA).

them made a deep impression on Artem, who is quoted as saying, 'Things have developed nicely. We absolutely must tell Il'ich [Lenin] about those events'.

Zuzenko goes on to recount how a few days later Artem arranged a private meeting in the Kremlin with Lenin who, as Artem had predicted, reacted favourably to the news from Australia and recommended that Zuzenko should pursue the matter further through the Comintern:

The conversation with V. I. [Lenin] lasted over an hour. He was interested in everything. To some of his questions neither I nor Artem could give an answer, although we had lived in Australia for quite a long time — so profound were his questions. Our weak point lay in the fact that we had seen Australia from the perspective of manual labourers. V. I. wrote a note to Zinoviev and said that I should make a report to the Large Bureau of the Comintern.

There is no suggestion here that Lenin was the initiator of the project. Indeed there is little doubt that the idea of a mission to Australia came from Zuzenko himself and was warmly supported by Artem. Zuzenko's report of this meeting with Lenin cannot be corroborated from independent sources, but there is evidence of personal acquaintance from other documents, some of which confirm that Lenin followed the course of Zuzenko's journey with interest.<sup>7</sup>

Zuzenko was sent by Artem and Yan Berzin, one of the Comintern's secretaries, to Petrograd to report to the 'Large Bureau' in the Smol'nyi Institute.<sup>8</sup> There his 'Report on the Work of the Union of Russian Workers in Australia and the Ideological Work of the League of Communists in Queensland' was well received, and a shorter version of it published, signed 'R.', in *Kommunisticheskii internatsional*.<sup>9</sup> In it he described the turbulent events of recent years in Queensland, the role of the URW and of himself as

<sup>7</sup> For example: Zuzenko's wife Tssetsilia, known in Australia as Civa, often told of meeting Lenin in person at the Second Comintern Congress (1920). Australian files on the case contain a report of Lenin in conversation with Jock Garden voicing surprise that a man like Zuzenko should have been caught. NAA, A6122, 111, 'Summary of Communism', p. 273; Bessie Braddock's memoirs tell of Zuzenko in Liverpool destroying credentials obtained from Lenin in order not to be arrested with evidence. Jack and Bessie Braddock, *The Braddocks*, London, 1963, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> Z/ECCI 28/2/23.

<sup>9</sup> RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, A. M. Zuzenko, 'Doklad o deiatel'nosti Soiuza rossiiskikh rabochikh v Avstralii', 30 April 1920, pp. 11–15. *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, pp. 65–70. 'R.' [Zuzenko], 'Soiuz rossiiskikh rabochikh v Avstralii', *Kommunisticheskii internatsional*, 14 June 1920, pp. 1845–48.

its leader, and painted a picture of Australia as a country ripe for socialist revolution, needing only the spark provided by 'an experienced organizer, familiar with working conditions in Australia', such as himself.

From Petrograd he returned to Moscow and reported, as instructed, to Karl Radek, a senior Comintern official, who was then deeply engaged in Polish affairs. Radek angered him by keeping him waiting for five days, when, to make matters worse, he was sick with typhus, which he had caught in Petrograd. However, when Radek eventually received him, he found himself dispatched to the Kremlin clinic for treatment and was co-opted into the service of the Comintern in early May 1920.<sup>10</sup> He was given six weeks to hand over his responsibilities in Tiraspol', where he had been employed on leaving Odessa, and return to Moscow with his wife and baby daughter.

In the interval came a brief period of employment by the Cheka in Tiraspol', which he had not previously mentioned:

I worked for a while on the newspaper, and for about three weeks had charge of the information department of the Cheka, quarrelled fiercely with Comrade Podzakhodnikov, raised a question about him in the Party Committee, and in June 1920 arrived in Moscow with my family.

It is possible that the novelist Iurii Klimenchenko knew of this episode. In his novel *The Life and Adventures of Long Alek*, the hero, 'Chibisov', is taken on by the foreign department of the Cheka on a temporary basis — he wishes to return to the sea as a captain. A comrade tells him: 'The defence of the gains of the revolution is a noble cause, though a dangerous one', and Artem Sergeev, who figures in the novel under his own name, adds that the Cheka is 'the most important and challenging sector of work'. Chibisov is persuaded, and we learn that for a time he 'works with interesting documents from enemies of the Soviet state'.<sup>11</sup>

Z/BMSL, however, provides no detail on his Cheka duties in those three weeks. Instead, Zuzenko goes on to tell of the preparations for his epic journey to take the Revolution to Australia. Though this is not stated, it appears that it was Artem who later proposed a two-man mission. In June or July, Zuzenko learned, to his deep displeasure, that he was to be accompanied by another deportee from Australia, Paul Freeman. Freeman,

<sup>10</sup> Only Z/BMSL supplies any detail on his dealings with Radek. The date 'early May' appears in a memorandum from Zuzenko dated 15 August 1920. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2; *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, p. 70, and in Z/ECCI 28/2/23, *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, p. 160.

<sup>11</sup> Iurii Klimenchenko, *Zhizn' i prikliucheniia Long Aleka*, Leningrad, 1975, pp. 447–48.

an activist in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the militant workers' movement recently imported from the USA, had been arrested in Queensland in late 1918 and become a *cause célèbre* the next year as the Federal Government's attempts to deport him to the USA were frustrated. Eventually he was successfully deported to Germany and made his way to Moscow, arriving in May 1920. Freeman clearly enjoyed Artem's confidence and may well have been advised by him to speak to Zuzenko about forming a two-man delegation to rouse the workers of Australia.<sup>12</sup>

Zuzenko, however, did not welcome this suggestion. He held a low opinion of Freeman, which he expressed forcefully in a damning appraisal of Freeman's character, querying his sanity. His objections were supported by the American journalist and fellow-traveller John Reed, who was of the view that Freeman's 'many sufferings have a little unsettled his mind', and that he was ill-equipped for such a responsible assignment.<sup>13</sup> If Freeman lacked the personal support of Lenin, he was certainly close to Artem, who may have been unaware that Zuzenko saw Freeman more as a rival than a comrade. The eventual outcome was that both made separate missions to Australia, Freeman arriving eighteen months earlier and returning before Zuzenko got there, only to perish with Artem and five others on 23 July 1921 in a railway accident.

None of this is mentioned in Z/ECCI 28/2/23; the members of the Comintern executive were well aware of the background and of the circumstances of the death of Artem and Freeman. Z/BMSL expands somewhat on these matters, presumably because later readers would be less likely to know of them, and there is no hint of Zuzenko's previous contempt for Freeman, although the latter receives only the faintest of praise for his efforts in Australia: 'A few months before my arrival, Paul Freeman had been there. He had done a little work and set off back to Moscow.' There is also no trace of his previous scepticism with regard to Artem's revolutionary work in Australia, apparent in some slighting comments in Zuzenko's first report to the Comintern about Artem's

<sup>12</sup> On Freeman, see Raymond Evans, 'Radical Departures: Paul Freeman and Political Deportation from Australia following World War One', *Labour History*, 57, 1989, pp. 16–26; Kevin Windle, 'Round the World for the Revolution: A Bolshevik Agent's Mission to Australia 1920–22 and His Interrogation by Scotland Yard', *Revolutionary Russia*, 17, 2004, 2, pp. 90–118 (p. 97); idem, 'A Troika of Agitators: Three Comintern Liaison Agents in Australia, 1920–22', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 52, 2006, pp. 30–47 (pp. 30ff.); idem, *Undesirable: Captain Zuzenko and the Workers of Australia and the World*, Melbourne, 2013, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 127, 22 August 1920; *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, p. 75.



journalism in Australia.<sup>14</sup> He now displays more restraint in speaking ill of the dead than had been his habit in earlier years.

Zuzenko had not previously mentioned being present at the founding meeting of the Profintern (the International Association of Trade Unions) with Freeman, in the Delovoi Dvor in Moscow in August 1920. Twenty people attended, he says, including Solomon Lozovskii, Mikhail Tomskii, Grigorii Mel'nichanskii (known in the USA as George Melcher),<sup>15</sup> Angel Pestaña from Spain, John Clarke and Jack Tanner from Britain and Raymond Lefebvre from France. Zuzenko and Freeman represented Australia. The meeting closed after forming a provisional bureau to manage its affairs, and all those in attendance pledged to begin work to organize the first congress of the Profintern, which would be held in July 1921.

Like Z/ECCI 28/2/23, Z/BMSL describes the hazardous journey by boat and train from Murmansk to Christiania (Oslo), where he had a rendezvous with Olav Kyrre-Grepp, leader of the socialist movement in Norway, and on to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. At this point, and some others, Zuzenko's two accounts do not differ significantly.

Some of Zuzenko's Comintern and Profintern contacts, established at the Comintern congress, would be resumed in England. He would see more of Jack Tanner (not mentioned again in Z/BMSL), but elsewhere writes of him only in dismissive terms, and Sylvia Pankhurst, one of the most prominent figures on the British Left, is, he later declared, 'a scatter-brained [*vzbal'moshnaia*] lady'. In all his communications on the subject, Zuzenko evinces nothing but contempt for the leaders of the British Communist movement, and adjectives such as *bez'darnyi*, *tupoi*, *gluppyi*, *idiotskii* and *oslinyi* are liberally deployed. In a letter from England written on 9 January 1921, ostensibly to his wife but in reality to report to the ECCI, he had derided the widely publicized views of H. G. Wells and Clare Sheridan on the situation in Russia and observed that 'the Jack Tanners, [William] Gallachers, Pankhursts and kindred "Communists" mimic Wells without talent and repeat his statements parrot fashion, borrowing the views of Mrs Sheridan' on Russia and its leaders, and bandying catch-phrases like 'Lenin is ice; Trotskii is flame'. Incapable of action, they wait to be told what to do, in a country where revolution seems remote owing to

<sup>14</sup> RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 2, A. M. Zuzenko, 'Doklad o deiatel'nosti ...', 30 April 1920; *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, p. 66; Windle, *Undesirable*, p. 99.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Service, *Spies and Commissars: Bolshevik Russia and the West*, London, 2011, p. 49.

the prevailing atmosphere of 'slavishness, bigotry and complacency'.<sup>16</sup> Z/ BMSL provides some amplification of what he had written in 1921 and 1923:

In London I learned that the British Communist Party, about which Sylvia Pankhurst had talked so loudly at the Second Congress of the Comintern, had not yet assumed any organizational form. Instead of a party, in different corners of England there were groups, or little clusters: Sylvia Pankhurst's group, Bill Gallacher's Scottish group, the Liverpool group, and so on. I held two meetings with the leading comrades, reported to the ECCI in code on the situation in Britain, and was given a rendezvous in Liverpool, where my departure for America or Australia would be arranged. In Liverpool there was a one-hundred-strong communist group. They all immediately learned that a comrade had arrived from Moscow to acquaint himself with their work. I learned about it myself while sitting in the workers' club, where I had a rendezvous with the leader of the group, Braddock. I tried to keep my distance from the communist comrades. They would give me away out of stupidity.

His view of British socialists had not changed with time: in 1923 he had written of 'the incompetence of those who had undertaken to help me', meaning among others the Braddocks, to whom he had been introduced by Tanner. Although Jack Braddock, his brother Wilfred and his fiancée Elizabeth Bamber, better known later as Bessie Braddock MP, had done much to conceal him and assist him during his time in Liverpool in 1920–21,<sup>17</sup> there is no evidence of appreciation. On the contrary his natural optimism about the coming revolution in Britain seems to all but desert him as he contemplates the leading lights of its workers' movement.

Having at length found a ship to take him from Liverpool to Canada, Zuzenko crossed the border into Maine and stayed for an extended period in the USA, not because he wanted to, but because a prolonged seamen's strike made it impossible for him to travel on to Australia. However, he turned his stay to good account, finding ideologically unimpeachable outlets for his talents. He published articles in the Russian-language press, and sometimes in the English-language socialist press, dealing with developments in Soviet Russia and justifying the actions of the Revolutionary government. An effective orator, he spoke on these themes at many meetings of his fellow-countrymen and of American socialists.

<sup>16</sup> Zuzenko family papers.

<sup>17</sup> *The Braddocks*, pp. 49–50. Millie Toole, *Mrs. Bessie Braddock M.P.: A Biography*, London, 1957, p. 53; Windle, *Undesirable*, pp. 108–10.

Much effort was expended in organizing societies of aid and in famine relief. Z/BMSL says more about the commune formed in Seattle and therefore given the name 'Seiatel', still working in the Saian region of eastern Russia, he claims, in 1938. This was important to Zuzenko. The fact that this group had returned from the USA with his encouragement and support was tangible justification of the many months he had spent in that country in 1921–22. It spoke for the success of his mission and demonstrated achievements above and beyond the call of his Comintern duty. In other respects, his coverage of his activities in the USA and Canada is less detailed than in Z/ECCI 28/2/23.

The same applies to his work in Australia, which he finally reached in July 1922.<sup>18</sup> In his earlier reports and letters, his work with the Australian communists, in particular to bring unity to the warring factions, is treated more fully than in Z/BMSL. The new version summarizes in two paragraphs his efforts to bring the two factions together and his work with the trade unionists of New South Wales and Victoria.

It is noteworthy that Z/BMSL makes no false claims concerning a supposed sentence of death in either Australia or the United Kingdom. In Z/BMSL he writes, 'I was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with deportation from Australia for entering the country illegally'. Apart from the fact that 'six months' should read 'three months', this is an accurate reflection of the known facts.<sup>19</sup> Where his 'Autobiography' deals with the aftermath of the Brisbane riots in March 1919,<sup>20</sup> Zuzenko claims that he was 'promised capital punishment' for his involvement: 'I was arrested and held while I waited for the promised death sentence by hanging to be carried out', and numerous accounts in memoirs and fiction, such as that by Konstantin Paustovskii, and versions repeated by Zuzenko's widow, speak assuredly of a death sentence. However, Zuzenko may have chosen his words with care (a sentence 'promised' is not the same as one

<sup>18</sup> By the time he wrote this report, Zuzenko had evidently forgotten some of his Antipodean geography: he writes that he sailed for 'Khoborg' in New Zealand. He landed at Auckland before proceeding to Sydney in July 1922. He had earlier been briefly imprisoned in Hobart en route to Colombo in the course of his deportation in 1919.

<sup>19</sup> In Z/ECCI 28/2/23 Zuzenko himself had written 'three months', and other sources confirm this sentence. The *Argus* and the *Age* (Melbourne) also reported three months (18 August 1922).

<sup>20</sup> The riots began after the red flag demonstration on Sunday 23 March 1919. Zuzenko mistakenly writes 'February'. See Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance*, St Lucia, 1988; idem, 'Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation: Russian Radicals in Australia and the Red Flag Riots', in John McNair and Thomas Poole (eds), *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian Australian Relations*, Brisbane, 1992, pp. 125–71; Windle, *Undesirable*, pp. 50–67.

handed down by a court), although few of his readers would have been in a position to ascertain that no such punishment was ever canvassed, let alone imposed. The stories later told about Zuzenko are further characterized by confusion of his first deportation from Australia (April 1919) with his second (September 1922), but on neither occasion did he serve more than a short prison term preceding deportation.

In Z/ECCI 28/2/23 Zuzenko had supplied the Comintern Executive with an ample portrait of the Scottish-Australian communist Jock Garden, with whom he travelled from Melbourne to London on the *Hobson's Bay*.<sup>21</sup> He may have thought that this, like the precise nature of his work in Australia, was of less interest to his employers and his family, if that was the audience for whom he was writing in 1938, and less relevant if that audience included future NKVD investigators. He now confined himself to reporting that to Garden, who was proceeding to Moscow for the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, he entrusted his papers for the ECCI while still on board the ship. Garden was also able to provide the ECCI with recent news of his whereabouts and circumstances.

On finding himself detained in Brixton Prison in October 1922 for entering the United Kingdom without a valid passport, Zuzenko at once entered into deliberate conflict with the prison authorities. He reports in Z/BMSL:

My struggle was accompanied by brawls with warders and confinement in punishment cells on bread and water for three days, etc. They could not stand having me in the punishment cells for longer than ten hours because my battering on the iron door kept everybody awake.

This element, not present in his reports to the ECCI, had appeared in a brief sketch by Paustovskii and later in his novel, *The Gleaming Clouds*, where the setting was a prison in Brisbane.<sup>22</sup> It was given prominence in radio and television features about Zuzenko in the late 1960s and early '70s,<sup>23</sup> and nearly eighty years later it received more imaginative amplification

<sup>21</sup> RGASPI, f. 495, op. 94, d. 18, A. M. Zuzenko, 'O polozhenii kommunisticheskago dvizheniia v Avstralii', 16 March 1923; *Our Unswerving Loyalty*, pp. 180–81.

<sup>22</sup> Konstantin Paustovskii, 'Kapitan kommunard', in Paustovskii, *Rodina*, Moscow, 1972, pp. 14–15. The first version of this sketch, published in 1925, was considerably shorter and did not contain this passage. The novel is Paustovskii, *Blistaiushchie oblaka*, first published in 1929. See Kevin Windle, 'Konstantin Paustovskii, the "Communard Captain"', and William Morris Hughes, 'An Australian Motif in an Early Work of Soviet Literature', *Slavonica*, 14, 2008, 2, pp. 108–18.

<sup>23</sup> See Kevin Windle, 'The Heroics of Captain Zuzenko as Shown on Soviet Television', forthcoming.

in another novel, *The Fate of Captain Guzenko*, by the retired sea captain Valentin Gerasimov.<sup>24</sup>

Soon after arriving in Brixton, Zuzenko embarked on a hunger strike, and both his accounts state that he was subjected to force-feeding, which he resisted violently. On this the Home Office documents have less to say, merely confirming the fact of a hunger strike, with no detail: 'this man has been giving trouble as he suspects his correspondence is being interfered with and stopped. He has been hunger-striking, but has given this up now.'<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that the prison governor reports that his conduct in prison is 'good',<sup>26</sup> a description which ill accords with the behaviour he himself reports.

On other matters Z/BMSL is more sharply at variance with British documents, in particular the record of his interrogation by Captains H. Miller and Guy Liddell of Special Branch in December 1922, in the presence of a stenographer.<sup>27</sup> The official transcript of the interrogation does not show the same provocative defiance as he recalls; nor does it bear out any threats made by his interrogators. Z/BMSL reports the following exchange:

'The Tsar, the cousin of your King, used the gallows to intimidate everybody, and you must have heard how that intimidation ended for the Tsar himself. Don't try to intimidate me. London has plenty of lamp-posts.'

The gentleman turned livid with indignation, 'What did you expect to get out of your simian stunts, your hunger strike, your demands and the rest of it?'

'I expected what I got!'

'You've got yourself a trial in open court, a sentence, and the gallows as the organizer of a murder.'

I uttered an obscene oath.

'What?' said the gentleman. 'You're forgetting yourself in the presence of a lady.'

'That lady is a whore just like you.'

'Get him out of here!' roared the gentleman.

<sup>24</sup> Valentin Gerasimov, *Sud'ba kapitana Guzenko* <[http://www.litsovet.ru/index.php/material.read?material\\_id=148995](http://www.litsovet.ru/index.php/material.read?material_id=148995)> [accessed 16 October 2013]

<sup>25</sup> TNA, HO382/88/4, Minute, 29 November 1922.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, HO382/88/4, Minute, 17 October 1922.

<sup>27</sup> The record of Zuzenko's interrogation is held in the British National Archives at HO382/88/2, and in NAA, Series A1/15, Item 1924/30649, 'Soosenko — Undesirable' (Alias Tuzenko — Alias Matulishenko, Australia House to PM's Dept., Melbourne. It is reproduced with commentary and notes in Kevin Windle, 'Standard-Bearer of the Australian Revolution: The Interrogation of Aleksandr Zuzenko by Special Branch. An Annotated Transcript', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 39, 2005, pp. 175–215.

Assuming that the transcript is an accurate record — and there is no reason to suppose that it was falsified — it shows Zuzenko more deferential to the imperialist enemy. The conversation remains civil, the interrogators polite but persistent and the prisoner self-possessed and evasive. In this respect, his own report, Z/ECCI 28/2/23, concurs with the British record, although it differs in some other respects.

Zuzenko's references to the 'gentleman' implicating him in a conspiracy to murder are not matched by any comparable passage in the transcript of the interrogation. Z/BMSL explains these as a ploy to link him with an attempt to poison 'the manager of Scotland Yard', but nothing of this is apparent in the transcript, and the interrogator's supposed references to a trial in court with hanging to follow cannot be found either. Nor had any such threats appeared in Zuzenko's narrative of 1923. This component constitutes one of the more egregious excursions into the realms of fancy, designed perhaps to lend substance and motivation to the 'death sentence'. It was of course in his interests, especially in a time of mass 'repressions', to be seen as steadfastly defiant when in the clutches of the class enemy, should his writings be collected and perused for evidence against him in any future investigation of his career history.

Concerning his treatment in Brixton, it is also worth noting that Zuzenko wrote to the Soviet Trade Delegation on 30 October 1922: 'Everybody can come over and see me without any interference from the prison authorities. They are very kind to me.'<sup>28</sup> No kindness on the part of his jailers is mentioned in either of his later accounts, but his assertion that anybody could visit him, repeated in identical form in a letter to Sylvia Pankhurst, proved to be incorrect. When Miss Pankhurst called at the prison to see him, in response to his invitation, she was not admitted.<sup>29</sup> Z/BMSL reports that when he expected Sylvia Pankhurst he was visited by a woman whom he pretended to know, but in fact did not. A Home Office minute states that,

A woman named Cahill was allowed to see him on representations that she was a private friend. Police suspected [...] that she was Sylvia Pankhurst in disguise but this was disproved though they think she is an extremist.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> TNA, HO382/88/4, Tjorn to Dear Comrade, 30 October 1922.

<sup>29</sup> When questioned by Miller and Liddell, Zuzenko denied having written to Sylvia Pankhurst, despite the fact that his interrogators held a copy of at least one of his letters to her. TNA, HO382/88/4, Tjorn to Dear Comrade, 30 October 1922; Windle, 'Standard-Bearer', p. 209. Liddell strongly recommended that the prisoner should be allowed no visitors at all. TNA, HO382/88/4, Minute, 24 November 1922.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, HO382/88/4, Minute, 24 November 1922.

Later, when the prisoner had been removed from Britain, Miss Cahill enquired where he had been sent.<sup>31</sup>

As for Zuzenko's false passport, in 1938 he says (correctly) that in Melbourne his denial of his true identity was quickly disproved by the evidence of forcibly taken fingerprints. Nevertheless he claims that in Brixton he continued to insist under interrogation that Tjorn was his real name and that he was Norwegian. The record of interrogation, however, shows him admitting in London, as in Melbourne, to having used the name Zuzenko as an alias, thereby conceding that 'Tjorn' and Zuzenko were one and the same. His claim to be Norwegian, always difficult to maintain, was soon conclusively discredited: enquiries directed to the Norwegian embassy in London elicited information about the real Tjorn and a photograph, which bore no resemblance to the current holder of Tjorn's passport (Zuzenko). One of his interrogators, Captain H. Miller, is reported as saying: 'Tjorn is a superb liar when speaking to the bourgeois and the truth is hard to get. He speaks Russian fluently.'<sup>32</sup> The Canadian government communicated a well-founded suspicion that the real Tjorn had given his passport to Zuzenko in Vancouver, and later provided additional details volunteered by the man who had helped make the necessary modifications to it, William Bennett.<sup>33</sup>

The Home Office files record the progress of transactions, through the agency of Ellis & Fairbairn, solicitors, with the Soviet mission in London (Trade Delegation), to resolve the case of Zuzenko. On the Soviet side, the case was handled and correspondence signed by Nikolai Klyshko as 'Assistant Official Agent of the RSFSR in Great Britain'. This title matched his public role as interpreter to Leonid Krasin, the Soviet trade representative, but partially concealed his greater responsibilities as Cheka 'Resident' in London.<sup>34</sup> He was also an old friend of Maksim Litvinov; they had known each other well while living in England before the Revolution.<sup>35</sup> The Comintern executive in Moscow, forewarned by Garden and perhaps other sources that Zuzenko had been shipped from Melbourne to London

<sup>31</sup> TNA, HO382/88/4, 21 January 1923.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, HO382/88/2, Minute, 19 December 1922.

<sup>33</sup> TNA, HO382/88/1, H. M. Miller to Mr Haldane Porter, 9 April 1923; and NAA, SP43, N59/21/962 Alexander M. Zuzenko. Copy in University of Queensland Fryer Library, Poole-Fried Collection, UQFL336, Box 8, Folder 10, Zuzenko, Royal Canadian Mounted Police re Mamon or Mammon: Agent of Communist International, 22 March 1924.

<sup>34</sup> Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*, London, 1990, p. 54. Klyshko signed in English with the spelling 'Klishko'.

<sup>35</sup> Service, *Spies and Commissars*, pp. 160, 252.

with a false Norwegian passport,<sup>36</sup> had no doubt alerted its London agents. In his capacity as a Cheka officer, Klyshko would have been bound to take action to secure Zuzenko's release, while at the same time maintaining the fiction that he was a Norwegian sailor rather than a Comintern operative. Yet, whether owing to caution or delays in communication with Moscow, the Trade Delegation initially declared itself unable to help 'Tjorn' on account of his Norwegian nationality.<sup>37</sup> Only a few days later, however, the Trade Delegation expressed willingness to help him rejoin his family in Moscow, and the British took note of the 'considerable interest' shown in him by the Soviet representatives,<sup>38</sup> an interest which itself lent confirmation to their belief that he had assumed a false Norwegian identity.

When the British government had established that 'Tjorn' would be admitted to Soviet Russia, arrangements were made to place him on a Soviet vessel bound for Petrograd, and at the end of January the SS *Irtysk* duly delivered him to his homeland. On this period, Z/BMSL gives more personal details than before: he was in poor health, he claims, after his return from Brixton and his hunger strike: the strain had told on his nerves and the stammer from which he had long suffered had become much more pronounced. In telling of this time, he is unusually self-critical, accepting that he behaved badly on his return. As he appeared to his comrades more than usually truculent and quick to take offence, some questioned his sanity and recommended a period of treatment in a sanatorium. This he received with self-righteous indignation at first, but subsequently he appears to have acquiesced.

Soon after returning to Moscow, Zuzenko was debriefed by Osip Piatnitskii, head of the Comintern's Foreign Liaison Department (Otdel mezhdunarodnykh svyazei; OMS). Zuzenko was angry and 'spoke forcefully' [*krupno*]: he felt that insufficient importance had been attached to his mission to Australia; he himself had been forgotten in his long absence, and his wife and baby daughter had been badly neglected. The ECCI had offered little support for them, and though Piatnitskii had recognized Civa's 'exceptionally difficult situation' and sought increased rations and assistance for her, his order to provide this came only in November 1922.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Osip Piatnitskii knew of Zuzenko's detention by the British by 9 November, when he wrote to the ECCI Secretariat about Zuzenko's wife, citing Garden. RGASPI, f. 495, op. 185, d. 55, l. 3.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, HO382/88/4, Minute, 29 November 1922.

<sup>38</sup> NAA, A1 (A1/15), 1924/30649, 'Soosenko — Undesirable'; Windle, 'Standard Bearer', p. 179.

<sup>39</sup> RGASPI, f. 495, op. 185, d. 55, l. 3, V sekretariat IKKI, 9 November 1922.



Nearly fifteen years after the event, Zuzenko expresses uncharacteristic regret at his own behaviour. Piatnitskii had, it seems, brought him round to a different view: 'I was wrong. It had cost the Comintern enormous efforts to extract me from the [British] dungeon. I was freed as part of an exchange.' Earlier accounts by Zuzenko do not mention an exchange of prisoners, but by the 1960s an exchange involving some British officers captured during the military intervention in northern Russia had become a pivotal element in the legends surrounding his name, and held a firm place in family tradition. Some versions, for example one published in *Pravda* in 1967 and repeated elsewhere,<sup>40</sup> elaborated this to include demonstrably spurious components: it tells how he shared a cell in a London prison with Litvinov, who on his return home arranged a prisoner exchange (the dates alone give the lie to this). Piatnitskii may have given Zuzenko no more than a hint, on which he then constructed his own hypothesis involving an exchange.

In reality, no exchange was ever considered on the British side and there is no evidence of one being proposed by the Soviets. Further, it is evident that there was no desire on the part of the British to detain him in for long, and much documentary evidence makes plain that Britain did not wish to receive deportees from Australia en route to third countries.<sup>41</sup> It is, in fact, apparent from the records that the British government was prepared to send 'Tjorn' wherever he wished to go, as soon as another government — Norwegian or Soviet — showed willingness to accept him and supply a visa. And indeed, the British government, once it had these assurances, did act fairly quickly to rid itself of the problem.

Having done so, and having determined that Zuzenko was an undesirable — a word much used in the correspondence about him — the Home Office issued a circular on 17 February 1923, prohibiting him from landing in the United Kingdom.<sup>42</sup> The ban would assume importance and be the subject of debate in later years, when 'Tjorn' returned under his real name in command of Soviet merchant vessels. In this his case was rare, if not unique: it was generally recognized that captains of foreign vessels,

<sup>40</sup> B. Shabunin and M. Nikitin, 'Kapitan Smol'nogo', *Pravda*, 1 February 1967, p. 3. Shabunin, the Secretary of the Party Committee of the Baltic Shipping Line, and Nikitin, Chairman of the Historical Commission of Baltic Shipping Line, had access to Zuzenko's 'Autobiography' and Z/BMSL. Zuzenko's family accepted the story of an exchange as fact. It appears in Klimenchenko's novel, *Zhizn' i prikliucheniia*, pp. 473–74, and in his memoir *Korabl' idet dal'she*, Leningrad, 1973, p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> NAA, A1/15, 1924/30649 Devonshire to Governor-General 28 November 1922. For more detail see Windle, *Undesirable*, p. 155.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, HO382/88/3, Alexander Michael Zuzenko, Toni Tollagsen Tjorn, n.d. [1936].

of whatever provenance, needed to go ashore in port. Legend would have it that he did not land because a sentence of death remained in force and would have been put into effect had he stepped on British soil. The ban, which receives no mention in either Zuzenko's 'Autobiography' or Z/BMSL, constitutes the focus of most of the Home Office documents dealing with his case from his earliest visits as sea captain in 1924.

In the course of his travels for the Comintern and later as captain of the MV *Smol'nyi*, Zuzenko established numerous influential contacts, especially among the British Socialist Left. These included Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Harry Pollitt, Tom Mann and George Bernard Shaw.<sup>43</sup> Though he wrote disparagingly of William Gallacher (see above), he seems to have been pleased to welcome him aboard the *Smol'nyi* as a passenger and visitor to the ship when in the Port of London. He may have met George Lansbury when the latter visited Soviet Russia, and when Zuzenko was shipped from Melbourne to London on the *Hobson's Bay* Lansbury's son was a fellow passenger.<sup>44</sup> In 1922–23 Lansbury, a senior figure in the Labour Party and editor of the *Daily Herald*, took up his cause, putting questions to the Home Secretary in the Commons about the detention of 'Tjorn'.<sup>45</sup>

The Soviet government also issued repeated protests from an early date against the British refusal to allow Zuzenko ashore. Bogomolov, the Acting Soviet chargé d'affaires in London, wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, in January 1925 to voice his country's objections and seek an explanation.<sup>46</sup> Five years later Emrys Hughes, the radical journalist, made enquiries, but found the authorities unwilling to change their position.<sup>47</sup> In the same year, an immigration officer, E. E. Burgess, reported Zuzenko's continuing frustration and wrote in support of his case that he seemed 'a very quiet man, passionately fond of music [...] a harmless individual', who 'would devote his leisure hours to attending opera, concert and cinema',<sup>48</sup> a suggestion which attracted some internal ridicule: 'There can be little doubt that [...] if he had a free run in London he would be interested in

<sup>43</sup> See Windle, *Undesirable*, pp. 179–85.

<sup>44</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/2, G, Lansbury to W. C. Bridgeman, 6 December 1922.

<sup>45</sup> 'Aliens Awaiting Deportation' (26 July 1923), *Parliamentary Debates. Official Reports. Fifth Series. House of Commons*, vol. 167, cols. 685–87.

<sup>46</sup> 'Nota Polnomochnogo Predstavitel'stva SSSR v Velikobritanii Ministerstvu Inostrannykh Del Velikobritanii', *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, Moscow, 1963, vol. 8, pp. 66–67. TNA, FO 370, 11019, Bogomolov to Rt Hon. Austen Chamberlain, 15 January 1925.

<sup>47</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/2, Mr Emrys Hughes, Minutes, 24 September 1930.

<sup>48</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/1, E. E. Burgess to H. M. Inspector, 31 January 1930.

many things besides the opera.<sup>49</sup> When asked to explain its position, the Home Office was not forthcoming: the reason was that he had attempted to enter the United Kingdom without a valid passport in 1922 and was suspected of being a 'Bolshevist agent of some importance',<sup>50</sup> but 'We cannot say this to the Soviet authorities'.<sup>51</sup> In 1936 William Gallacher and N. Maclean MP made further representations in favour of Zuzenko, but the government heeded the advice of Major-General Vernon Kell of MI5: there could be no general leave to land, as that would enable him to make 'undesirable contacts over here and make our observations on his movements very difficult'.<sup>52</sup>

All sources without exception confirm that the British were not inclined to under-estimate Zuzenko's importance, even when he first fell into their hands, and paid increasing attention to him when he reappeared in his new role. In fact all the official records show that counter-intelligence operatives saw him as an agent of high value, and on occasion gave credence to unlikely rumours of uncertain origin, such as the following: 'Zuzenko's importance increases'; a 'reliable source' reports that 'on each occasion that the above-named returns to Russia he is seen privately by Stalin'.<sup>53</sup> There is no evidence that Zuzenko ever met Stalin, and no ship's master would have enjoyed such regular access to the dictator.

However, strong suspicions regarding 'the courier service which operates through the Sovtorgflot' had surer foundations,<sup>54</sup> and the British belief that Zuzenko continued to work for the Comintern should not be dismissed out of hand, though his services may have been sought only on an occasional basis. All masters of Soviet vessels could expect to be called upon at times to perform important duties 'for the Party and the Government', in the form of the OMS or OGPU, and Zuzenko would have complied without hesitation. The Home Office files cite surveillance reports pointing to his 'acting as liaison agent between persons engaged in Soviet espionage activity in this country and the headquarters in Moscow', and receiving visitors for this purpose on board the SS *Sibir* in 1930.<sup>55</sup> A note from the same period observes that 'Soviet ships are the means

<sup>49</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/1, Minutes, 11 February 1930.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/2, Minute, 2 October 1930.

<sup>51</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/1, Dear Collier, 17 January 1938.

<sup>52</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/3, Kell to Home Secretary, 13 March 1936.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/3, Chief Inspector Aliens Branch, 24 March 1931, F. H. Mugliston to Liddell, 6 March 1931.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/1, Minute, 4 February 1930.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, HO382/88/3, Alexander Michael Zuzenko, Toni Tollagsen Tjorn, n.d. [1936].

employed to convey agents and propaganda to foreign countries'.<sup>56</sup> Also relevant here are some extraordinarily brief visits to British ports. On one occasion the *Smol'nyi* arrived in Tilbury and spent only two hours in port before leaving directly for its home port.<sup>57</sup>

The Home Office records make clear that Zuzenko was still banned from landing in mid-January 1938,<sup>58</sup> almost the end of his sailing career, a time when the *Smol'nyi* was undergoing an extended refit in January–April 1938.<sup>59</sup> This late date is of interest since another oft-repeated myth tells of the King of England lifting the ban, and his emissary receiving the reply from Zuzenko: 'Kindly convey my gratitude to His Majesty. I will go ashore when Soviet power is established in England.'<sup>60</sup>

Towards the end of Z/BMSL, Zuzenko returns to the subject of the Comintern leadership, taking care to distance himself from Radek (sentenced in 1937 and later murdered in a labour camp), Zinoviev (executed in 1936) and Bukharin (arrested in 1937, tried and executed in March 1938). These prominent leaders of the Revolution were either dead (executed) or in serious trouble, with execution likely, as Zuzenko would have known from his attendance at Party meetings and from press coverage of their public trials. 'What do I think of Radek, Zinoviev and Bukharin and other former heads of the Comintern? Nothing at all,' he writes in Z/BMSL. 'To them I was probably only cannon fodder.' As elsewhere, he makes plain that the importance of his mission, as he saw it, was undervalued by the ECCI, and if he received insufficient support and appreciation for his endeavours he was now able to place the blame squarely on his former masters. If he had earlier felt ill-disposed towards them, he now had added reason to cast aspersions on them. His comments may have been prompted by precisely the events of 1937–38 and a growing sense of the danger to which he himself might be exposed.

There is nothing in his 'Autobiography' or Z/BMSL to indicate unequivocally that he felt threatened, except perhaps a valedictory tone in the concluding lines and the fact that he chose to set down a record for posterity. In his own mind, while the Radeks, Zinovievs and Bukharins had been unmasked as 'traitors', and others of his acquaintance, such as Piatnitskii and Berzin were facing a similar fate, he had remained true.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, HO382/88/1, Minute, 11 February 1930.

<sup>57</sup> Personal communication from Kseniia Aleksandrovna Zuzenko. See also, TNA, HO 382/88/3, Minute, 8 November 1934.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, HO 382/88/1, Dear Collier, 17 January 1938.

<sup>59</sup> See 'Eshche raz o modernizatsii Smol'nogo', *Sovetskaia Baltika*, 4 February 1938, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Klimenchenko, *Korabl' idet dal'she*, p. 79.

The closing paragraph of Z/BMSL expresses pride in his unwavering dedication: he quotes himself addressing himself with the words, 'You bear the grand title of Leninist-Stalinist with honour for your Party', seeming to forget that in years past he had been an SR and an anarchist — best not mentioned at a time when undivided loyalty to the party of Lenin and Stalin was *de rigueur*. While it was true that he had joined the Communist Party in 1920, soon after his first deportation from Australia, and served that party loyally for the rest of his life,<sup>61</sup> his revolutionary apprenticeship was not served in the RSDLP, and unlike Sergeev he was not an early convert to Lenin's party. In his youth, like many others of his generation, he had joined the SRs and professed an anarchistic strain of revolutionary thought. This was at the time the natural choice of many who admired the dedication of *Narodnaia volia*.

Zuzenko was, moreover, an anarchist by temperament from earliest youth, and something of this can be seen in his late account of himself: he reports that even in 1924 he found himself being described by his superiors and Party functionaries as an anarchist and a tearaway (*stikhiinik*), and he speaks of his youthful self as a 'socialist rebel'. In his 'Autobiography' he told of visiting Prince Kropotkin, 'the father of Russian anarchism', in London in 1911.<sup>62</sup> A little later, in Queensland, he found kindred spirits among the anarchistically-inclined IWW. (When he tells in Z/BMSL of attending the founding meeting of the Profintern with Freeman, both did so *as members of the IWW* from Australia, but he gives no other indication of having belonged to any other party. His 'Autobiography' does mention 'breaking with the SRs' and his earlier reports to the ECCI are more expansive on this matter.) In Brisbane, as Secretary of the URW and editor of its newspaper, he remained more anarchist than Social Democrat even after the 1917 Revolution. Rivals such as Hermann Bykoff (German Bykov) referred to him in 1919 as a 'Bakuninist' and 'His Anarchic Majesty', and he was known to sign letters 'yours for anarchy'. A significant press article, 'How I, an anarchist, became a Leninist', published in the USA in the course of his mission (February 1921), recounts his conversion and his renunciation of Kropotkin and the heirs of the People's Will.<sup>63</sup> In both his reports, under interrogation by Miller and Liddell he denies working for the Comintern, claiming instead that his allegiance is to the IWW. The

<sup>61</sup> His children knew him only as a true Bolshevik, and were unaware of any previous affiliations. Kseniia Aleksandrovna Zuzenko, personal communication.

<sup>62</sup> 'Avtobiografiia'. Zuzenko family papers.

<sup>63</sup> A. Matulichenko [Zuzenko], 'Kak ia, anarkhist, stal lenintsem: neskol'ko slov o teorii i praktike revoliutsii', *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 16–18 February 1922.

stenographic record of his interrogation differs on this point: there he is recorded as saying that he is a *former* IWW and *former* anarchist, who has come to see the error of his ways. He admits readily to being a socialist but will not elaborate, saying only that he is 'a simple individual, who is willing to help the socialistic [*sic*] movement, no matter of what kind it is'.<sup>64</sup>

In the end, as Zuzenko was probably well aware, a long-standing Party member could find no protection in statements disclaiming close acquaintance with Radek and others, or in a record of unflagging loyalty to the cause. Agents of the Comintern who could match his endeavours on its behalf were probably few, but the mere fact of having served for so many years, of having joined the Party long before Stalin took command, had itself become a liability. Moreover, his anarchistic leanings and early work for other parties would also tell against him, like his long history of contact with foreigners, whatever their political persuasion. Zuzenko was finally arrested on 10 April 1938 as he walked to work in Leningrad, taken to Moscow for interrogation, and executed on 25 August, on a charge of espionage on behalf of the British. Neither his alleged spy-masters in London nor his family in Leningrad knew of his execution for many years, though it soon became apparent to the family, at least, that he had been arrested. Definite news of his fate reached them only after his posthumous rehabilitation in 1956. Some of his writings, such as the 'Autobiography' and Z/BMSL, held by his employer, were also made available to them only then, and later came the memoirs of Paustovskii, the novels and memoirs of Klimenchenko and Gerasimov, and the radio and television features. The effect was to construct an image of a much-mythologized Soviet hero figure, in which the reality and the fiction could not easily be separated.<sup>65</sup> To the fictional component the hero himself had made a substantial contribution. The Home Office papers, though hardly free of bias, error and over-statement with regard to Zuzenko, offer a valuable corrective, while the documentary evidence as a whole shows something of the Comintern's early operations and of official British attitudes and counter-measures.

<sup>64</sup> Windle, 'Standard Bearer', p. 209.

<sup>65</sup> Windle, 'Heroics'. In addition to the works of Paustovskii, Klimenchenko and Gerasimov, Zuzenko makes brief appearances, unnamed but unmistakable, in the works of Aleksei Tolstoi and Mikhail Bulgakov. See Windle, *Undesirable*, esp. pp. 199ff.