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Report of M. Wolberg to Comintern,
15 April 1920¹

A COPY OF THE REPORT SUBMITTED BY MICHAEL
WOLBERG-VELMONT TO THE BUREAU OF THE 3D INTERNATIONAL
IN MOSCOW ON 15 APRIL 1920

Strictly confidential

I, Michael Yakovlevich Wolberg, was born in Königsberg in 1891. (My parents lived in Kovno and my mother went to Königsberg specifically to give birth). I lived and was brought up in Moscow and spent a couple of years in a real schule² in Berlin.

I became interested in politics for the first time when I was 15 or so. I was member of the CC of a student organisation in secondary institutions of Moscow.

I was expelled from Morozov's School in Moscow for agitation even though the students there tried to support me with a strike, and therefore had to continue my education abroad. I first went to Brussels and then stayed in Liège (Belgium), at the University.

During my stay in Liège I began to publish a weekly newspaper, 'La Presse', in French but then had to stop the publication because of the lack of funds. The newspaper was published under the guise of non-partisanship but, clearly, I expressed my own ideas in it.

Obviously, several issues of this newspaper, particularly the issues with my editorial on Stolypin's assassination,³ got to Moscow Secret Police Department through the Russian Consul and later, when I returned to Russia, I was arrested and put into prison in the town of Trubchevsk in Oryol Province on the

1. This document was the first detailed information about the activities of South African socialists which the Comintern received. The report was immediately requested by V.I. Lenin. Volume XXXVII of the *Leninsky sbornik (Lenin Miscellany)* contains Lenin's note to the Secretary of the Council of People's Commissars, L.A. Fotieva, in spring 1920: 'Get me (through Klinger) Waltman's report on South Africa' (*Leninsky sbornik*, XXXVII, Moscow, 1970, p. 203). G.K. Klinger was Executive Manager of the Comintern. The editors' comment to this publication was: 'What report is referred to could not be ascertained' but it is safe to assume that Lenin referred to Mikhael Wolberg's report.

The identities of many people mentioned by Wolberg could not be established.

2. A particular kind of school in Germany and Russia that taught 'practical' disciplines as opposed to Latin, theology, etc.

3. P.A. Stolypin, premier and minister of interior in 1906-11, was assassinated by Russian revolutionaries for his success in quashing revolutionary fervour by a combination of repressive measures and social reform.

instructions from Moscow Secret Police. Due to strenuous efforts on my behalf in Moscow I was finally released after 50 days' detention and deported from Trubchevsk.

Soon after this, in 1913, I served as a conscript in the 3d Don Infantry Regiment in Kovno. The Secret Police informed them about me and they began to persecute me and to threaten to send me to the penal battalion – with all the consequences. My situation in the Regiment became so intolerable that in August 1913 I had to escape and after a difficult fight I found myself in Germany.

It was extremely difficult to stay in Germany without documents and when I met acquaintances who were on their way to South Africa I decided to join them for a few months' holiday there and then to return to Europe and settle in Paris or another West European city. I spoke French and German fluently and I thought that upon my return to Europe I would take up politics. Fearing persecution from the authorities I changed my name to Henri de Velmont.

I came to Africa almost without means and without any knowledge of English, and at the beginning my situation was extremely difficult. I had been starving before I finally found a job as a book keeper in a small butchery in the Cape Colony Province. The war broke out and it became impossible to leave Africa.

After the butchery I worked as a photographer, then was employed at a tobacco factory, played the piano in a movie theatre, served as a commercial traveler and finally opened my own small business as a manufacturers' representative.

To my own surprise I discovered that I had a great talent for business. I managed to build up my business to such an extent that in October 1917 I moved it from Cape Town to Johannesburg already as a joint-stock company in which I was Director of the Board. I made good money and lived very comfortably.

Clearly, from the time of the revolution in Russia I longed to go home with all my heart but the Russian Consul, as well as the South African government, categorically refused to issue me departure documents for Russia despite my repeated strenuous efforts to get them.

Only now, in Moscow, did I discover that during Comrade Litvinov's term of office as Ambassador in London the British government at his insistence gave telegraphic instructions to the Governor-General of South Africa not to impede my departure for Russia. However, not only was I not informed about this in Africa but, on the contrary, all kinds of obstacles were put in my way, the advantage being taken of the fact that I had no Russian documents. I was also cavilled at for giving public lectures on the Russian revolution.

In Johannesburg I enrolled as member of the International Socialist League.

Enclosure No. 1 – Declaration of Principles of the League and its Statutes.⁴

At the beginning I worked without speaking officially at the meetings because my ostensible position as a 'bourgeois',⁵ Director of a large firm, was very convenient for the Party. I could, therefore, disseminate literature, etc. from my office without arousing suspicions.

In Johannesburg I organised a Russian circle what was called 'The Russian Literary and Drama Circle'. The true aim of this circle was, of course, propaganda. To put this circle on a solid legal footing I, as Chairman, invited the wife of Mayor of Johannesburg to be its Honorary President. She was a very ambitious person and gladly agreed relying on me although, naturally, she understood no Russian at all.

For her sake we arranged a couple of charity concerts and the Circle came to be considered very reliable by everyone.

Enclosure No. 2 – Letterhead of the Circle.

Enclosure No. 3 – A Ticket for One of the Concerts.

At first there was a Labour Party in South Africa⁶ that supposedly aspired to the ideals of socialism. When the war began the majority of the leaders of this party, i.e. Cresswell and others came out in its favour albeit under a certain 'pressure'. They began to campaign for war among workers and realised their goals, i.e. donned colonels' epaulets and led special workers' regiments to the 'glorious war in defence of democracy'. And this is when the final split in the Party occurred. The extreme left wing under the leadership of Member of Parliament Com. William Andrews, broke away and began a bitter struggle against the war.

According to the conditions of the treaty between the British and the Boers mobilisation in South Africa is prohibited. So the 'bourgeois' began 'economic mobilisation', i.e. men at the age of 18 to 40 were no longer employed for any service or work. On the instigation of the Unionist Party women came up to young men in the streets and insulted them in public.

4. Enclosures to Wolberg's report could not be found in the archives. *The Declaration of Principles* passed by the congress of the International Socialist League on 5–6 January 1919 and delivered to Russia (most probably Wolberg's copy) was published in Moscow in the Comintern's journal *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional (The Communist International)* in 1920 (No. 11). According to another archival document (RGASPI, 495–64–5–1), the *Declaration* was translated by Wolberg.

5. Here and elsewhere Wolberg uses a particular derogatory form of the Russian equivalent of the word 'bourgeoisie' – 'burzhui', either in the singular or in the plural. There is no direct equivalent of this word in English.

6. South African Labour Party.

South Africa has a civil militia for the purposes of defense in case of an enemy attack. According to law it could not be used outside the colony. However, the law notwithstanding, it was sent to German West and East Africa where many of them were killed. Because of economic mobilisation people were hungry in the streets and willy-nilly had to enlist for military service.

It goes without saying that our party had to work hard in literally unbearable conditions but nevertheless we worked energetically, disregarding the danger.

The 'Labour Party' does not consider the Blacks ~~as~~ people at all; it does not admit them to trade unions and generally treats them as animals. Members of the Labour Party boycott employers who employ black workers, smash their windows, etc. And, incidentally, the fact that in South Africa unskilled workers are almost all dark-skinned has to be taken into consideration. Our Party does not recognise any kind of difference based on religion, nationality or skin colour, and it conducts particularly militant propaganda among dark-skinned comrades as it is evident from the enclosed declaration.

According to South African laws not only anti-government propaganda among the Natives but any kind of communication with the Blacks generally is subject to severe punishment by law, so our situation was very, very difficult.

But despite all the difficulties, despite the prosecution, we managed not only to agitate among Black workers but even to form a rather strong organisation among them as a branch of our Party.

Our central office is situated in Johannesburg; we have branches in almost all other cities, the largest, naturally, in Cape Town where our propaganda is very successful and where we gradually incorporate many members of the left wing of the Labour Party in our midst.

Our Party exists officially, or rather the government so to say passively tolerates us, although speeches and publication of proclamations, etc. often lead to arrests, etc.

However, the struggle against us is often waged by cruder weapons, i.e. gangs of drunken hooligans with sticks are stirred up against our meetings and during a fight the police zealously protects them.

Our best comrades and leaders, such as W. Andrews, S. Bunting, T. Tinker and others were more than once beaten almost unconscious and even I tasted a rubber baton, although only in 'small doses'.

According to a (secret) instruction nobody lets us a venue for our office in Johannesburg. Our good comrade Neppe (who is of Russian origin) allowed us to use his old, barely standing house, and this is where our office takes shelter. I was witness to a search there during which the police tore off the posters with portraits of Coms. Lenin, Trotsky and others from the walls and confiscated the documentation but in a few days the office resumed its work.

According to the same instructions from 'above' no hall, nor theatre were let out to us for our meetings.

But we did not lose heart. Every Sunday evening we hold our meeting in the square near the City Hall in Johannesburg. The speakers give speeches from upturned crates. The crowd that is present often numbers more than 2,000-3,000 people. Similar meetings are held in Cape Town, Germiston (the centre of gold-mining industry), Durban and other cities.

The police are also there but they do not dare to intervene, and our speakers openly call for following Russia's example, call for a revolution, etc. True, the speakers are often arrested later on at home. Thus, before my departure our active members from Pietermaritzburg, Jones and Green, were arrested, ridiculously judged and sentenced to prison and large fines.

In view of the above we had to work under the guise of literary circles, and so on. Two years ago when a large workers' demonstration was organised in the streets of Johannesburg the troops were brought and there were many killed and wounded.

The following incident which led to my exile from South Africa serves as a striking example of the tricks that we had to use and of the strong sympathy for the Third International which exists in workers' circles of South Africa.

The Lecture.⁷

When we spoke of the Russian revolution or of the Soviet system at our meetings we were often confronted with open distrust. 'How do you know? You have not been in Russia for a long time and you have not seen the revolution there yourself', the comments could be heard.

And, to tell the truth, our information was rather scanty. We received only, so to say, 'leftovers' from England or Norway and even these very seldom.

Then, unexpectedly, two persons came to me and introduced themselves as Leo Markovich Lapitsky (said to be humorist poet Sasha Cherny) and Israel Sosnovik.

They told me that the former was Skobelev's secretary in the Provisional Government,⁸ then something short of Deputy Finance Minister and later, after the coup, began to work with the Soviet Government as a public prosecutor in Lugansk (Donetsk Basin).

7. The lecture described by Wolberg had the effect of a bombshell on the South African public. It was widely debated by the press (for example, in *The International*, 21, 28 March, 11 April 1919; *The Cape Times*, 15, 18, 22 April 1919; *The Cape Argus*, 18 April 1919). It was much remembered and mentioned later on both in official documents (for example, in the *Report of the Martial Law Inquiry Judicial Commission*. Pretoria, 1922, p. 24) and in memoirs by participants (for example, by W.H. Harrison in his *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa, 1903-47*. Cape Town: 1948, pp. 65, 67). However, only Wolberg's report explains how it was organised and why the authorities overlooked it.

8. Provisional Government in Russia was formed in the wake of the Second (February 1917) Russian Revolution on 15 March 1917. Ousted by the Bolsheviks on 7 November 1917.

Enclosure No. 4 – His Visiting Card.

Sosnovik told us that he was a military emissary in the same Donetsk Basin and presented me with a whole collection of certificates signed by various Soviet authorities in Lugansk.

They both told me that during the German offensive on Kharkov they were cut off from Central Russia in Lugansk, and so Lapitsky with his wife and Sosnovik whom they had met in Lugansk by chance made their way together to Persia and from there via Mesopotamia to India, by which time they had hardly any means left. In India they were advised to seek assistance from me as chairman of the Russian Society, and they came to Africa.

To tell the truth, as much as Sosnovik made an excellent impression on me as an honest person and an enthusiastic activist, to the same extent my impression of Lapitsky was unfavourable and from the first meeting I felt distrustful of him.

At any rate, these two men had left Russia only two months earlier and I decided to use them for the purposes of our propaganda whoever they were.

I sought advice from Com. Andrews and then asked the visitors to write and deliver a lecture on the Russian revolution, the Third International, the Soviet government, etc.

Sosnovik gladly agreed. Lapitsky, on the contrary, suddenly and unexpectedly declared that he was not a Bolshevik, that he only worked for the Bolsheviks, that he had to work for the Bolsheviks and that he was a Kerensky supporter. And generally he began to tell not only me but all and sundry all sorts of horrors about the Red Terror, etc.

I then told him categorically that if he wanted help he would write a lecture as I wanted it. To cut a long story short I decided to use him whoever he was because it was extremely important for us.

Lapitsky declared that he was afraid of being arrested and that generally he did not want any trouble. So he tried to dodge the lecture as much as he could but in the end I virtually forced him to consent. It was finally agreed that Lapitsky would write only the first half of the lecture, i.e. before the October coup⁹ and Sosnovik would describe the coup itself, explain the reasons that had led to it and describe the Soviet Government, the III International, etc. in detail.

I put up Sosnovik at my place and Lapitsky and his wife found a place across the road, and thus the lecture was written at my place over several nights from dusk to dawn and then I translated it into English.

But the main question remained – where to organise the lecture. As I mentioned before, due to ‘the instructions from above’, nobody would hire out

9. ‘October Coup’ – Bolshevik or Third Russian Revolution on 25 October (7 November New Style) 1917.

a venue to us. I felt that this lecture was undoubtedly necessary and that because our underground movement was getting stronger from day to day it was essential to organise a public demonstration and to get our propaganda, so to say, ‘into the streets’.

I thus decided to put myself and my personal well-being at stake. I decided that this was the moment when I could use my official ‘bourgeois’ status most effectively although I was sure in advance that the outcome of this for me would most probably be imprisonment for many years.

And then I went to the Mayor of the city, Allen, and told him that two persons ‘on the run from the Bolsheviks’ had come from Russia and were telling all sorts of horror stories about the Soviet regime, and that I strongly advised Mr. Mayor to use the fortuitous occasion of their arrival in order to organise a lecture about the horrors of Bolshevism, etc. This would serve as a useful counterweight against Bolshevik propaganda which was spreading in South Africa from day to day.

The Mayor of the city was very pleased for he had been much annoyed by the Left-wingers during the elections. As he had met me as director of a well-known firm and as a member of the Main Committee of the Red Cross he accepted my deposit and allowed me to use not only the main hall of the City Hall seating about four thousand people but also his name as the ‘Honorary Patron’ of the lecture.

I told the same story to the ‘Imperial Russian Vice-Consul’ who was clearly glad to offer his ‘high patronage’ to a lecture at which Bolsheviks would be denounced.

Finally, I visited all newspaper editors and told them the same story with even more ‘details’.

In two days the papers were full of sensational news about ‘two noble Russian aristocrats who fled from Bolshevik terror and intended to deliver a lecture in the Johannesburg City Hall about the Russian revolution and the Soviet government’. The papers vied with one another in advertising the forthcoming lecture and ‘seriously advised the public not to fail to attend it in order to hear the real truth about the situation in Russia at last’, etc.

We produced fancy posters advertising the lecture ‘under the sponsorship of the Mayor of the City, Mr. Allen, the Imperial Russian Consul, Mr. Moore, and the Chairman of the Russian Society’, your humble servant.

Some Party members were much surprised by this strange combination but, fearing provocation, we were afraid to tell even the Party members what the situation was, for it was the first time since our Party came into existence that we succeeded in obtaining the City Hall for a meeting and clearly we valued this very much. And so some of our comrades came to the lecture with spoiled tomatoes, rotten eggs and other ‘fragrant foods’ in their pockets, thinking that the lecturers were some provocateurs or agents of the Russian or British Secret Police.

Enclosure No. 5 – A Ticket for the Lecture.

On the evening of the lecture about six thousand people gathered in the hall which usually seated about four thousand and near the doors outside there was a crowd of several hundred people for whom there were no seats.

In my capacity as Chairman I opened the lecture with a short speech stressing particularly that now the citizens will at last learn the truth about Russia and the Russian revolution and will finally see what despicable lies were spread by bourgeois newspapers. Lapitsky said a few words in Russian and I instantly translated them into English. And then our comrade Beer,¹⁰ the owner of a booming voice, started to read the text of the lecture which lasted for 3 hours and 10 minutes.

There were representatives of all classes in the hall. There were representatives of the government, bankers, directors of gold mines, but primarily an enormous number of workers. A copy of Comrade Chicherin's letter to President Wilson, five hundred copies of which we had typed beforehand was lying on each seat, and our literature and our weekly newspaper, 'The International', were sold in the hall.

As the lecture continued the faces of the bourgeois became darker and the faces of our comrades began to light up with joy. After the inspired concluding words of Comrade Sosnovik, a splendid orator, which I translated into English, and after my concluding speech, several thousand voices rang out with the 'International', accompanied by the huge City Hall organ, instead of the British national anthem for which the bourgeois who were present had risen from their seats.

According to a prior arrangement with me, our comrade Andrews came down to the podium and amidst thunderous applause asked for my permission to vote a resolution. Of course, I gave him the permission (everything had been agreed upon beforehand) and it was unanimously decided to cable a letter to parliaments in Cape Town and London stating a protest of the citizens of Johannesburg against the intervention of the British Government in the affairs of Russia, Hungary, Germany and other countries and calling for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from these countries.

We dispersed loudly singing 'The International' for the second time and long afterwards crowds walked along Johannesburg streets singing revolutionary songs.

The next day the papers were dead silent for they were too 'flabbergasted'; just a day before the lecture they had urged the public 'to listen to the truth about Russia' and all of a sudden the lecture turned out to be purely Bolshevik.

However, on the subsequent days the papers were concerned solely with us. All the lead articles were devoted to us. All kinds of dirt were poured on us.

10. The identity of Beer could not be established.

The demand was to arrest us immediately. The questions raised were: 'What was the Municipality doing, giving them the City Hall for Bolshevik propaganda?', 'Is the Mayor of the city a Bolshevik?', etc.

To cut a long story short, the matter reached the point where a question in Parliament was raised by the Unionists and other bourgeois parties.

Unimaginable scandal began. The government was alarmed and ministers did not know how to respond to the questions. Minister for Home Affairs answered that he had no idea about the contents of the lecture, 'because nobody could understand Russian'. The funniest thing was that our lecture was delivered in English. And in Parliament demands continued for our immediate arrest and exile.

At that time a strike of municipal workers of Johannesburg (tramway, water and electricity services, etc.) took place. The workers had set up a Soviet,¹¹ took the management into their hands, and for about ten days the Soviet managed everything, ignoring the municipality completely. Frightened ministers flew from Cape Town, negotiations began, the 76 sacked workers were re-employed, the demands of the workers were satisfied, and the Soviet gave the power back to the Municipality.

It was, so to speak, a test.

Then carpenters, bricklayers and others went on strike. In a word, the government was in trouble up to its neck and on top of it the workers declared that if the government arrested us they would call a general strike all over South Africa and 'The League of Returned Soldiers' directly threatened to start disturbances in the event of our arrest.

The situation of the government was very 'delicate' and unpleasant. On the one hand they were afraid of disturbances in the event of our arrest but on the other hand the Unionists and others demanded our arrest and started an enormous row in their newspapers. Even in the 'Labour Party' the mood was undoubtedly in our favour.

Meanwhile we still walked freely about the town and were greeted with applause everywhere, even if we dropped into some cafeteria, and I, having once openly shown my 'colours', began to make speeches at all street meetings, etc. Finally we started to get 'polite' summons to the police department; each time they sent a luxury automobile to fetch us and treated us with extreme politeness.

The talks were conducted in a very friendly tone. The head of police, Colonel Grey, declared that he 'could not guarantee our life and security; because we had allegedly stirred up the citizens against ourselves, etc., etc'. We politely asked him 'not to worry about our security because if need be we could defend ourselves'. But after several days of futile talks Colonel Grey, on behalf of the Council of Ministers, categorically offered us to leave

11. Soviet – 'Council' in Russian.

Johannesburg within 2 days, and South Africa, by the first departing ship. Our comrades decided that it would be best for us to leave because we had achieved whatever we could in Africa and we would be prevented from doing any further work, and in Russia we would be able to work effectively.

At first they wanted to exile us to Madeira, and the Russian Consul Moore made special efforts to achieve this but then, after we made a whole row, we were issued passports for a passage to Russia.

Meanwhile Lapitsky drank unrestrainedly, borrowed money right, left and centre, although he had received half of the income from the lecture, and was almost on the verge of opening a herring shop with somebody. He went on talking about the horrors of Red Terror in private homes and generally behaved in such a way that Comrade Sosnovik and I decided to get rid of him at any cost.

One of the best Party comrades in South Africa, Sophus M. Pettersen (a Norwegian), lives in Durban. He does much business with sailors, delivers provisions on ships and donates a lot of funds to the Party. Pettersen offered to get us on some Scandinavian boat as sailors or stokers, whether we had documents or not, and in this way to get us across to Europe and Russia. He also gave us a list of his friends, Swedish and Norwegian comrades, to whom we could turn for help. Pettersen is very well connected, he is a former head of Sailors' Union, etc.

Enclosure No. 6 – Statutes of this Union.

Enclosure No. 7 – Cd. Pettersen's Portrait.

You will notice a scratched out spot under his signature; he enthusiastically wrote the word 'Bolshevik' under his surname and I, clearly, had to scratch it out for security reasons.

Lapitsky declared, however, that 'it did not suit him to travel as an ordinary sailor' and demanded that the Government issued first class tickets from Cape Town to Lisbon, Portugal, for himself and for his wife, as well as a special first class compartment from Johannesburg to Cape Town, a room in a first class hotel in Cape Town at the expense of the Government and even a special license to take on board his monkey which he had brought from India. Thus, newspapers wrote later on that 'Mister Lapitsky sailed off with his monkey and his wife'.

To get rid of him the Government agreed to everything, and finally he left for Portugal after he, once again, collected money both from the Party and from other people in Cape Town, and this after the Party in Cape Town had to pay his bills at the Royal Hotel restaurant where he drank all the time with all kinds of spies assigned to him for protection.

He left drunk, having made a shameful speech before his departure while he was barely standing on his feet. In it he threatened the African¹² government that 'the Bolshevik fleet' would appear soon near South Africa's shores and destroy South Africa. Later a comics magazine called him an 'admiral of the Bolshevik fleet'.

And so Com. Sosnovik and I decided to go via Durban with the assistance of Comrade Pettersen. It became impossible to stay in Africa, and generally comrades had decided that, once I had an opportunity to get to Russia, I should go because I would be able to work much more productively in Moscow for the Soviet Government, and furthermore, it was extremely important for the Party to establish a direct link with Moscow and my departure indeed offered a good opportunity for this.

Accordingly, the Party commissioned us:

1. To tell in Moscow about our Party and its activities.
2. To request most urgent support in the form of propaganda pamphlets, newspapers and, generally, literature, direct instructions, etc.

As I have said above, we have absolutely no material for propaganda in Africa and nearly everything had to be created by ourselves. For instance, right before our departure our lecture was sent to printers to be published as a pamphlet.

3. To establish direct communication with the International. And if possible to receive monetary assistance as well because the Party is very poor and the propaganda is very important in South Africa because this colony is the most important after India.

In Johannesburg our Party publishes a monthly newspaper, the 'International', which is edited by Com. Bunting, a remarkable activist. The collected issues of this newspaper for the last couple of years were bound in hard covers and we were entrusted with handing them in as a present from the Party to Coms. Lenin and Trotsky, to the III International and to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. Appropriate inscriptions were made on each volume and the members of the Party's Executive Committee signed them.

Before our departure the closest Party workers took a special group photograph. I sat at the chairman's place in the middle and by my side were Cds. Sosnovik, Andrews, Bulding,¹³ Tinker and others. To our regret, Lapitsky also appeared in this photo.

The above mentioned volumes of the 'International' with gold stamped inscriptions stood in front of our feet. One of these photos with all the signatures we were also to hand in in Moscow, and another one, to Com. Litvinov as a keepsake from Com. Andrews, who had met him in London.

12. South African.

13. Bunting.

The Party also gave us letters of recommendation and I received a special letter from Com. Andrews which was addressed to me and stated that I had worked in Africa, and expressed the hope that on arrival to my native country, in Moscow, I would be able to work productively for the good of humanity.

Thus, Com. Sosnovik and I accompanied by a very good comrade, Simon Yakovlevich Geidler, who also aspired to go to work in Russia set off to Durban, to Com. Pettersen, after a warm farewell at the railway station in Johannesburg with a red flag and the singing of the 'International'.

Clearly, I had to leave my business, and my partner, taking advantage of the fact that I was forced into exile, did not pay me anything, although a couple of months earlier my share in the business had been estimated at about 6 thousand pounds sterling. And so in twenty four hours I only just sold the furniture from my apartment, etc., and with this money we departed. Sosnovik still had a little money, the remainder of his share from the lectures, although very little. Geidler did not have a kopeck.¹⁴

We did not take anything from the Party because it is very poor, and in addition just before our departure it had to pay two big fines for Comrades Green, Jones and others in court.

Com. Pettersen received us with open arms and we remained in Durban waiting for a Swedish or a Norwegian ship. Unfortunately for us, after the truce had been signed with Germany Scandinavian ships that used to call at Durban during the war on their way from Australia began sailing via the Suez Canal without calling at Durban. So after more than a month's stay in Durban (we stayed at private homes because hotels refused to put us up) we still had to leave for Cape Town in order to attempt to arrange a passage via Africa or any British territory. Incidentally, all foreign consuls refused to issue me visas for I was really a marked man and my passport stated that I was being deported from Africa. Therefore, upon my arrival in Cape Town I appealed to Boydell, MP, (the far left wing of the Labour Party) and he together with other members of his faction persuaded Home Affairs Minister De Wet to issue me a new, more appropriate passport.

Enclosure No. 8 – This Passport.

Our comrades in Cape Town welcomed us with a festive banquet and wanted us to repeat our lecture in Cape Town. But it was absolutely impossible, for on our arrival in Cape Town a Special Branch detective Evans met us at the railway station and on behalf of the Council of Ministers warned us that if we gave any speeches anywhere we would be immediately put to jail.

So, we had to refrain from public speeches, and only at private meetings arranged by the Cape Town Committee Sosnovik, who had already learned a

14. Russian coin.

little English, spoke. And I gave a speech only once, at a big street meeting a day before our departure when the tickets for the boat were already in our pockets.

Our Cape Town comrades told us a lot of nasty things about Lapitsky. They refused his request to give him recommendations and to have a group photograph with him taken. We asked them to hush up all the unpleasant talk about Lapitsky in order not to make it known to the public at large to prevent spoiling the general impression. We asked them not to inform even the Johannesburg Committee about Lapitsky's behaviour.

Before our departure from Cape Town a group picture of us with the local Committee and with the best local activists, Harrison, MacManus and others was taken and we got letters of recommendation from them. When we were leaving the comrades organised a wonderful demonstration on the pier despite the presence of a special detachment of police and detectives.

Before the departure Sosnovik became severely ill and began to spit blood but he had to leave all the same.

Thus, we had to go to Madeira, and to report to the British consul there for permission to proceed further. When we came to him he received us very brusquely and in his visa on the back of my passport he added that the passport was only valid for travel to Russia and underlined the word 'only'. Of course, he had been informed about us beforehand by a telegram. On the very same day we were sent off to Lisbon on board a small dirty Portuguese steam boat.

Upon our arrival in Lisbon we were arrested by a whole detachment of armed police led by Bellem, Head of the Political Investigation Department of Portuguese police, and were taken to Home Affairs Department. There Sosnovik and I were thoroughly searched but Geidler began to protest and made a row saying that he was a British citizen (he had become naturalised in Africa) and that he would complain to the British government. We said that my suitcase which contained the volumes of the International and other dangerous documents also belonged to Geidler and it was not searched.

At that time a British, a French and an American officer came to the Department to interrogate us. Geidler produced a document that he had served in the South African army, Sosnovik was completely ill and thus we were not put in prison but rather the police took us to the most expensive hotel and left us there with guards at our doors.

A strange surprise for us was that unexpectedly Lapitsky turned up at Home Affairs. He told us that when he arrived in Lisbon he was arrested but then was allowed to move freely in the city. He became friendly with Detective Bellem, drank with him, and did not have at all a bad time, although the police still bothered him sometimes.

We were somewhat glad to meet an acquaintance for he had already learned Portuguese a little and could be useful to us. And even during the search he selflessly took the risk of being caught and surreptitiously carried

Sosnovik's bag with compromising documents out of the Department. This certainly saved us from big trouble.

It turned out that Lapitsky stayed at the same hotel, and although we considered him to be a low quality person we still stuck together. We were kept under custody at the hotel for a long time. But we managed to meet a member of the Portuguese Parliament, Orlando, at the hotel, and he raised a question about our house arrest in Parliament, and due to his and other MPs' intervention we were allowed to walk in the streets unguarded, although, naturally, we were under constant surveillance by detectives.

Meanwhile, our names were often bandied about in the newspapers and we learned from these newspapers most sensational news about ourselves, for example, that the government had decided to deport us to a Portuguese penal servitude colony. But Orlando and his friends stood up for us again. Then there was a report in the newspapers that we would be transported to Australia by a British cruiser, but once again the deputies stood up for us. In view of the fact that the police did not allow us to leave the hotel in which they placed us and because this hotel was terribly expensive my money ran out completely and we owed the hotel for a fortnight's stay.

Our situation was desperate and we decided to risk everything and to try somehow to make our way via Constantinople and through Denikin's front, although we knew that the odds were 99 to one that we would be executed by Denikin's forces. So, having obtained a recommendation from Deputy Orlando, we went to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and I explained to him that if we were considered to be such dangerous people for Portugal it would be in his own interest to help us leave. I also explained to him that steamers sail from Italy to Novorossiisk via Constantinople and that therefore I ask him to give us a letter to the Italian envoy in Lisbon with the request that he issue us a visa for a couple of days' stay in Italy in order to get a steamship sailing to Constantinople. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers was glad to get rid of us and gave us an obliging official letter in which he wrote that the Portuguese government allowed us to go to Russia via Constantinople, that we also had the permission of the British government, and that he had asked the Italian envoy to give us a visa.

Enclosure No. 9 – This Letter.

Unfortunately, when I returned to the Italian envoy I found there Yevgeny Vasilievich Popov, Chargé d'Affaires of the Russian embassy in Lisbon. He whispered something to the envoy, after which the envoy shouted at me, invalidated the letter of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and declared that he would give us the permission to enter Italy only if the Chairman of the Council of Ministers wrote to him that we are banned from Portugal as dangerous Bolsheviks and asked Italy to accept us.

Clearly, I did not return to the chairman of the Council of Ministers with such a 'provocative' errand, and, because all consuls of other states who had learned about us from the newspapers categorically refused to issue us visas, we lost all hope.

Meanwhile Sosnovik was getting steadily worse and I took him to a professor who discovered that he had tuberculosis in its most desperate form. We were able to persuade the Lisbon Jewish society to take him, under its protection and at its expense, to a little hamlet in the mountains close to Lisbon.

And Popov, as well as the Russian consul, did all kinds of dirty tricks and reported us almost daily to the police.

Our financial situation was most desperate; we owed the hotel for a fortnight, the money was rudely demanded from us and we had nowhere to get it from. Lapitsky still had quite a bit of money which he had managed to collect everywhere in South Africa. In Lisbon he began to play roulette in the clubs and he was extremely lucky. So he lived relatively well. It turned out that one Lipshitz, a rich Russian Jew in Johannesburg, being a 'sympathiser of the movement', gave him about 100 pounds sterling for himself and Sosnovik before their departure from Africa. But in Lisbon, when Sosnovik asked for his share, Lapitsky stopped short and declared that Lipshitz's cheque allegedly had not been paid by a bank. Later on we found out that this was not true and that he had received the money.

To get away from this awful indigence I placed an announcement in a newspaper on the off-chance that 'an experienced businessman and former director of a joint stock company with excellent recommendations from British banks and manufacturers seeks a position in a Lisbon commercial firm'. I was lucky and got a job as a partner and manager of the import-export department in a large Lisbon firm, 'Gilman and Santiago, Ltd.'

Enclosures No. 10 and 11 – My Contracts with this Firm.

Having made commercial enquiries about me in London, they gave me a very high salary on top of the commissions from the business, and the three of us lived decently on my salary.

Meanwhile we were able to get in touch with Doctor Costa and other party comrades in Lisbon from whom Lapitsky again immediately borrowed money, and we started to assist them in their work, supplying them with information. I also translated various articles for them from French and English.

The situation of Communists in Portugal is very bad. They are persecuted dreadfully and thrown into jails. At the very time that we were there many were deported to a penal servitude colony in Portuguese Africa.

Trade unions are almost non-existent and workers are generally more exploited and persecuted than anywhere else.

Following my insistent complaints Deputy Orlando and his friends raised a question in Parliament about Detective Bellem and his gang, and he was fired from service for bribery etc. but British representatives immediately employed him at the British political intelligence service. He is still in Lisbon, getting a salary from the British mission.

During my stay in Lisbon railway workers, driven to despair by atrocious exploitation, declared a strike. The government replaced engine-drivers and conductors with soldiers, trying thus to break the strike. But workers began throwing bombs at trains, blowing up bridges on the line, etc.

Then the 'Government of the Democratic Republic of Portugal' devised a new Machiavellian way of breaking the strike: in front of each departing train, in front of the steam engine, they put a goods wagon with workers' leaders shackled in irons and under armed guard. Thus, by blowing up trains or bridges the workers would first of all kill their own comrades. In this fashion the strike which had lasted for two weeks was suppressed.

Nevertheless, propaganda is conducted rather well and there is even a newspaper, *La Batalia*, and in addition some leaflets.

Portuguese comrades need the same things as South African comrades do, that is literature for propaganda, direct instructions, and, most of all, monetary help. As I was told by one of the Portuguese comrades, with some ten thousand pounds a revolution could be organised in Portugal in a few months.

I advised him not to go for a purely Portuguese revolt until Spain rebels, because otherwise Spanish troops from one side and the British navy from the other would crush Portugal completely.

I promised the Portuguese comrades to pass on their message about the above as soon as I manage to get to Moscow.

I found out that Popov was a great lover of music and because I am also musical I was finally able to make friends with him on these grounds. We began to meet rather often and I even succeeded in part to persuade him that I was considered a Bolshevik 'by mistake'. I needed him because of his influence on the Russian consul Laksman so that he would give me a permit to leave Portugal.

Popov had not received his salary for several years and had a lot of debts. Only once did he get ten thousand francs from Kolchak with which he barely managed to ...¹⁵ the worst gaping holes in his budget. He still had some of the jewelery of his wife who lived in Holland, and he wanted to send it to her very much so that she could sell it but he was deterred from this by the high duties levied in Holland.

I offered to bring these things for him to Holland if he arranged an exit permit for me. He agreed and asked Laksman to do it. He gave me the permit after making me sign a pre-filled in form stating that I had nothing in common

15. The verb is absent in the original.

with the Bolsheviks and with the Soviet government and that 'I stand for a unified Russia under the supreme government of Admiral Kolchak'.

I thought that I was not in the position to stand on principles and signed the paper after which I got the exit permit.

Meanwhile I worked hard in my office and gained the complete confidence of the managers of the firm. Thus I persuaded them to send me to Germany to start trading relations and to obtain German representation.

The Spanish and French consuls refused point-blank to give me transit visas for Spanish and French territories but my firm succeeded in getting me on a small cargo steamer loaded with our own goods (cocoa) heading for Holland.

The Dutch consul also refused to give me a visa, but one of my partners, Santiago, was a friend of the Portuguese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Doctor Gonzales Texeira, and he referred me to him. Texeira officially asked the Dutch envoy to permit me entry into Holland. The latter wired to the government in the Hague that the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs specifically requested a permission for me to enter Holland. A positive answer came immediately by telegraph.

Popov gave me his jewellery in a sealed courier parcel and a certificate of a diplomatic courier from the embassy.

Thus I set off on my journey to Holland. We had not yet reached Amsterdam when a motorboat with policemen approached our steamship and they wanted to search my room. It turned out that Bellem had already sent a telegram to the Dutch political police informing them of my departure. However, after I produced my courier document, my firm's attestation that I was going to Holland as a partner in their business, the letter of recommendations from Popov to Baron Fersen, the Russian consul in the Hague and Rotterdam, and after my negative answer to the question of whether I knew the Dutch communist Wynkoop and others, the police left me alone.

I handed the parcel in to Baron Fersen and then went to the German embassy in Amsterdam with the letter of recommendations from the Amsterdam agent of our firm, Van den Berg, who enjoyed a considerable influence in Amsterdam.

I told the German consul my full surname, i.e. the real one, 'Wolberg', and the illegal, 'de Velmont', and explained to him that I had had a double surname but that there was only 'de Velmont' in my passport because Wolberg was a German surname and it was not convenient to be called that in Portugal at a time of war with Germany and that this was the reason why only the first part of my surname was in my passport. This circumstance, as well as the fact that I speak German fluently and, moreover, that I was born in Königsberg, and that, in addition, I was going to buy goods in Germany on the account of my firm, had an effect on him and he gave me a passport with the double surname and wrote in the visa that I was going to buy goods in Germany for a warehouse in Lisbon.

Enclosure No. 12 – This Passport.

That is how I got to Germany.

Having got to Germany, I considered it to be my moral duty to work for my Portuguese firm since I was travelling on their money, and in three weeks' time I got several first-class representatives for them.

In Berlin I met some comrades, i.e. Sergei Matveiev and others, who told me that the only way to enter Russia is through Lithuania. I applied to the Lithuanian embassy for a visa, allegedly for business, but was turned down.

At that time I met the artists of the local Russian theatre in Berlin who told me that part of their company was going to the Kovno City Theatre in Lithuania and that all the artists were promised visas by the Lithuanian embassy. The financial situation of the artists was, however, desperate, and not only did they not have the means to leave but some had even been evicted from their boarding houses for non-payment.

Then I recalled that I had once been drawn to the stage at Adashev's drama course in Moscow and even performed professionally.

I 'got in' the Russian theatre in Berlin and even played the role of Andrei in Chekhov's 'Three Sisters' under my old stage name 'Onegin' with great success and brilliant reviews in all newspapers.

Enclosure No. 13 – The Program of the Performance – for Fun.

I had to give financial assistance to many artists and even arranged a special charity performance at which they earned more than 600 marks each. As a sign of gratitude I received a silver cigar case with a signature which I still have.

As an artist I immediately received a visa from the Lithuanian embassy and came to Kovno with the company which I supported by my own means on the condition that, after the first two or three performances, I would get my money back from the kitty and be absolutely free from any obligations to the theatre.

I must mention that when leaving Portugal I did not take the risk of taking, for example, the volumes of 'The International' with me. I only took the letter of recommendation from the South African Party, my membership card, the Party statutes and the Johannesburg group photo. Before my departure from Berlin I thought that I should show these papers to Comrade Sergei Matveiev who communicated with the Com. For. Af.¹⁶ in Moscow, and to Comrade Boris Schneider who had formerly worked in the Soviet Bureau in Berlin. I requested these comrades to pass on my assignments to Moscow if something were to happen to me on the way.

16. Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

Through a party member 'Comrade Leva' (Garfunkel) I met one Manusevich in Kovno whom 'Comrade Leva' recommended to me as a comrade in the Party. According to Manusevich, he had to leave for Moscow in a couple of days on Sovnarkhoz business. Just in case I showed him my documents and asked him to pass on to Moscow that I would be in Moscow soon with my commissions.

Now, in Moscow, I have discovered that he had not been here and I have not yet found anyone who knows him.

A few days after my arrival in Kovno my lodgings were searched and I was arrested. During the search I managed to destroy the letter of recommendation and eat my membership card, so only the group¹⁷ and a receipt from the African¹⁸ Party together with some other insignificant documents got into the hands of the counterintelligence. My money was also confiscated as well as my British¹⁹ passport.

Enclosure No. 14 – Receipt from Public Prosecutor Prushakevich.

I was detained for 40 days in prison together with comrade Rotkegel from the Moscow German Soviet, and we agreed that whoever was the first to get out of prison would pass on the assignments of the other and make efforts on his behalf. Rotkegel was kept in prison for about four months.

One of these days I shall write a special report about prison conditions, the general situation in Lithuania, and the government-instigated Lithuanian revolution of 20th February, etc., for I consider it to be necessary to give a detailed account of these matters. I can only say now that the whole of Lithuania is in the hands of former Russian gendarmes, policemen and spies and that 'white terror' rages there with might and main.

It turned out that Minister for Byelorussian Affairs in Lithuania was Joseph Voronko, my cousin's fiancé. He and other acquaintances began to make efforts on my behalf and after 40 days I was released and ordered to leave Lithuania within 24 hours. The counterintelligence refused to return my money and my British passport.

Enclosure No. 15 – Certificate from Kovno City Prison.

I did not want to leave Kovno without my British passport, and my money was confiscated, and so I decided to do what the English call a 'bluff'. I set off for the British diplomatic mission and complained that my British passport was confiscated. The Head of the mission, Colonel Ward, felt insulted; he thought it

17. Group photo.

18. South African.

19. The origin of this British passport is not clear; the author had not mentioned it before.

to be a great insult to Britain that they had dared to confiscate a British passport.

He went to the counterintelligence and demanded that my passport and money be returned. He was promised that the next day a clerk from the counterintelligence would bring my money and passport to the railway station a quarter of an hour before my departure.

Clearly, I appealed to him as I was sure that he would not contact South Africa because of the long distance.

He advised me not to leave the city until I received my passport.

The following morning the Public Prosecutor Prushkevich himself, personally, instead of a clerk, came to the station with a guard and declared that he would not return my passport and that 'the British are not the rulers here', and that if I did not leave for Germany by train in 10 minutes I would be arrested and would 'rot in jail' for another several months and then would be deported to Germany under guard.

Relying on Colonel Ward's words I refused to leave and was again arrested at once and led, with swords drawn, to the counterintelligence. A girl who was seeing me off at the railway station immediately took a cab and went to the British mission. When I was brought to the counterintelligence, the mission had already been on the phone for me. Prushkevich declared to me that I was under arrest but that he gave me twenty minutes to go to the mission and inform them that 'he gave me the opportunity to leave for Germany and I refused to go' and that in twenty minutes I should come back and go to jail. He sent a soldier with me. When I came to the mission Colonel Ward was furious that the counterintelligence had deceived him. He provided me with a document which stated that 'until my British document is returned to me the mission insists that I stay in Kovno without interference from Lithuanian authorities'. My photo was pasted on the document.

Enclosure No. 16 – This Document.

Colonel Ward ordered the soldier who was accompanying me out and told me that I should not worry and go home on his responsibility.

Upon learning out about this, Prushkevich became furious and immediately issued an order to the City Major Mikutzky to detain me wherever I was to be found. In fact the police came later to my apartment but they did not dare to arrest me with that document.

On 17th February I was released from jail, and on the 20th the revolution began in Kovno. The Lithuanian government did not dare to touch me but wanted to get rid of me very much, for they were afraid of my 'activities'. At last my passport and money were returned to me through the British mission, although some letters, papers and the group photo were still kept, the certificate of the Russian consulate in Lisbon and Popov's courier certificate among them.

Voronko gave me a letter of recommendations to the Byelorussian mission in Berlin in exchange for my promise to find my cousin – his fiancé for him in Russia.

Rotkegel left a day before me and was waiting for me in Berlin.

I received a very warm welcome in the Byelorussian mission in Berlin and was given a certificate stating that I was going to Revel through Denmark and Finland on a diplomatic errand of their mission.

Enclosure No. 17 – This Certificate.

With this certificate I easily got Danish, Swedish and Finnish visas. The Estonian consul denied me a visa but told me that I could easily get one in Helsingfors.

In Berlin Cd. Rotkegel arranged for me to be received by Com. Kopp. I did not manage to see him in person but spoke with his secretary Com. Reich who impressed me as a person with whom it is difficult to deal. He stated straight away that he was too busy and just put down my telephone number promising to call. He spoke only a couple of minutes to me and did not even let me tell him anything and so I decided not to get back to them.

Comrades from Berlin advised me to go instead to Comrade Litvinov in Copenhagen to whom I had a calling card from Phillips Preis.

Enclosure No 18 – The Calling Card.

I also provided myself with a good letter of recommendations to Wilhelm Bucholz, representative of the Soviet Red cross in Copenhagen.

On the German-Danish border I was detained by a German policeman who, as it turned out, had followed me from Berlin. But he let me go when I produced my Byelorussian diplomatic document, informing me that such a document was sufficient for 'departure' from Germany. Obviously, German police succeeded in getting information about me from Portugal or Lithuania.

I went to Com. Bucholz who was very kind to me and immediately informed Com. Litvinov about me. He passed on to me a reply that it would be best to take my business to Frederick Ström in Stockholm where I then went.

I wrote a detailed report for Com. Ström in English which was translated for me into Swedish in the Stockholm branch of 'RosTA'²⁰ and enclosed the same documents that are enclosed herewith.

My report was discussed at a meeting of the Stockholm group of the International and Com. Ström promised to try to establish without delay direct contacts with South Africa and Portugal through the addresses I gave him.

²⁰ Russian Telegraph Agency.

In view of the fact that Com. John Reed had just been arrested in Finland and that white terror is generally reigning there Com. Ström did not recommend that I go via Finland and Revel. But, having given me a Soviet passport and a letter of recommendations to Com. Thomson in Varde (Norway), he advised me to go there.

The Norwegian consul was not willing to issue me a visa but I produced my Byelorussian document and told him that I was going to buy fish oil for a Byelorussian company in Norway and he gave me a diplomatic visa.

At Com. Ström's I met Alexander Billan who told me that he was going to Russia as Chairman of the Committee of the Workers' Party of America.

Comrade Ström also gave me some parcels to take to Moscow.

I had travelled under my own steam to Stockholm all this time, and I only had to take 300 crowns from Com. Ström for further expenses.

Soon after I crossed the Norwegian border the customs examined my luggage and found the parcels from Com. Ström. They immediately arrested me and brought me to the police department of the city of Trondheim where I was detained for several hours. I understood that my salvation would be a 'bluff', so bursting with arrogance, I began to shout at the Head of the Police Department waving my diplomatic certificate in front of him and threatening that he would lose his position for the arrest of a diplomat. I frightened the poor old man to such an extent that he was glad to release me. Thence I went to Com. Thomson and gave him the letter from Com. Ström, and he gave me the necessary recommendations and transported me to Murmansk together with Alexander Billan (who came to Varde a couple of days after me).

Billan informed me that a message from Com. Litvinov had been received in Stockholm, with the information that a day after my departure from Copenhagen Danish police were looking for me everywhere but, naturally, to no avail. I must mention that for some reason the Murmansk-Varde link is rarely used although there is nothing easier than to transport parcels and couriers by this safest way through Murmansk to Varde, and thence further. Andro, chairman of the municipal council of Varde (and editor of the newspaper Finmarken) is our comrade. We also have comrades even in the customs and police. The Norwegian government allows steamers and motorboats from Murmansk to come to Varde under the Soviet flag in order to receive and to deliver mail.

A shining example of how easy it is to transport even contraband from Norway is the fact that we smuggled in three large boxes of medical supplies as a gift from the Scandinavian Workers' Parties to a Murmansk hospital. The boxes were sent to sea on a fishing boat while we left on a motor boat a few hour later. In the middle of the sea we reloaded the boxes from the fishing boat onto our motor boat.

But for some reason this only 'window to Europe' is treated in Murmansk very negligently. This is blamed on the lack of coal, but it is possible to send motor boats. When I was there Com. Thomson did not have any news from

Murmansk for two weeks while the former Russian 'white consul' in Varde and the rest of the 'white community' who are cooped up with him receive news and letters from Murmansk almost daily. Various 'whites' and their wives with masses of baggage often come from Murmansk and Alexandrovsk allegedly with the permission of the Murmansk Soviet.

I earnestly advise the dispatch to Murmansk of a special person or a special commission to maintain a regular contact with Com. Thomson and other comrades abroad.

I am happy that finally, after 10 months of wanderings and suffering, I have this opportunity to hand in this report and thus to carry out the assignments entrusted to me.

Now I consider myself free and eagerly hope that I will succeed in my fondest wish to render a useful service to the Soviet government and to the idea that is so dear to me.

I must add that recently, in Berlin, I received a letter from Comrades Gendler²¹ and Sosnovik. They write that Gendler has a position in the office of a commercial firm and barely makes ends meet. Sosnovik, contrary to all fears, has allegedly recovered but has no means of existence. Both ask for financial assistance and dream of making their way to Russia. They still have the documents, a few volumes of the International, etc.

I consider it my duty to add to this that it became clear that I had been arrested in Lithuania due to a telegram from Germany and to a personal report of Alexei Sergeievich Volin, a former Petrograd actor. It turned out that he was a close friend of a counterintelligence investigator, Orzhekhovskiy, a former Petrograd police officer; both were sentenced to death at the time of the Soviet Government in Lithuania. It turned out that when I was out he searched my baggage and found in a chest a group photo with the inscription 'International' etc., and immediately reported me to the counterintelligence.

When I was in jail he stole my suitcase with belongings and ran away to Riga where he 'hung out' with the theatre company with his mistress Sophia Nikolaevna Dorian, identified in her passport as 'Volina, born Kantkovskaia from Petrograd'; but actually she was Sophia Kagan, the daughter of a watchmaker from Dvinsk.

It is noteworthy that it was I who dragged them out of poverty in Berlin, paid for their trip to Kovno and lent them DM2000 in cash.

To get in touch with comrades Sosnovik and Gendler it is necessary to write to the address of Gendler's firm.²²

Through them one can communicate with our Portuguese comrades, but naturally not by post, and parcels must be sent somehow with the sailor

21. This name was spelled in several different ways in the original.

22. Break in the text.

comrades. Many boats go from Scandinavia to Lisbon. Naturally, it is necessary to be very careful, since my comrades are still being watched in Portugal.

Communicate with the South African comrades at the following address:²³ However, Comrade Ström received all the details from me and pledged to arrange a direct connection from Sweden.

RGASPI, Personal file no. 49. ECCI. Personnel Department.²⁴
Original in Russian.

1a Appendix to no. 1¹
Report of Informant of South African Police,
5 April 1919²

Confidential.
JOHANNESBURG.
5.4.19.

re: – Lapitsky and Sosnovick.³

I beg to report that keeping an appointment with Mr. Traub I proceeded to the Balcony Tea Room at 9.30 p.m. last night to meet Mr. Lapitsky. At 10 p.m.

Doc. 1

23. Break in the text.
24. A. Davidson copied this document while working in the Comintern Archives in 1966. The only reference on the file that he received at that time was: 'ECCI. Personnel Department. Personal File No. 49 (Wolberg)'. The original Comintern stamp ran: 'The Archives of the Comintern, No. 136. Moscow.' After the Comintern Archives were opened in 1991 this file could not be found and, consequently, can not be precisely identified. Despite this the editors decided to include this document into the volume in full because of its importance. Not only does it describe the most prominent event in South Africa connected with the Russian revolution and the arrival of the first emissary of South Africa's left to Soviet Russia but it also contains a detailed description of the route that Wolberg and other Socialists and Communists used and the problems that they encountered. No other documents of similar nature have been discovered in the Archive.

Wolberg's file contained only one other document, besides this report: his request to allow him to leave Russia because he could not adjust to life there. The outcome of this request is not clear.

Doc. 1a

1. This is the only document in this selection that does not come from the archives of the Comintern. The editors decided to publish it as a supplement to the previous document because it contains the information supporting the authenticity of Wolberg's report, proves a deep interest of South African police in personalities involved and shows police methods.
2. The original has no indication of authorship.
3. See document no. 1, vol. I.

Traub, Miss Benjamin,⁴ Jones, several others whose names I could not catch on introduction, and the Secretary of the League of International Socialists,⁵ whose name I understand to be Aubret or O'Bell⁶ arrived. I was given to understand that all of them had just left a meeting of the Executive of the League. The Secretary had all his books with him. Lapitsky himself was for some reason prevented from coming.

Traub introduced me as Mr. Hirschman to all present and Miss Benjamin took me by hand and wanted to know my intentions as regards Socialism. I gave her to understand, that being anxious to join the League and take an active part in their propaganda, but before doing so I would like to be enlightened as far as their Native Policy is concerned, as being a man who has been living amongst natives for sometime, I would never bring myself to acknowledge absolute equality with them.

Miss Benjamin, saying that she had nothing to do with Native Propaganda, turned me over to Jones and to the Secretary who outlined their policy as regards Natives to me in detail.

Put in a nutshell it simply amounts to this: The present native trouble is engineered by the League, who by inciting the natives to strike for higher wages, hope that when the time comes when the natives achieve their object, wages of the white men will rise as a matter of course as no white man will work for a lower wage than natives. The destruction of their passes is merely a side issue which appeals to the native mind.⁷

Jones admitted that they were only using the natives in a selfish way to further their own ends. That their policy might lead to serious trouble does not seem to concern those people in the least, as to their mind 'the end justifies the means'.

Joining in the general conversation Miss Benjamin remarked that even if Lapitsky and Sosnovick were deported, they, the League were quite competent to carry on Bolshevik propaganda and that no doubt I too would prove a willing helper.

South African Central Archives: SAB; JUS; 267; 3/1064/18.

Original in English.

Typed.

4. The identity of Miss Benjamin could not be established.
5. International Socialist League.
6. The identity of this person could not be established.
7. There is a single line in the left margin opposite the paragraph starting from 'Put in ...'.