

MILITARY COUNTERINTELLIGENCE AND THE RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS – WESTERN AUSTRALIA - WWI

File No 4/7/29

The origins of Zulman Mackmail, known as Sam Mack, blacksmith with the AIF, were in question following conflicting reports about his nationality. He was reported upon by a constable in Quairading where he had previously resided. The police officer was convinced he was a German, not a Russian as he claimed, the constable averred that he should be on Rottneest. Mack was later cleared after reports, from Jewish compatriots Mazel and Breckler, that he was indeed a Russian. The matter was resuscitated when Mack was seen on picket duty, in military uniform at Fremantle, guarding the Troopship 'Orsova' after having joined the AIF. MI informed the Commandant of Blackboy Camp that Mack was not to be allowed to leave the State until attestation papers had been signed by the District Commandant. Dated June October 1915.

File No 4/7/168

The Russian Government agree to allow their nationals in Australia to join the AIF and to receive credits for their service upon return to their homeland. Dated 14.1.1916.

File No 4/7/250

Names of Russian subjects who had enlisted in the AIF from WA. The was to be sent to the Russian Consul, Michelides, to enable them to obtain credits for their service, from the Russian Government, as though they had served in the Russian Army. Dated 8.5.1916.

File No 4/7/268

No reason was given for refusing to allow Morris Nissenzhon to enlist in the AIF. However, the testimony of Lewis Cohen that he was not an enemy alien because he came from a little Palestine village called Safed may well have been the cause of the refusal. The village was in the area of Palestine which was under Turkish rule hence Nissezhon was technically an enemy subject. Dated 19.6.1916.

File No 17/1/27

As a result of ABA claims Joseph Rosenthal had to prove that he was not of German origin. He was Australian born of a Russian-Jewish Father and a British mother. Dated 23.3.1916.

File No 17/1/40

Nissenzhon, a Russian Jew, supplying uniforms for the army, was also targeted by the ABA as a German. Dated 27.4.1916.

File No PF 61

Notes on Fiedler, proprietor of Federal Hotel, Fremantle, whose premises were attacked in the 1915 riots despite his claim that he was a Russian. A letter from ABA, dated March 10th 1916 signed by Le Mesurier, said Fiedler should be investigated.

File No PF 301

Leon Goldberg came under suspicion because a book on wireless telegraphy was seen amongst his effects by removalists when he was moving from Geraldton to Perth. Inspector Holmes reported; "I have had my doubts for some time past of this mans loyalty. He claims to be a Russian subject. I firmly believe he is a German Jew" some other derogatory comments are included in the report, with which Sgt Thomas of Geraldton agreed. No final conclusion is reached. The file then turns to consideration of E.F.Sander JP, a Blacksmith who was said to be a friend of Goldberg. Dated February - July 1915.

File No PF 482

A letter from a Russian Bolshevik to his brother Elia Ephanoff in Boulder tells about the changes that had occurred in Russia following the Revolution. Dated 15.4.1918.

File No PF 643

A general letter sent to all Military districts imposed an unlimited prohibition on Simonoff (read more about this man on the page [Red Flag Riots](#)), a Russian revolutionary, from issuing propaganda of any kind. Dated September 1918

File No 1/2/385

Samuel Maurice Stein, Photographer, of Russian Jewish origin sought and obtained permission to bring out his widowed sister from America. She had been married to an assistant Rabbi of Austrian origin which made her an enemy alien. Some suspicion fell upon her when she tried to exchange German currency at a bank whose manager informed MI. She was cleared of any offence and later returned to the United States. Dated 1917 - 1919.

File No 1/2/719

Report that William Bernard Rabin, a Russian Pearl Buyer, was going to Bombay and Singapore. It was suggested he could be the subject of an attack by Bolsheviks because "He wears stays, swallows scents, and luxuriates in striking mauve kimonos. If there were any Bolsheviks about here he would be their first sacrifice". His permit was endorsed 'not to be allowed to disembark at any port in the Commonwealth'. Dated 25.2.1920.

File No 1/2/745

Circular dated 23.8.1919 "Information Evanoff Russian of Bolshevik sympathies Fireman on SS *Krasnocarsk* ... deserter from *Princessan Ingeborg* may endeavour desert your district".

File No 1/2/747

Swiss passports were being forged in Hungary and Russia. A general instruction was issued; "arrest all persons found in possession of these passports". Dated 3.9.1919.

File No 1/12/234

Bernard Klem, a Russian Finn of Geraldton, was reported for alleged disloyal utterances when drunk in the Freemasons Hotel. Without any charge being laid MI leaned on the Fisheries Department to withdraw his licence to fish. It is stated in documents he was the best Fisherman in Geraldton. His employers, owners of the fishing boat, were naturalized Germans. Klem was employed as a Cook on board the fishing boat 'Magnolia. Police believed this was a ploy and that

he was still fishing. J. Willcox MLA intervened on behalf of Klem. Detective Inspector Mann made a number of adverse comments about Willcox. Dated February 1918 to June 1919.

File No 2/1/39

MI and the Police were very suspicious of the bona-fides of Anna Loeffler, a woman of German nationality, who was married to Reinherd Antunovich who claimed to be of Russian origin but was suspected of being German. She was allowed to leave for Sydney where she was to meet her husband when he arrived from America, where he had gone shortly after the war broke out. The file closed when the 2nd Military District noted Mrs Loeffler had produced a certificate testifying to her husband's nationality signed by the Russian Consul General in New York and a marriage certificate from Kansas City dated 12.10.1912. Dated 6.10.1917.

File No 2/1/367

A letter from John Wagin to Leonard Aleksandrovitch, in Russian dated 15.2.1919, was intercepted and retained. MI comment "Writer is...returning member...AIF...with Bolshevik leanings".

File No 4/3/573

Wirthe's Circus was required to submit its country itinerary to MI because the Circus employed a Russian national as a circus hand. Dated January 1919.

File No 4/3/577

MI Headquarters sought information on William Martin Harris, alias Hirschman, previously of Perth now residing in Melbourne; "this man further claims that his antecedents were born in Russia and that he is English by birth as stated above, but on account of his admitted close association with the Socialist Party since his arrival in Australia in 1892 and on account of his close association with a Russian Bolshevik named Petruchinia, it is desired to verify his status". Dated 24.1.1919.

File No 4/3/578

Memo about John Ivanoff; "Russian strong IWW (*Industrial Workers of the World - a left-wing international organization at the time - VK*) and a Bolshevik deserted the 'Princessan Ingeborg' in Melbourne". General alert with description. Dated 31.1.1919.

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