

# VIII

## Alexander Abaza

Alexander Nikolayevich Abaza was Tsarist Russia's last official representative in Australia. He was born on 4 August (OS) 1872 in Tiflis (Tbilisi), a member of an illustrious noble family of Moldavian origin. One of his great uncles was Nikolai Savvich Abaza, a provincial governor and member of the Council of State, and another, Alexander Ageyevich Abaza, was Minister of Finance in 1880–1881. A second cousin, Rear-Admiral Aleksei Mikhailovich Abaza, was influential in political circles in the early twentieth century and a member of the so-called 'Bezobrazov clique'.<sup>1</sup> In 1891, the future consul graduated from grammar school in Kharkov and entered the Alexander Lycée in St Petersburg, after which, in 1895, he joined the Foreign Ministry.<sup>2</sup> His first diplomatic postings were in Galati in Romania, Jerusalem and Bangkok. Standing out by his vigour and energy, with an ability to express his views clearly and convincingly, Abaza rose quickly through the ranks of the service. In 1905, he was appointed Russian consul in Alexandria, and in June 1910 came his appointment as consul general in Melbourne.

Abaza was married twice. His first marriage, to Yelizaveta Aleksandrovna Mossolova, ended in divorce. In London in November 1910, immediately before departing for Australia, he married a young woman of German

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1 Bezobrazov clique: a conservative group of mainly landed gentry, which included Secretary of State Alexander Mikhailovich Bezobrazov, the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich Romanov, and Viacheslav Konstantinovich Plehve, the Minister of Internal Affairs. It exerted influence in foreign policy, especially that concerning Manchuria and Japan in the period leading up to the war with Japan.

2 St Petersburg Central State Historical Archive: 11-1-12436, ff 88–91; AVPRI: 159-749/1-1081, ff 1–5.

origin, Frederica Sophia Sperlich. Together they arrived in Melbourne on 31 December 1910.<sup>3</sup> In the wedding notice in *The Times* and later foreign publications, his surname appeared as 'd'Abaza'. This apparently gave rise to groundless assertions that he held the title of 'prince' or 'count'.

As consul general in Melbourne, Abaza travelled widely through Australia, and became the first Russian representative there to visit New Zealand and the islands of Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and the New Hebrides. These journeys were prompted not merely by a love of travel – he had been a member of the Royal Geographical Society since 1899; his primary purpose was a plan which he was devising to expand the Russian consular service in Australia and Oceania. It was his belief that this region, especially New Zealand, could become a new market for Russian wares.<sup>4</sup> Besides that, owing to a rapid growth in Russian immigration to Australia, he sought to follow the situation in the Russian community, visiting the main centres of Russian settlement. In 1917, he visited Brisbane twice, that being the focus of Russian immigration in Australia and the centre in which, after the February revolution of 1917, the radical revolutionary elements were most active. His journey to Brisbane in October 1917 was closely coordinated with Australian military intelligence, as the Russian radicals stood accused, not without good grounds, of conducting anti-war propaganda. The visit brought little comfort. It became clear that a majority of the Russian residents of Brisbane were sympathetic to the anarcho-syndicalists of the organisation known as the Industrial Workers of the World, and their publications included articles of an 'undesirable nature'.<sup>5</sup>

After the October revolution, Abaza refused to serve the Bolshevik regime; the former consul and his wife left Australia in March 1918. They settled in Alexandria, where he had once served and where his father lived, having been Russia's representative before the revolution in the Egyptian Mixed Court of Appeals. There the last imperial Russian consul in Melbourne ended his days. He died on 6 November 1925. His wife survived him by only five months. Both lie buried in the Greek Orthodox cemetery of Chatby in Alexandria.<sup>6</sup>

3 *The Times*, 17 November 1910, p. 1; *The Argus*, 31 December 1910, p. 12.

4 He spoke of this in an interview with the Wellington *Evening Post*, 21 February 1912, p. 6; V. P. Oltarzhevskii, 'Plany sozdaniia rossiiskogo konsul'stva v Novoi Zelandii', *Rossia i politika derzhav v stranakh Vostoka*, Irkutsk, IGPI, 1991, pp. 72–73.

5 National Archives of Australia: BP4/1, 66/4/2072.

6 V. P. Oltarzhevskii, 'A. N. Abaza: "poslednii iz mogikan" rossiiskoi konsul'skoi sluzhby v Avstralii', *Chelovek na Vostoke i Zapade: vzgliad iz Sibirii*, Irkutsk, IGU, 2012, p. 145; V. V. Beliaikov, 'Rossiiskii nekropol' v Egipte', *Rossiiskii nekropol*, 2001, 11, p. 10.

The archive of the Melbourne consulate has never been found. According to some accounts, Abaza himself destroyed it. If this should prove to be incorrect, previously unknown documents may yet come to light.

## 104. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
29 (16) April 1911  
No. 219<sup>7</sup>

[...] Last Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> April 1911 will long remain a memorable day in Australian history for the first defeat meted out to the previously all-powerful Labor Party.

In office for more than a year (the Federal Government consists entirely of Labor members),<sup>8</sup> the Labor Party has striven unrelentingly to increase and strengthen its influence, openly flaunting the slogan which proclaims that the workers rule Australia.

The ideal of that Party and the present Government with which it is so closely linked is evidently the gradual destruction of capital, the nationalisation of industry and trade, and ultimately the establishment in Australia of a purely socialist system on principles of collectivism or communism.

The first step in the direction of such 'reforms', in the view of the Federal Government, was to broaden the powers of the Federal Parliament at the expense of the more conservative state parliaments and amend the Federal Constitution of 1901 accordingly.

According to Article 128 of that Constitution, any amendment or addition to it must be the subject of a referendum by all the Australian population, and must be accepted by a majority of states with an absolute majority throughout the Commonwealth.

7 The first page of this dispatch bears the note 'Excerpt for the Emperor'.

8 Andrew Fisher's Labor Government held power from the end of April 1911 until June 1913.

Such a referendum (the third since federation) was held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> April on two separate bills proposed by the Government and designed to amend and add to the Federal Constitution of 1901, dealing with (1) the legislative powers of the Federal Parliament, and (2) monopolies.

These draft bills amounted to the following:

**(1) Legislative powers**

(a) Trade

The Constitution of 1901 granted the Federal Parliament the power to enact laws concerning only 'trade and commerce with other countries, and among the States'. It was now proposed to remove this restriction and make all trade subject to the legislation of the Federal Parliament, that is, to grant it full and unrestricted control over trade, markets and rail communications in all states.

(b) Corporations

According to the 1901 Constitution, the legislative powers of the Federal Parliament include only 'foreign corporations, and trading or financial corporations formed within the limits of the Commonwealth'. It was now proposed to replace this article by another granting the Federal Government power over (1) all corporations, their establishment, liquidation, regulation, and control over them; (2) corporations established within each separate state (except purely religious, charitable, scientific or artistic associations which do not pursue material gain), their liquidation, regulation and control over them; (3) foreign corporations, their regulation and control over them.

This broadening of the powers of the Federal Government would have granted it, *inter alia*, unlimited control over the operations of municipal councils and would have placed all civic administration entirely in its hands.

(c) Labour and industry

The 1901 Constitution granted the Federal Parliament an arbitration tribunal for 'conciliation and arbitration for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes extending beyond the limits of any one State'. Instead of this, it was now proposed to subject to the exclusive regulation of Federal Parliament 'labour and remuneration, including (1) pay and working conditions for all industries and trades,

and (2) averting and resolving all industrial disputes, including those connected with conditions of service or work on the railways, whichever state those railways may belong to.”<sup>9</sup>

The aim of this bill was plainly to strip the separate states of all control over their own railways in favour of the Federal Parliament. In addition to this, the Federal Government, i.e. the Labor Party again, would obtain the legislative power to set wages in literally all industries.

(d) Unions

It was proposed to add to the 1901 Constitution an article subjecting to Federal parliamentary control ‘all unions and monopolies involved in production, manufacture or delivery of goods and offers of employment’.

The intention of this poorly drafted addition was utterly unclear, as it apparently gave Federal Parliament no new powers beyond those already enumerated.

**(2) Monopolies**

Concerning government monopolies it was proposed to add the following article to the 1901 Constitution:

‘If in one and the same session both chambers (of Federal Parliament) decide and declare the production, manufacture and supply of an item or the offer of employment a (Government) monopoly, Parliament may by means of legislation convey the said production, manufacture and supply or employment offer to the Federal Government or place them under Government control, thus acquiring for this purpose any private property required for such production on fair terms.’

Such power in the hands of the ‘workers’ government would have been an eternal sword of Damocles hanging over all private industry and independent labour, and would have offered unlimited scope for arbitrary Labor rule over people who are not members of various trade unions.

Fortunately the result of the referendum showed clearly that far from all Australians are so enamoured of socialist theories as to entrust the fate of their country to the Labor Party, or more precisely to a group of Party

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<sup>9</sup> Here and below, in order to preserve any nuances or possible bias in the interpretation, the wording of proposed amendments to the Constitution derives from Abaza’s Russian.

bosses (the Caucus) who, with high-sounding promises of a universal golden age, lead the working class onward while in fact pursuing their own personal aims, or at best their narrow Party interests.

Contrary to the Federal Government's expectations, the amendments to the Constitution proposed in the referendum were rejected by all the states except Western Australia, and moreover by a substantial majority, as may be seen from the following table:

**The States**

	Legislative Powers		Monopolies	
	For	Against	For	Against
New South Wales	130,061	228,903	129,377	225,478
Victoria	167,379	266,219	168,279	264,422
Queensland	60,239	82,890	61,264	81,569
South Australia	48,508	77,637	49,044	77,477
Western Australia	32,323	26,557	32,865	25,932
Tasmania	23,902	32,564	23,934	32,139

**The Commonwealth**

Legislative powers	Monopolies
For: 462,412	For: 464,863
Against: 714,770	Against: 707,017
Majority against: 252,358	Majority against: 242,254

The failure of the Government proposals was to a considerable degree due to the splendid organisation of the Democratic Party (which calls itself liberal but is really conservative),<sup>10</sup> and the influence of the press, which from the first day of the campaign spoke with rare unanimity against the proposed amendments to the Federal Constitution.

It is also interesting to note that the principal opponents of the Labor Party's desires were not only the affluent classes, but also almost the entire rural population and all women.

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10 Abaza is referring to the Commonwealth Liberal Party, or 'Fusion Party' (1909–1917), formed when the Australian Protectionist Party and the Anti-Socialist Party merged, to counter the influence of the Labor Party.

In conclusion one can only say that the Australian Commonwealth, having spent over £50,000 for the referendum, has at very low cost freed itself from the Labor Party's oppression, which was already becoming quite intolerable. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1194, ff 1-4. In Russian.

## 105. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
26(13) May 1911  
No. 301

[...] I have the honour to report to Your Excellency that the new Governor of Victoria, Sir John Michael Fleetwood Fuller, who has replaced the previous Governor Sir Thomas David Gibson Carmichael, appointed Governor of Madras, arrived in Melbourne on 11<sup>th</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> of this month and in a solemn session of the Victorian Parliament the same day took the oath of office and immediately took up his duties.<sup>11</sup>

Sir John Fuller was most cordially welcomed by the authorities and the population of the state and evidently promises to become just as popular here as his predecessor, Sir Thomas Carmichael, who, unlike Lord Dudley, the Governor-General,<sup>12</sup> was able to win the universal love and respect of the entire population during his three years in Victoria. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1194, f. 11. In Russian.

11 Carmichael held office as Governor of Victoria from 1908 to 1911, Fuller from 1911 to 1913.

12 William Humble Ward, Second Earl of Dudley, was Governor-General from 1908 to 1911. Among the political elite of Australia he was not popular, on account of his dubious moral qualities and questionable business acumen.

## 106. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
10 October (27 September) 1911  
No. 520

[...] I have the honour to report to Your Excellency that the day before yesterday Egerton Lee Batchelor, the Federal Minister for External Affairs,<sup>13</sup> died of a heart attack at Warburton.

Born in Adelaide in 1865, the late Minister was for some time a schoolteacher in his youth. In 1891 he became actively involved in the then newly-created Labor Party. In 1893 he was elected to the South Australian Parliament, and seven years later to the first Federal Parliament, as a South Australian representative. In 1894 he was granted the portfolio of Minister for Home Affairs in Watson's cabinet, and in 1898 that of Minister for External Affairs in Fisher's first cabinet,<sup>14</sup> which, however, held office for only seven months.

When the Labor Party returned to office in April 1910 and Mr Fisher formed his second cabinet, Mr Batchelor was again entrusted with the Ministry for External Affairs and headed it from that date.

Thanks to his exceptional mind, his tact and moderation, the late Minister won universal respect and his premature death is a great loss to the Federal Government. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1194, f. 17. In Russian.

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<sup>13</sup> Batchelor was a political figure in South Australia and the Commonwealth. He served as Minister for External Affairs in Fisher's Labor administration in 1908–1909 and 1910–1913.

<sup>14</sup> These dates are incorrect, perhaps as a consequence of a scribal error. Batchelor was appointed federal Minister for Home Affairs under Watson in 1904 and Minister for External Affairs under Fisher in 1908.

## 107. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
18 (5) October 1911  
No. 540

[...] Further to my dispatch of 27<sup>th</sup> September last (No. 520),<sup>15</sup> I have the honour to report to Your Excellency that the executive council of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia has appointed Mr Josiah Thomas, formerly Postmaster-General, to the office of Minister for External Affairs, left vacant by the death of Mr E. L. Batchelor.<sup>16</sup>

From the point of view of the foreign representatives here, this seems quite a felicitous choice, as the new Minister for External Affairs is known for his broad horizons – rather uncommon in Australia – and has none of that narrow Australian exclusivity, owing to which international interests are usually seen by the local government as something barely worthy of attention.

It may be worth adding to the above that Mr Thomas is an old friend of Mr H. C. Sleight,<sup>17</sup> whom I recommended for the post of Honorary Consul in Melbourne (in my memorandum to the Second Department, No. 425, 15<sup>th</sup> August last),<sup>18</sup> and to whom he is much indebted in his private life. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1194, f. 16. In Russian.

15 See Document 106.

16 Josiah Thomas was a New South Wales and Commonwealth politician and Minister for External Affairs under Fisher from 1911 to 1913.

17 Harold Crofton Sleight: Melbourne shipowner and merchant. In 1905, he acquired a timber concession in Siberia and began importing timber to Australia. Honorary Russian Vice-Consul in Melbourne 1912–1917.

18 The memorandum has not been traced.

## 108. Abaza to Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
27 (14) June 1912  
No. 292

[...] I have the honour to enclose herewith, for appropriate processing by the Department, a bank cheque drawn on the local branch of the Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris as No. 2650,<sup>19</sup> in the name of the Director, Second Department,<sup>20</sup> for £80, 5 shillings and 3 pence. This represents a total of £80, 17 shillings and 3 pence, with banking fees, collected by a subscription fund opened by the Melbourne *Age* for those affected by famine in Russia (the Russian Famine Relief Fund).<sup>21</sup>

I have the honour to respectfully request that receipt of the said bank cheque be acknowledged. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1227, f. 14. In Russian.

## 109. Abaza to Director, Personnel and Management Department<sup>22</sup>

Melbourne,  
14 (1) November 1912  
No. 625

[...] While on leave in May 1910 and awaiting my appointment as Consul General in Melbourne, I felt it my duty to avail myself of the presence in St Petersburg of State Councillor Hedenstrom in order to learn from him some details concerning my future service in Australia. When I chanced to enquire about our honorary consuls in Australia, State Councillor

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19 Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris (CNEP): in the early twentieth century, the third most important French bank, with a network of branches in the major industrial and financial centres of the world.

20 i.e. to A. K. Bentkovsky.

21 The Russian Famine Relief Fund was established in London to raise funds for the starving in Russia in the winter of 1911–1912 as a result of the failed harvest of 1911.

22 In 1910–1914, the Director of the Foreign Ministry's Personnel and Management Department was Vladimir Antonovich Artsimovich.

Hedenstrom replied as follows: 'Most of them are of no practical use to us, and I would advise you to get rid of them as soon as possible. The one exception is Lubrano di Negozio, the Italian I appointed as consular agent in Newcastle.<sup>23</sup> He is a thoroughly respectable and capable man. He was exceptionally helpful to me in the complicated matter of the steamer *Sungari*,<sup>24</sup> and I advise you, whatever you do, to keep him on as our agent.'

Upon my arrival in Melbourne, from my correspondence with Mr Lubrano I was very quickly able to confirm that State Councillor Hedenstrom's report was fully accurate. My Italian colleague Mr Mercatelli's favourable opinion of him and my personal acquaintance with him since meeting him in March 1911 further confirmed my impression of him as the ideal honorary consul: he is honest, efficient and truly conscientious in his work.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, I have learned from experience that our Consul in Sydney, Mr Paul, who is now over 87, is in no state to cope with the consular work placed upon him, which, incidentally, has never been of interest to him.

It was awkward for me to compel an old man with so many years' service to retire, and Mr Paul on principle still refuses to understand my numerous hints on that score.

On learning that Mr Lubrano was spending three days a week in Newcastle and three in Sydney, I decided that it would be best to let Mr Paul keep the title of Honorary Consul in Sydney, while passing all the actual work to Mr Lubrano, as the one person ready and able to selflessly serve the interests of the Russian community in Sydney.

In June 1911, the death of our Honorary Vice-Consul in Sydney Mr Rougier, who had been seriously ill since 1908 and no longer fit to work, provided the opportunity I sought. In my memorandum of 20<sup>th</sup> September 1911 (No. 503)<sup>26</sup> I requested that the Imperial Embassy in London appoint Mr Lubrano our Honorary Vice-Consul in Sydney and Newcastle.

23 Francesco Lubrano di Negozio: a port agent at Darling Point, Sydney, who from 1909 acted as honorary Russian consular agent in Sydney and Newcastle, and from 1912 was honorary vice-consul in those cities.

24 *Sungari*: this refers to Hedenstrom's efforts to obtain the release of the steamship *Sungari*, which was impounded in Sydney by the Australian authorities in 1909 for non-payment of debt. Hedenstrom was able to find a cargo for the vessel, thus enabling it to pay the debt and sail for Europe.

25 Luigi Mercatelli: Italian consul general in Melbourne since 1908.

26 The memorandum is not reproduced here.

At the same time, in my memoranda of 2<sup>nd</sup> February (NS) 1912 (Nos 81 and 82) I informed the Federal Government and the Government of New South Wales that I was provisionally appointing our Consular Agent in Newcastle Mr Lubrano di Negozio Vice-Consul, 'pending the confirmation of his appointment by H.I.R.M. Foreign Office.'

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 1912, the provisional appointment of Mr Lubrano was announced in the *New South Wales Gazette*, and on 6<sup>th</sup> March in the *Commonwealth Gazette*.<sup>27</sup> I feel duty bound to observe that, as a general rule, before appointing any honorary agent, I make private enquiries as to the extent to which that appointment will be agreeable to the state government in question and the Federal Government. In the present case, I did not consider this necessary, as Mr Lubrano was appointed Consular Agent by my predecessor in 1909 and I naturally assumed that State Councillor Hedenstrom had made all the necessary enquiries at that time.

On 17<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> May 1912, in memoranda of that date (Nos 250 and 251), I notified the Federal Government and the Government of New South Wales that Mr Lubrano had been confirmed by the Imperial Ministry in the post of Honorary Vice-Consul in Sydney and Newcastle. From the New South Wales Government I received no reply, but the Federal Government informed me on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1912 that the definitive appointment of Mr Lubrano had been announced in the *Commonwealth Gazette* of 3<sup>rd</sup> August.

By this time I had had the opportunity to become even more convinced of the degree to which Mr Lubrano justified the expectations I had placed in him: a more efficient, sensible and conscientious agent I could never have imagined.

On 30<sup>th</sup> September last, Mr Hunt,<sup>28</sup> Secretary of the Department of External Affairs (that is, a colleague of the Minister for External Affairs), invited me to the Ministry and informed me that the New South Wales Government had learned that our Vice-Consul in Sydney and Newcastle, Lubrano di Negozio, was identical with another Lubrano, who, it seemed, enjoyed a most unenviable reputation in Sydney and had been convicted in 1905 for the illegal importation of cigarettes and fined £50, for non-payment of which he had been sent to prison.

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27 The proper titles are *New South Wales Government Gazette* and *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*.

28 Atlee Arthur Hunt: lawyer and senior public servant, in 1901–1916 Secretary of the Department of External Affairs.

‘A person of this sort,’ Mr Hunt added, ‘cannot be tolerated as a consular representative, and the New South Wales Government intends to dismiss him immediately from his post.’

In reply I told Mr Hunt that I was very surprised by this news, as Mr Lubrano had been warmly recommended not only by my predecessor State Councillor Hedenstrom, but also by my former Italian colleague Mr Mercatelli, who personally knew him well; that I had always been very satisfied with Mr Lubrano, and that I knew from the documentation that his full surname was Lubrano di Negozio. Furthermore, even if he was guilty of an improper action in 1905, one would think that the New South Wales Government should have protested against his appointment in 1909 and not now, after his approval and the official announcement not only of his appointment as Consular Agent in Newcastle in 1909 but also his provisional appointment as Vice-Consul in Sydney and Newcastle in February of this year.

In conclusion I nonetheless promised Mr Hunt that I would immediately investigate the matter and, if need be, take any necessary steps with regard to Mr Lubrano. Here, however, I drew Mr Hunt’s attention to the fact that a Russian Consular representative, even in an honorary capacity, can be dismissed only by the Imperial Russian Government.

I communicated the above to Mr Lubrano in a private letter and at the same time advised him that if the information I had received about him was really true he should resign, without awaiting further developments. I have the honour to include herewith a copy of Mr Lubrano’s reply, received on 3<sup>rd</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> October.

In the meantime Mr Hunt, in a memorandum dated 7<sup>th</sup> October 1912 (No. 16 721) informed me that the New South Wales Government had announced ‘the cancellation of the recognition of Mr Lubrano (di Negozio) as Vice-Consul for Russia in Sydney and Newcastle’ in the *New South Wales Gazette*, as early as 16<sup>th</sup> September, that is, fourteen days before my conversation with him.

I immediately set out for the Department of External Affairs and told Mr Hunt that the action of the New South Wales Government was completely inappropriate because the dismissal of Mr Lubrano was a matter for the Imperial Russian Government alone, not that of New South Wales, which had not even taken the trouble to forewarn me of its intentions concerning an agent on my staff. Mr Hunt agreed with me but

began insisting forcefully that Mr Lubrano should resign. I replied that not only did I lack the authority to dismiss Mr Lubrano, but also that I did not even have the right to accept his resignation if he were to offer it, and that all I could do was temporarily suspend him from duty and report the incident to the Imperial Ministry.

On the same day I wrote to the Department of External Affairs requesting to be informed of the extent to which the Federal Government approved of the action of the New South Wales Government. I received the reply that an announcement in the *New South Wales Gazette* was of no consequence to the Federal Government, that is, in the eyes of the Federal Government Mr Lubrano remained Russian Vice-Consul in Sydney and Newcastle, and in my memorandum of 27<sup>th</sup> September/10<sup>th</sup> October (No. 562) I informed the Department of External Affairs that I had temporarily suspended Mr Lubrano from duty until such time as the matter was clarified.

In a personal interview with Mr Hunt, I informed him that, in view of the circumstances surrounding the case, I did not undertake to give Mr Lubrano definite advice as to whether he should resign or not, and that I had asked him to come to Melbourne to see me in person. I promised that I would promptly inform Mr Hunt of the outcome of that meeting.

Owing to certain private circumstances of his own, Mr Lubrano was unable to come to Melbourne until 21<sup>st</sup> October/3<sup>rd</sup> November last. When he arrived, after a long conversation and prolonged reflection he decided that, in order to pre-empt any unpleasantness, the best course of action would be for him himself to resign, which he did in a declaration to me on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1912 (No. 58), a copy of which is enclosed herewith. At the same time, however, Mr Lubrano expressed the hope that the Imperial Government would not accept his resignation, and I must admit that I share this hope.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October/4<sup>th</sup> November 1912 I informed the Department of External Affairs in a statement (No. 615) that Mr Lubrano had tendered his resignation and that I was notifying the Imperial Embassy of this, and on 24<sup>th</sup> October/6<sup>th</sup> November I followed this with a statement (No. 620, copy enclosed herewith)<sup>29</sup> of my emphatic protest against the high-handed and inappropriate conduct of the New South Wales Government in this matter.

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29 Abaza's statement is not reproduced here.

This conduct is, incidentally, utterly typical of the contemptuous attitude of all the Australian states (and of the Federal Government, though to a lesser extent) to foreigners in general and foreign representatives in particular.

In almost two years in Australia I have often had occasion to see how any trifle, which in any other country would be of no consequence at all, here has to be contested with all one's might against people who have not the slightest notion – and wish to have none – of international law, and on principle have no wish to take account of any foreign laws at all. Furthermore I have concluded that good manners and courtesy will achieve nothing in Australia; these qualities are not appreciated here. This means that every foreign consul in Australia is compelled to stand up for his official interests most energetically and never accept the slightest attempt to ignore his official position and his rights, which in any case have here been reduced to a minimum.

Returning to the case of Mr Lubrano, I am of the opinion that two completely separate and independent questions arise: first, Mr Lubrano's suitability for consular service, and second, the action of the New South Wales Government, which high-handedly permitted itself to dismiss a Russian consular agent.

Concerning Mr Lubrano's suitability, I can only say that I will never be able to find such a good agent for Sydney and Newcastle, and that his suspension from duty is already proving a source of great difficulty for me, in view of the size of the Russian community in Sydney and the Russian (Finnish) ships which call at Newcastle.

Mr Paul, our Sydney consul, is absolutely incapable of discharging any consular duties at all, and has no wish to.

To what extent Mr Lubrano's past, that is, the unfortunate episode in 1905, is compatible with the dignity of an honorary Russian vice-consul or otherwise, I do not presume to judge. I leave that decision to the Imperial Ministry. For my part, I can only reassert that many honorary foreign consular representatives have worse records, and it is my belief that this question would never have been raised had Mr Lubrano been a British subject rather than an Italian one.

As for Mr Lubrano's dismissal by the New South Wales Government, I can find no words to describe the impertinence of this action, and sincerely dare to hope that the Imperial Ministry, for the sake of its own prestige, will find it in its power to endorse my protest.<sup>30</sup> In my humble opinion, to accept Mr Lubrano's resignation at the present time would be tantamount, so to speak, to sanctioning the high-handedness of the Australian Government, and we would then have no guarantee that any one of our honorary consuls in Australia would not be dismissed at any moment, and even without our knowledge, in spite of prior official recognition of his appointment.<sup>31</sup> [...]

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1441, ff 5-9. In Russian.

## 110. Appendix 1 to Abaza's Dispatch No. 625 Lubrano di Negozio, Honorary Vice-Consul in Sydney and Newcastle, to Abaza

14 October 1912

Dear Mr d'Abaza,

Your sincere mark of friendship shown to me in your private letter of the 10-th instant will never be forgotten by me.

I am a man of very limited means, but I can work and if ever my services may be of any use to you and to the Imperial Russian Government you can dispose of me as your most humble servant.

The allegation brought against me is true. I was on the 18-th of September 1905 charged with smuggling cigarettes, and on the advice of my solicitors I pleaded guilty and was sentenced to pay £50 fine, or in default conviction for two months. Although I had no money at the time, a friend of mine bailed me out, and I succeeded in time, within the ruling of the court, by working to make enough money to pay the fine.

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30 The archive materials point to the conclusion that the Russian Foreign Ministry did indeed protest to the British Government.

31 In April 1913, Lubrano was stood down from the office of vice-consul 'at his own request'.

The smuggling had not been effected by me, but by the buyer of provisions of the Austrian man o'war *Panther* then on a visit to Sydney,<sup>32</sup> and I, in the anxiety of securing the contract, to supply all that the *Panther* wanted in the way of provisions, materials and coal, acted as mediator for this buyer to sell the smuggled cigarettes, which were sold. On the cigarettes being sold to the public a custom house officer traced that the cigarettes had been smuggled, and seized them from the persons who were selling them, and as the Austrian man o'war had left Sydney the vendor of the cigarettes gave my name to the customs and that is why I was prosecuted. As I have already stated, on the advice of my solicitors I pleaded guilty, as they expected that being the first offence and as I had never been in court before, the Judge might have acquitted me, and save a long debate by pleading guilty, otherwise the matter may be worse. This is the fact pure and simple.

On your advice I am enclosing to the present a blank Consular letter-heading signed, being sure that any decision you will take will be for my best, which letter-heading, after reading the present, you can fill in type writing in whatever way you like and to my full satisfaction. But I have no hesitation in saying that I am fully qualified to fulfil the great honorary position that you so kindly conferred upon me, especially in Australia, and I call upon you as a friend and to the Imperial Russian Government to defend me, even if I have to sustain expenses to the extent of £500, and even all that I am worth, as I am not ashamed of my past.

May I add: 1) that my wife is the niece of Mr John Baxter late Collector of Customs for N.S.W., who was in office at the time of my prosecution, 2) that I have been for several years a member of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, 3) that many consular elective officers in N.S.W., deceased and in active service, have committed embezzlement and been bankrupt – offences of more serious character than mine, 4) that some of the members of the N.S.W. Parliament, past and present, of very prominent position, are in office although the public think that they ought to be somewhere else, 5) that the only reason of the cancellation of my appointment by the N.S.W. Government, which today I have found to have been published on the 18-th of September, is that someone, who is evidently not a friend

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32 *Panther*: a torpedo cruiser of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, built in Britain by the Armstrong yards, completed in 1885.

of mine, has gone to the Government and laid information against me. I am sorry to say that this someone is undoubtedly an Italian, and he did the same thing with the Consul General for Italy, Signore Mercatelli.

From the enclosed letter of Signore Mercatelli to me of various dates you can form an opinion as to what the Italians of Sydney are capable of doing in the way of envying a person. You would rather believe that the Italians would be glad to see a countryman (who, though I say it myself, has always helped Italians and who by giving money to poor Italians and lending it to those of better conditions has lost more than £500), representing as Vice-Consul a big country like Russia; instead of which they go and lay information against him. But I am glad to say that Mercatelli cares more for me now than he ever did before, and that before leaving Australia he promised me that the next Chevalier of the Crown of Italy to be appointed in N.S.W. would be Lubrano. He also wrote privately to Dr Marano,<sup>33</sup> Consular Agent for Italy in Sydney, that 'Near Lubrano and away from him I shall do for him always my best in order to improve his position'.

I must also say that the N.S.W. Government have acted in the most undiplomatic manner, first by not acquainting you or me of the fact, so that an explanation could have been given, and secondly by having published in the cancellation my name as Francesco Lubrano (di Negozio), in brackets, as if I had used it to escape recognition. No! My name is Francesco Lubrano di Negozio, and my captain's certificate of service that I have in my possession and other Government papers can prove it. If I shortened it since I arrived in Australia, it was because of the simplicity of these people who do not know any other language but their own, and who do not attach any importance to the 'di Negozio'. Was I not going to have my full name registered, when a nation like Russia was giving me the honour to represent her? Certainly I was, even if all Australia should have objected. And on this point I am very strong against the Government, and on the settlement of this affair I am going to have it out with them.

You can understand that I would never have accepted the high honour of a Consular office if I thought that I could have been debarred from it, and a fine surely ought not to have been made such a strong allegation when the fine was paid [*sic*]. I love my work as a Consular officer and I shall be

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33 Dr Vincenzo Marano was appointed Italian consular agent in Sydney in June 1880, served for 42 years and retired as consul in August 1922.

very sorry to leave it, but in the event that you will advise me to do so, I shall always do my best for any Russian subject that you might like to address to me.

I really do not think it necessary to give any further reference as to my character, but should you like to have those of the leading people in Sydney I shall be only pleased to forward them to you.

I am extremely sorry for the unpleasantness and sorrow that I have caused you, and I thank you very, very much for the good words you have written about my work as a Consular officer. I have not yet handed over to Mr Paul all that belongs to the Vice-Consulate, as I want to go through everything again and see that it is in order, but I give you my word of honour that nothing will be used by me.

If you wish to have a personal interview with me, I shall come to Melbourne any time you like.

Thanking you again for your sympathy, and asking you to forgive my way of writing, as I feel quite excited, with respects and kind regards,

Yours faithfully

(signed) Lubrano di Negozio.

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1441, ff 2, 15. Copy. In English. Previously unpublished.

## 111. Appendix 2 to Abaza's Dispatch No. 625

Abaza to Secretary, Federal Department  
of External Affairs,

Melbourne,

6 November (24 October) 1912

No. 620

[...] In continuation of our correspondence re the Honorary Vice-Consul for Russia in Sydney and Newcastle, Mr Lubrano di Negozio (now resigned), and referring particularly to my letter of the 27<sup>th</sup> ultimo No 562 I have the honour to draw the attention of the Commonwealth Government to the following facts in connection with the attitude taken up by the Government of New South Wales in this matter:

(1) On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1909 Mr Lubrano was appointed, by my predecessor Mr Hedenstrom, Consular Agent for Russia at Newcastle, vice Mr Eugene Boivin, deceased. No objection to his appointment was made, at the time, by the New South Wales Government, and the appointment was duly gazetted in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* of the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 1909.

(2) On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January (2<sup>nd</sup> of February) 1912 I informed the Premier of New South Wales that I had provisionally appointed Mr Lubrano to the office of Honorary Vice-Consul in Sydney and Newcastle.<sup>34</sup> In his reply, dated the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1912, No. 12/626, the Premier raised no objection whatsoever to the appointment, which was duly gazetted in the *Government Gazette* of the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1912.

(3) On the 17/30<sup>th</sup> of May 1912, I informed the Premier of New South Wales that the Imperial Russian Foreign Office had confirmed the appointment of Mr Lubrano as Imperial Vice-Consul for Russia in Sydney and Newcastle. Receiving no reply to my communication, I naturally concluded that there was no obstacle to the appointment, and that it would be gazetted in due course, as it was gazetted in the *Commonwealth Gazette* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 1912.

(4) The refusal of the New South Wales Government to recognize Mr Lubrano di Negozio in his Vice-Consular capacity is, on their own showing, not based on anything having happened since his first appointment as consular officer, but on certain events which took place in 1905 – viz., 4 years prior to Mr Lubrano's first appointment as consular agent. It would seem to have been the duty of the New South Wales Government to have taken those events into consideration before Mr Lubrano's appointment was gazetted in October 1909, or, at least, before gazetting his subsequent appointment in February 1912.

The sanction of a Government, once given, cannot be withdrawn arbitrarily, especially after it has been given not only once, but twice during an interval of 4 years.

(5) Once made, the appointment of a Consular Officer can be only cancelled by his own Government. According to Russian law, I myself, as Imperial Russian Consul General in Australasia, have not got the

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<sup>34</sup> The Premier of New South Wales in February 1912 was James McGowen.

power of dismissing a subordinate Consular Officer, or even of accepting his resignation. This rests entirely with the Imperial Foreign Office in St Petersburg, to whom it is my duty to refer the matter.

There is, of course, not the slightest doubt that every Government has, on sufficient grounds, the right to oppose, or object to, the nomination of any particular individual as Consular Officer within the limits of its territory; but there is only one way in which such an objection should be made – viz., by making friendly representations to his Government for the removal of the officer in question. In the present instance, however, I regret to say that the Government of New South Wales have not only acted ultra vires in cancelling the appointment (or recognition of, which practically amounts to the same thing) of a foreign Vice-Consul, which may only be cancelled by his own Government, but have also been guilty of a most discourteous and unfriendly act towards the IMPERIAL Russian Government, in as much as its official representative – myself – was not even informed beforehand of the steps the New South Wales Government proposed to take, and still less asked to investigate the matter and to take the necessary steps himself.

In consequence of the above, I am reluctantly compelled, while protesting most emphatically against the unwarranted attitude of the New South Wales Government, to ask the Commonwealth Government to take the necessary steps in order to prevent, in future, the recurrence of similar unfortunate incidents. [...]

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1441, ff 3–4. Copy. In English. Previously unpublished.

## 112. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
18 (5) April 1913  
No. 267

[...] I have the honour to report to Your Excellency that on 12<sup>th</sup> March last (NS) the official opening took place of the new capital of the Australian Commonwealth, which has been named Canberra.

In spite of the solemnity accompanying this notable event in the history of Australia, to which all the senior Federal and state authorities were officially invited, none of the foreign representatives in Australia was favoured with an invitation to attend, with the sole exception of the Consul General of the United States of America in Sydney.<sup>35</sup> [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1253, f. 9. In Russian.

## 113. Abaza to Benckendorff, Russian Ambassador in London

Melbourne,  
2 June (20 May) 1913  
No. 432

[...] I have the honour to report to Your Excellency that in the past two years the town of Port Pirie in South Australia has become the centre of a quite significant and still increasing Russian community, already numbering over 500 people, mainly Orthodox Ossetians, natives of the Caucasus.

All are employed at the smelting works of Broken Hill Pty. Ltd, a major concern here, and they differ so markedly from Australian and British workers that the management has more than once expressed to me his readiness to take on, if possible, all the Russian workers who seek employment with him.

Furthermore, I am aware from private sources that the Russian community in Port Pirie lives in close harmony and unison and does its best to maintain proper ties with the homeland by founding a Russian club, a Russian library and a Russian school, all very worthy enterprises in their own right, but in my view they ought, if possible, to be placed under the supervision of my consulate.

As I am in Melbourne, a distance of forty-eight hours travel by train from Port Pirie, whither I can travel no more than once a year for a brief period, I would consider it highly desirable to have at least an honorary consular agent appointed there, who might keep me constantly informed about everything that happens in the Russian community there.

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35 In 1908–1915, the consul general of the US in Sydney was John Bray.

Should Your Excellency see fit to concur with my view, I would permit myself to suggest one Montague Lewes Warren as a most suitable candidate for the post of Honorary Consular Agent in Port Pirie.<sup>36</sup> He is a highly respected man and occupies a prominent public position in Port Pirie, evidence of which in standard form is attached herewith, with his signed declaration that he is not a member of any secret societies.<sup>37</sup> [...]

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1441, f. 80. In Russian.

## 114. Abaza to Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,

5 August (23 July) 1913

No. 568

[...] In accordance with the instruction of 17<sup>th</sup> June last (No. 8066),<sup>38</sup> I have the honour to forward to the Department in a separate package a copy of *The Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia* for 1911,<sup>39</sup> containing the most complete information on the question of the transfer of the federal capital to Canberra (pp. 1134ff).

It is as yet impossible to add anything to the information provided, as work on the construction of the capital itself and of communication routes to it is proceeding extremely slowly, so slowly that the transfer of government agencies from Melbourne is unlikely to occur sooner than the next five or six years.<sup>40</sup> All Federal Government agencies and the residence of the Governor-General are to be transferred to Canberra.

As for Sydney, it will retain all its importance as capital and government centre of a state, and as a vital commercial and industrial city. The same may be said of the other capital cities of the separate states, i.e. Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1253, f. 11. In Russian

36 Montague Lewes Warren: a bank employee in Port Pirie, later an accountant and manager of a smelting works. At the end of 1913, he was appointed honorary Russian consular agent there.

37 The attachments are not reproduced here.

38 The instruction is not reproduced here.

39 The first *Official Year Book* was published in 1908.

40 In fact, the transfer was effected only in 1927.

## 115. Abaza to Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
6 January 1914 (24 December 1913)  
No. 1008

Further to my report of 23 July last, No. 568,<sup>41</sup> I have the honour to forward to the Department in a separate package the book, *Canberra*, published by the Federal Government.<sup>42</sup> [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1253, f. 12. In Russian. Previously unpublished.

## 116. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>43</sup>

Melbourne,  
23(10) February 1914  
No. 138

[...] As Your Excellency is probably aware, all children born in Australia are considered Australian citizens and British subjects under Australian law, regardless of the nationality and citizenship of their parents. Since I have been in Melbourne, I have on several occasions discussed this matter with the Federal Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs and have pointed out to them that this principle is not only archaic from the standpoint of international law, but also entails practical inconveniences for the child and parents owing to the conflict between Australian law and, for example, Russian laws on citizenship. The only reply I have received is that 'It's our law and anyone who doesn't like it does not have to come here' – a fairly rude reply, but one which perfectly illustrates Australian indifference to the rest of the world.

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41 See Document 114.

42 The original document bears a note acknowledging receipt of the book: 'Received for the library, 4 February 1914'. Signature; date 4 February 1914 (NS: 17 February 1914).

43 This document is a copy of a 'confidential dispatch' from Abaza to Bentkovsky, sent by Abaza to Benckendorff, the ambassador in London.

Until now I have taken a mainly theoretical interest in this question. Now, however, I am expecting an addition to my own family in a few months, and the matter of the citizenship of a Russian child born in Australia has become one of personal interest to me. Beside the fact that I have no wish to have my child regarded as a foreign national wherever that may be, it seems to me impermissible that the child of a Russian official in Australia in the course of his duties as representative of Russia should be subject to Australian citizenship laws and regarded as a British subject.

In communicating this, I most respectfully entreat Your Excellency not to refuse me your gracious advice, and if possible secure the assistance of the Imperial Ministry in contacting the British Government to ensure that, in view of my official position, Australian citizenship laws are not applied to me. If absolutely necessary, I have the honour to most respectfully seek permission to depart from Australia in June or July this year for six weeks, not as leave of absence, to take my wife to New Caledonia, the closest foreign colony, where Australian law does not apply. [...]

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1506, f. 55. Copy. In Russian.

## 117. Appendix to Dispatch No. 109

### Abaza to Director, Personnel and Management Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
18 (5) February 1914  
No. 108

From the attached table, Your Excellency will be able to observe how much the work of the Imperial Consulate in Melbourne has increased in all respects in recent years, and how it continues to increase owing to the ever-increasing rate of Russian emigration to Australia.<sup>44</sup> I take the liberty of adding that the attached figures are far from a true indicator of the Consulate's work, but merely reflect the number of cases the Consulate is able to handle in the course of a year with its limited staff. With increased

<sup>44</sup> The table is not reproduced here. On the increase in the work of the Consulate General in Melbourne owing to increased Russian emigration to Australia, see Document 121.

staffing, the Consulate would be able to double, at least, if not treble, the amount of work done, and above all would be able to perform its functions promptly and without delay.

On the other hand, the greater the increase in consular correspondence, the less time I am able to devote to it, as I am obliged to spend more time receiving guests and speaking to petitioners, on personal contact and negotiations with the Australian authorities, on official visits and travel, etc.

Finally, I would like to request that in the second half of 1915 the Imperial Ministry grant me five months' leave, on the basis of Articles 158–164 of the Foreign Ministry regulations, but must admit that I see no possibility of entrusting the Consulate and care of Russian interests in Australia either to the Honorary Vice-Consul in Melbourne or to any other foreign colleague, as used to be the practice. At present the matters in the care of the Consulate are too weighty and important to permit such a course.

In view of the above, I make so bold as to most respectfully draw Your Excellency's kind attention to the urgent need to establish the office of secretary in the Imperial Consulate in Melbourne as soon as possible, and I dare to hope that Your Excellency will not ignore my request. A salaried appointment is absolutely essential here to assist me in my routine daily work and to replace me during my absence.

I consider it my duty to add that in order to be of real value, such an assistant should meet the following criteria: he should know English, be single, and ready, as the English expression has it, to 'rough it' everywhere and at all times.<sup>45</sup>

Hoping that Your Excellency will see fit to attend to my request,<sup>46</sup> I have the honour to remain ever most respectfully etc.

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1491, f. 3. Copy. In Russian. Previously unpublished.

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45 'To rough it': in English in the original.

46 In late 1915, a vice-consul, Leonid Alekseyevich Bogoslovsky, was posted to the Russian Consulate General in Melbourne to assist Abaza.

## 118. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
25 (12) February 1914  
No. 151

[...] Having spent more than three years in Australia and in that time quite thoroughly studied the composition of the Russian community in this remote part of the world in terms of both quantity and quality, as well as the duties of the consulate entrusted to me, I now consider it my duty to respectfully report to Your Excellency that our consular representation in Australia no longer comes close to meeting modern requirements and is no match for ever-increasing everyday needs. Leaving aside the honorary consulships, which are of great value though in reality restricted to very close limits, it is impossible to ignore the fact that a Russian population of many thousands scattered across the two land-masses of Australia and New Zealand has only one place – the consulate in Melbourne – to turn to for advice, assistance and protection. Here we should not forget that the journey from Sydney to Melbourne takes 17 hours, from Adelaide 20, from Hobart 24, from Brisbane 55, from Oodnadatta four days,<sup>47</sup> from Perth and New Zealand a week, from Cairns two weeks and from Darwin three.

The result is that, deprived of any possibility of timely support from the authorities of their own country, and sometimes even against their will, many Russians take Australian citizenship, while others – and there are hundreds! – fall under the baneful influence of political criminals who have fled from Russia, and soon cease to be loyal, peaceable settlers and become rabid socialists and anarchists.

On the other hand, for our fellow-countrymen in distant parts to appeal to my consulate involves postal expenses and much expenditure of time, sometimes in the most urgent matters, and means excessive correspondence for me, demanding too much of my time and distracting me from more serious matters. Since Australia and New Zealand are self-governing and

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<sup>47</sup> The settlement of Oodnadatta, 1,000 km north of Adelaide, was at the time the last station on the railway line towards the north of the continent.

almost completely independent of Britain, the work of a Consul General here should *ipso facto* be of a largely diplomatic nature, that is, it should be directed as much towards political and general matters as towards the protection of petty private interests – protection which, incidentally, in most cases here in Australia is dependent on the successful resolution of those same general questions (for example, citizenship, military service, guarantees of justice, payment of inheritances and the like). It is plain that if the Melbourne consulate has to devote all or almost all its time to petty, routine day-to-day work, it is very difficult and sometimes even impossible to deal promptly with its broader general tasks.

To return to the honorary consulates, I must say that to me they are most useful, even essential as, on the one hand, intermediaries between me and the authorities in the separate states, and on the other as conduits for information on various commercial and statistical matters. But owing to their ignorance of the Russian language and Russian law, not to mention their entirely natural lack of interest and initiative, the honorary consuls remain utterly alien to the Russian community and unable to instil in it any confidence.

My general conclusion from all the above is the belief I have arrived at, that in the interests of both the service and the Russian community in Australia our consular representation here should be substantially expanded and reorganized, to wit, by the total separation of that in Australia and New Zealand, with the establishment of the following:

(A) In Australia:

- (1) a Consulate General for the Commonwealth of Australia, with primarily diplomatic functions, initially in Melbourne but eventually in the Federal capital, Canberra: to be staffed by a Consul General, a secretary, and an honorary clerk,
- (2) a Consulate in Brisbane, with Consul and secretary. Brisbane should also have a Russian priest in permanent residence,
- (3) a Consulate in Sydney (without secretary),
- (4) a Consulate in Melbourne (without secretary), to include Tasmania in the Consul's jurisdiction,
- (5) a Consulate in Adelaide (without secretary),
- (6) a Consulate in Perth (without secretary).

(B) In New Zealand:

- (1) Consulate in Wellington, with Consul General and secretary, and
- (2) Vice-Consul in Auckland, such that the New Zealand consular establishments are completely autonomous, that is, not subordinate to the Consulate General in Australia.

Further, I would consider it worthwhile to include the islands of Fiji, the Solomons, the condominium of the New Hebrides, the French colony of New Caledonia and the German part of New Guinea in the jurisdiction of the Consulate General in Australia, and the independent islands of Tonga, the British, German and American parts of Samoa and the French colony of Tahiti in that of the Consulate General in Wellington.

I fully realise that the Imperial Ministry may very well disagree with what I regard as absolutely essential in the interests of the Russian community and the success of the cause of Russia in Australasia, and that even in the best case it will take at least several years to expand our consular representation here. But I would consider myself at fault if I failed to express to Your Excellency my frank opinion on this matter, the more so since in 1915 I intend to seek the Imperial Ministry's permission to take leave of five months with subsequent transfer to a new posting, but do not seek in any way to reduce my own burden of work in Australia and am not pursuing any personal interests. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1274, ff 1-3. In Russian.

## 119. Abaza to Imperial Russian Embassy, London

Melbourne,  
21 (8) March 1914  
No. 254

[...] I have the honour to most respectfully request that the Imperial Embassy graciously assent to approach the Imperial Ministry concerning the appointment of a British subject, Thomas Archibald Welch, to the vacant position of Honorary Consul in Sydney.<sup>48</sup> I have the honour

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Archibald Welch served as honorary Russian consul in Sydney from March 1914 until April 1917, when he retired.

to append his details herewith, in the customary format, as well as his signature attesting to his declining any monetary remuneration and to the fact of not belonging to any secret societies.

Mr Welch is well known to me personally, is of high social standing in Sydney, and is well liked in the Russian community, as he has spent several years in Russia (the Baltic region) and not only speaks Russian well, but – most importantly – is very well disposed to all things Russian and always most readily comes to the aid of any of our fellow-countrymen who are in need of it. [...]

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1473, f. 14. In Russian. Previously unpublished.

## 120. Abaza to Imperial Russian Embassy, London,

Melbourne,  
22 (9) May 1914  
No. 447

[...] In view of the relatively frequent visits by Russian (Finnish) vessels to the port of Newcastle in New South Wales, and the consequent desirability of having a consular representative in that city, I have the honour to most respectfully request that the Imperial Embassy appoint one Luigi Leopold Ferrari,<sup>49</sup> an Italian subject, as our Honorary Consular Agent in Newcastle. I append his details in the customary format, with his signature attesting that he is not a member of any secret societies.

I consider it my duty to add to the above that Mr Ferrari is known to me in the very best light, has rendered great service to the masters and crews of our ships and is very popular with them. [...]

AVPRI 184 (London Embassy) -520-1473, f. 18. In Russian. Previously unpublished.

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49 Luigi Leopold Paolo Ferrari, a Sydney entrepreneur, held office as Russian consular agent in Newcastle from 1914 until all Russian consular staff in Australia were dismissed at the beginning of 1918.

## 121. Abaza to Bentkovsky, Director, Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
13 June (31 May) 1914  
No. 526

[...] In accordance with Your Excellency's instruction of 1<sup>st</sup> April last (No. 5217),<sup>50</sup> I have the honour to report that, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the number and distribution of Russians in Australasia at present is as shown in round figures below:

(A) Distribution by state:

Queensland: 5,000  
New South Wales: 2,000  
Victoria: 1,500  
South Australia: 1,100  
Western Australia: 1,200  
Tasmania: 100  
Northern Territory: 50  
New Guinea and Pacific islands: 50  
New Zealand: 1,000  
Total: 12,000

(B) Distribution by centre

Brisbane: 3,000  
Sydney: 500  
Melbourne: 400  
Adelaide: 200  
Perth and Fremantle: 300  
Hobart and Launceston: 30

50 On receiving Abaza's dispatch No. 151 (25 February) 1914 (see Document 118) at the end of March, Bentkovsky sent him a special instruction on 14 April. Noting the 'timeliness' of Abaza's proposed improvements to the consular service in Australia, he asked him to 'convey the most detailed information, and if possible statistical data' on the number and composition of the Russian community, and its regional distribution, and to clarify the 'nature of the consulate's work to take care of Russian nationals'. (See AVPRI 155 [II Department, 1-5] -408-1274, f. 4.) This dispatch is Abaza's reply.

Cairns: 150  
Rockhampton, Maryborough, Bowen, Townsville: 300  
Wallumbilla:<sup>51</sup> 200  
Broken Hill: 200  
Port Pirie: 200  
Other Australian centres: 450  
Scattered through Australian townships and farms: 5,020  
Wellington and Auckland: 200  
Other New Zealand centres: 300  
Scattered through New Zealand townships and farms: 500  
New Guinea and islands: 50  
Total: 12,000

I feel compelled to add that the above figures may be considered only approximate, and I am inclined to think that they are somewhat lower than the true figures. I have not so far succeeded – and am unlikely to succeed – in obtaining from the Federal Government any remotely satisfactory statistical information on this matter, and in any case such figures could have only relative meaning for me, since they would not show Russians who have illegally taken Australian citizenship or children born in Australia to Russian parents. Moreover, the nationality of immigrants is judged here according to country from which they arrived; they are not asked their country of birth unless there is a particular reason to do so.

In view of this, the figures cited above represent only my final conclusion from (1) my consular practice and observations; (2) my enquiries of various people, both in Melbourne and in the course of my various official travels; (3) dispatches from honorary consuls under my jurisdiction; (4) figures communicated to me by various shipping lines; and finally (5) incomplete and fragmentary data which I receive from time to time from the Australian and New Zealand governments.

Nonetheless, as I have already had the honour to mention, I believe that the true total number of Russians in Australia is more likely to exceed that quoted than fall short of it, because even the official statistics show that as early as the beginning of 1911 there were 4,456 Russians in Australia and 778 in New Zealand, and an increased rate of Russian immigration began only after that date.

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51 Wallumbilla: a small stock-rearing settlement (meat and dairy) in Queensland, 440 km west of Brisbane.

As for the growth of the community, owing to the fact that the great majority of our immigrants here are unmarried, the natural increase by births is utterly insignificant. I do not think that in all the time I have spent here more than 100 to 150 Russian children have been born in Australasia. However, this does not apply to those Russians (predominantly Jewish) who came here many years ago and (illegally) took out Australian citizenship. Their second- and third-generation descendants are, of course, extremely numerous. I mention them because I have on occasion chanced to observe that such people do not always lose their ties to Russia, and often come to the consulate seeking advice and assistance concerning some matters of their own.

On the other hand, the increase in the Russian population by immigration is very marked. Without exaggeration one can state that every month 90 to 150 people arrive in Australia from Siberia and Manchuria, and from European Russia 20 to 30, which means that the community increases by 120 to 150 per month.<sup>52</sup> To this number must be added Russians arriving directly from Canada or the United States, although, as far as I can tell, these are not numerous – barely 20 or 30 a year. Lastly, I consider it my duty to note that the crews of Finnish sailing vessels which call here (eight to ten a year) almost always desert in Australian ports and stay here.

Concerning the composition of the Russian community, I unfortunately have no definite statistical information, but in broad terms can say that the dominant proportion are native Russians, mostly from Siberia. Then come, in descending order, Jews, Poles, Finns, Letts, Estonians, Baltic Germans and natives of the Caucasus (Ossetians and Georgians). The latter number up to 300 and are concentrated in Port Pirie and Broken Hill, where they work in the mines and smelters of Broken Hill Pty Ltd.

With the exception of the Jews, who live in cities and, as everywhere else, are engaged in trade and artisan work (as tailors and cobblers), almost the entire Russian population in Australia makes a living exclusively by manual work. Artisans (fitters, turners, joiners, painters) find it relatively easy to earn a wage in government employment or in private workshops and factories. Others are obliged to take manual work of various kinds: at the construction of railway lines, in mines, as dockside porters etc. Few of them work on the land, and then only as farm labourers, except in North Queensland, where large numbers of Russians work permanently on the

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52 Faulty arithmetic as given in Abaza's original.

sugar-cane plantations. Here and there one meets Russians who have their own farms, but these are still few in number, scarcely 300 in the whole country, including the Russian settlement in Wallumbilla.

The Russians who come here are quite unsuited to white-collar work, mainly because they do not know English. I know many educated and cultured Russians (ex-officers, teachers, accountants, telegraph workers etc.) who have absolutely no opportunity to apply their knowledge and are obliged to earn their living by the hardest of manual labour.

From a political point of view the Russian community in Australia can be divided into two groups: (1) those who have come with the best of intentions, in the hope of better earnings; these are the great majority; and (2) felons, political criminals and people of extreme socialist views who have fled Russia. This latter group is relatively few in number,<sup>53</sup> but presents a great danger because it consists of comparatively educated people who spare no effort to acquire the greatest possible influence over all our fellow-countrymen who come here. It is extremely difficult to combat the influence of this group, given our insufficient consular staff and the lack of a Russian church or Russian priest in Australia.

Turning to the matter of the extent to which the consulate is involved in taking care of Russian subjects, I make so bold as to most respectfully draw Your Excellency's attention to the fact that this matter is so complex that it is very difficult to answer in any detail. Summarising, however, as much as possible, the work of this consulate over the past three and a half years and dividing it, so to speak, into categories, I believe that the synopsis below may give a fairly clear idea of its variety:

(A) General business

- (1) Consultation and correspondence with Russian nationals on matters of concern to them (judicial, family, religious, financial etc.; too numerous to list),
- (2) Combating by direct consular influence the influence of socialist and social-revolutionary elements in the Russian community,

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53 The group of Russian political emigrants who belonged to a variety of political tendencies and continued their agitation and propaganda in Australia numbered approximately 500. In 1910, they united in a Union of Russian Emigrants, which, in 1914, changed its name to the Union of Russian Workers and adopted a pro-Bolshevik position.

- (3) Supporting our settlers' spiritual links with Russia, mainly by consulting with them and distributing printed materials from the homeland,
  - (4) Establishing and maintaining relations with the Australian authorities of a kind to ensure that the Russian community in Australia is spared official malfeasance and enjoys the greatest possible protection by the consulate and the local authorities.
- (B) Particular business
- (I) Judicial
- (1) Protection of the interests of Russian nationals charged with criminal acts, by
    - (a) preliminary correspondence and prison visits,
    - (b) engaging good lawyers to represent them, and when necessary competent interpreters,
    - (c) the presence in person of the Consul General or his consular delegate in court. It was only thanks to the intervention of the Imperial Consulate that the Russian nationals Boris Zenkevich (in Sydney in 1911) and Evka Fridman (in Ballarat in 1912) were spared capital punishment when charged with premeditated murder.<sup>54</sup> In 1913 I succeeded in having the sentence on one Grigory Monakov quashed when he was wrongly sentenced to prison by a Port Darwin court on a false and malicious accusation by an Australian Government official of slander.<sup>55</sup>

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54 In September 1909, a young man named Boris Zenkovich (not, as Abaza has it, 'Zenkevich') killed the companion with whom he was travelling to Australia, Alexander Eismond, while resisting his sexual advances. His sentence of death was commuted to life imprisonment with hard labour. He was released after serving eleven years. Evka Fridman (in Australian sources, John Fridman), an immigrant of Jewish background from Russia, was employed at seasonal work on a farm in Victoria. On 18 May (NS) 1912 he quarrelled with Charles Nunn and killed him with a knife.

55 Grigory Monakov was a Siberian peasant who had come to Australia with his wife and daughter and worked on a farm in the Northern Territory. His wife was employed as a cook, and their daughter worked in the home of the property manager, Mr Woolley. When Woolley tried to take advantage of Monakov's daughter, the Monakovs went to Darwin in March 1913 to lodge a legal complaint. This gave rise to the Monakov–Woolley case, in which Monakov was accused of slandering the property manager.

- (2) Defending the interests of Russian nationals involved in civil cases, explaining Australian law to them and seeking suitable legal representation (e.g. the case of Danilchenko v. the Queensland Government in 1911; Grigory Saporov and the Russian Cossacks v. the Bud Atkinson Circus; and the Russian glass-blowers v. Glass Bottle Works Ltd in 1913).<sup>56</sup>
- (3) Gaining Australian Government approval and transferring to Russia the estate of Russian nationals who have died intestate in Australia. (To date I have sent 15 inheritances, worth a total of £950-3-4, to the Imperial Ministry and the office of the Finnish Governor-General.)

(II) Immigration

- (1) Assisting in landing Russian immigrants who are undesirable from the Australian Government's point of view due to (a) ill health, or (b) Asian origin.
- (2) To the extent possible, helping Russian immigrants to find employment.
- (3) Translating their documents and certificates into English and certifying the accuracy of the translations.
- (4) Assisting with the exchange of Russian currency in Australian banks, and with the transfer of funds from Russia (from banks, savings banks and private sources).
- (5) Issuing visas, passports and travel documents back to Russia for persons without passports for foreign travel.
- (6) Cases involving renunciation of Russian citizenship and naturalisation in Australia; explaining Russian and Australian law in this area.
- (7) Protecting Russian nationals against conscription for military service in Australia.
- (8) Correspondence with the Russian authorities, trading companies and private individuals in Russia about Russians in Australia.

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<sup>56</sup> The American Bud Atkinson Circus troupe, with some Russian Cossacks performing equestrian acts, toured Australia in 1913. An Australian court upheld the case of the Russian artistes, who had sued for unpaid wages. The court case between the Russian glass-blowers and the Glass Bottle Works in 1913 was related to demands for improved working conditions. No further detail has been located on Danilchenko's case against the Queensland Government in 1911.

## (III) Navigation

- (1) Shipwrecks (the wreck of the barque *Glenbank* in 1911).<sup>57</sup>
- (2) Accidents.
- (3) Sale of vessels (the sale of the *County of Anglesea* to Scott, Fell & Co. in Sydney in 1911).<sup>58</sup>
- (4) Drafting maritime protests.
- (5) Correspondence with Australian authorities concerning deserters from Russian ships.
- (6) Investigating misunderstandings arising between ships' masters and crew.
- (7) Maintaining observation of sailors who are ill or in hospital in Australia.
- (8) Changes in crew manifests and presentation of ships' documents.

## (IV) Trade

- (1) Replying to questions and supplying information to commercial companies in Russia about Australia and vice versa.
- (2) Corresponding with the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

## (V) Notarial

Drawing up and witnessing deeds of civil status, letters of attorney etc.

## (VI) Sundry

Assisting tourists, scholars and artists visiting Australia.

Corresponding with private individuals in Russia with a scholarly interest in Australia, sending them books, statistical data, samples etc.

From the synopsis above, which incidentally also applies to New Zealand, though to a lesser extent, Your Excellency may easily see how broad and varied are the functions of the consulate entrusted to me. I will go further: in view of the colossal size of a jurisdiction which covers Australia and New Zealand, and the very small consular staff, the consulate cannot

<sup>57</sup> The Russian barque *Glenbank* (1,481 t) was wrecked on 6 February 1911 on the coast of Western Australia.

<sup>58</sup> According to Australian sources, the sale of the barque *County of Anglesea* (1,590 t) to the Australian company Scott, Fell & Co. did not, in the end, go through.

satisfactorily discharge its functions, that is, it cannot deal promptly with all the matters which come before it, and as a result the interests of the Russian community inevitably have to suffer.

The community is constantly increasing in number and its interests are therefore becoming increasingly complex, thus adding to and complicating the work of the consulate. On 31<sup>st</sup> December 1911 I had 722 items in the 'out' register, and no items pending in the consulate. Today, on the other hand, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1914,<sup>59</sup> I have 526 outgoing and several dozen still pending for lack of time. In other words, one can say that the amount of consular work usually doubles every three years, although in my personal opinion the increase will proceed much faster, owing firstly to the proportionate rise in immigration, and secondly to the established trust in the Imperial Consulate on the part of the Russian community, which a few years ago looked on it with extreme mistrust, not to say hostility.

I am profoundly convinced that if the Imperial Ministry succeeds in establishing new salaried positions in Australasia, in accordance with the proposal I set out in my dispatch of 12<sup>th</sup> February last (No. 151),<sup>60</sup> this will serve to greatly assist our Russian community, raise our national prestige and thus be of benefit to Russian statehood by retaining thousands of our respectable fellow-countrymen, who will otherwise in the second generation, if not the first, lose all connection with Russia and become loyal Australians.

No consul appointed here would consider his duties a sinecure, because in spite of the relatively small jurisdiction proposed there is no doubt that many Russians who at present have no opportunity to contact the Melbourne Consulate General, because of the distance, limited literacy, and postal expenses, would begin to visit the consulates.

On the other hand the Consul General, freed from the burden of everyday routine work, would be fully able to devote himself to serious matters of importance and observe the extremely interesting progress of the country's political life. The present state of affairs being what it is, I have absolutely no time for this. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-1274, ff 5-10. In Russian.

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59 The dates given here are Old Style.

60 See Document 118.

## 122. Secret telegram from Abaza to B. E. Nolde,<sup>61</sup> Head, Legal Advice Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
6 May (23 April) 1916

[...] I refer to my dispatch of 18<sup>th</sup> February (No. 263).<sup>62</sup>

Following the practice of consuls in the Near East, I am issuing to Czechs and Dalmatians who seek Russian citizenship temporary certificates placing them under the protection of the Consulate and requesting that the Australian authorities free them from the restrictions placed on citizens of hostile powers, exception being made for permission to leave Australia.<sup>63</sup> [...]

AVPRI 135 (Special Political Department) -474-355, f. 5. Copy. In Russian.

## 123. Abaza to Second Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melbourne,  
27 (14) April 1917  
No. 941

[...] Aware that it is impossible to discharge satisfactorily the obligations placed by the times on this consulate to serve Russia's commercial interests in the area of this consulate's jurisdiction, I have taken it upon myself to implement the idea of establishing a special body which, as it

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61 Boris Emmanuilovich Nolde: eminent legal scholar and specialist in international law, diplomat and historian, who served in the Foreign Ministry from 1899 to 1917 and headed the Legal Advice Section from 1914 to 1916.

62 This dispatch has not been traced.

63 During the First World War, consular protection for 'Austrian Slavs' – Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Slovenes, Croats and Serbs – became a topical matter for the Russian consulate in Melbourne. Being subjects of Austria-Hungary, which was at war with Australia, they were threatened with internment. Abaza provided them with temporary certificates of consular protection and appealed to the Australian Government to release bearers of these from the restrictions placed on citizens of hostile powers. However, the Australian Government took the view that this practice might lead to confusion in the registration of citizens of enemy states, and urged the consul general to discontinue it.

includes people involved in the world of trade, might meet the increasing need to develop trade between Russia and distant Australia. For many historical and political reasons, and also because of insufficient mutual knowledge of the products of the other country, trade between the two countries has so far remained at the initial stage, and efforts by individual merchants have left hardly any trace. Both in Australian Government circles, and among the public, the idea of setting up such a body was most sympathetically received, and in a telegram addressed to the Minister on 24<sup>th</sup> January/6<sup>th</sup> February,<sup>64</sup> I had the honour to report to the Ministry that a Russian–Australian Commerce and Information Bureau had opened here.

I consider it my duty to submit a summary of the history of the founding of the Bureau for the consideration of the Second Department, and to outline its first steps.

From the Australian side, people who are most influential in society and know the country from a commercial perspective were invited to join the organising committee called to establish the Bureau. Thus the committee included Mr Pratt, a well-known press columnist and personal friend of the current Federal Prime Minister, Mr Farr, formerly army Paymaster and now Lieutenant-Colonel in the Reserve, and Mr Driffield, who has a business of his own and is well-known to me for his excellent qualities.<sup>65</sup> The Russian representatives on the committee were: M. Kliachko, a Russian doctor now with the Australian army, who has won great popularity here, Mr L. Bogoslovsky, who is attached to the Consulate,<sup>66</sup> and I myself.

In accordance with the plan developed by the committee, the idea of the need to establish a Russian–Australian trading body here was widely popularised first of all in the Australian press. Local literary talent was drawn in to the task of arousing interest in the idea of founding such a body, and in addition, I personally thought it necessary to place appeals in the newspapers, asking readers to take a sympathetic view of it. When

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64 The telegram has not been found. From 30 November (OS) 1916 until the February revolution in 1917, the Russian Foreign Minister was Nikolai Nikolayevich Pokrovsky.

65 Abaza is referring to the well-known Australian journalist Ambrose Goddard Hesketh Pratt. The Prime Minister in 1915–1923 was William Morris Hughes. Albert George Farr, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Reserve (Pay Corps), was a veteran of the Boer War and First World War. Lancelot Driffield: a prominent agricultural entrepreneur.

66 Mikhail Emmanuilovich Kliachko: Russian army doctor, captain. While in Egypt during the First World War, he served with the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). On arriving in Australia, he was assigned to the Russian Consulate General in Melbourne.

public opinion had been prepared, it was decided to set about convening a founding meeting. Representatives of the Australian Government were invited to participate, such as the well-known Prime Minister Mr Hughes, the Premier of Victoria,<sup>67</sup> and others, and the chairmen of chambers of commerce and representatives of the largest companies. I sent out up to 700 invitations to attend the inaugural meeting. In a circular on the subject I indicated the obstacles which have to date stood in the way of the establishment of closer trading relations between Russia and Australia, to wit: (1) well-established trading relations between Russia and Germany, at the expense of such relations between Russia and other countries, (2) Australian and Russian ignorance of each other, (3) inadequate transport links. As the historical moment is now propitious, I called on the Australian public to establish closer trading relations between our two countries, pointing to the foundation day of the Russian–Australian Commerce and Information Bureau as the first step towards the development and strengthening of such desirable commerce.

On 24<sup>th</sup> January/6<sup>th</sup> February, a well-attended meeting took place in Melbourne Town Hall, under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor.<sup>68</sup> I will summarise the speeches of the more important speakers. In his opening address, the Lord Mayor said that he was glad to welcome the founding, on the initiative of the Russian Consul General, of a Russian–Australian trading body. He went on to say that the Russian people have earned the closest attention of the Australian people and that when the efforts of the allies were crowned with success they must be prepared to make the best use of the fruits of victory. Here in Australia, he said, one hears voices saying that the workers cannot find an outlet for their strength owing to the insufficient number of enterprises, and that there is deep enmity between the affluent classes and the proletariat. The reasons for this, he went on, may lie in a deliberate stalling in the development of relations between the countries concerned in the past. Pointing out that in Russia, which was friendly to Britain and united with it by a common aim, the need for industrial products would lend impetus, given a normal state of affairs, to the development of the forces of production in Australia, Mr Hennessy expressed the certainty that this would lead to an easing of the struggle between employers and employees here. In this way

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67 The Premier of Victoria in 1914–1917 was Sir Alexander James Peacock.

68 The Lord Mayor of Melbourne in 1912–1917 was Sir David Valentine Hennessy.

prosperity, which is the true fruit of victory, is created. At its basis lies a true trading relationship, the development of which is the aim of the trading body now being founded.

It was proposed that the first resolution be moved by the Federal Prime Minister, Mr Hughes, who said that with the aim of establishing closer trading links a Russian–Australian trading body was being established, with the title of the Russian–Australian Commerce and Information Bureau. Australia was proud, he said, to have the honour to fight shoulder to shoulder with Russia. Awareness of the danger to their nation had awoken in the Russian people an enthusiasm which by its nature recalled the era of the crusades. The Russians were going into battle literally under the sign of the cross. Australians had come to know the Russian people better. Although Russia had suffered defeats – part of its territory was occupied by the enemy – the struggle could end in only one final outcome: Russia would march across Germany from the East, just as France and Britain would march across it from the West. We were gathered here, he went on, to form the nucleus for an improvement in our commercial and national relations. Until now, Russia's economic organisation was shaped by Germany. Like Italy, Russia had become a commercial vassal of Germany. At the Paris conference the allies had formed a tight trading circle, which, when victory came, would carry the wartime alliance into peacetime. We must reap the fruits of victory, he said, and it was essential to create organisations through which the peoples of the allied nations could get to know one another better in peacetime. Even the difficult obstacle of the Russian language could be overcome by developing close trading relations. Mr Hughes concluded his speech by saying that he welcomed the founding of the Russian–Australian Commerce and Information Bureau.<sup>69</sup>

One of the subsequent resolutions, that those present express their readiness to be members of the Bureau, was moved by Mr Peacock, the Premier of Victoria. Referring to the Prime Minister, who had indicated the brilliant fighting qualities of the Russian people, Mr Peacock developed the idea that a people who had demonstrated such qualities on the field of arms could naturally succeed equally well in peaceful work. The talents

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69 Hughes is referring to the Paris conference of the Entente states in June 1916 on economic matters. Its decisions made provision for the all-round development of trading relations between the Allied powers and aimed to reduce as much as possible the volume of Germany's industrial output on world markets. The British paid particular attention to expanding the export opportunities of their colonies and dominions.

of the Russian people, their enthusiasm, energy and strength now turned towards the military defeat of the foe, would later be applied to building economic power. And just as Russia and Australia marched shoulder to shoulder in war, so they would enter peacetime together, mutually enriching each other by trade, and thus fostering the improved welfare of the two friendly nations.

The next resolution, on establishing an executive council under the chairmanship of the Russian Consul General, who would have the right to appoint Russian representatives to the council, was proposed by the President of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce.<sup>70</sup> As a businessman, he was able to foresee all the advantages of the proposed trading association between Russia and Australia. The allied countries would undoubtedly use the moment to their advantage, and Germany was profoundly mistaken if it thought that after the war it would again be able to occupy the exclusive trading position it had held before the war. Was it not vital that Australia should play its part in the new order of things?

It was proposed that I personally bring into the Executive Council some persons previously nominated. In my speech I pointed out that the newly-formed trading body had as its purpose, from the Russian point of view, the negotiation of contracts at first hand. The role of Germany as an intermediary in this field must be terminated once and for all. One of the primary aims of the Bureau was to eliminate the lack of mutual understanding which arose mainly because of mutual ignorance of the other's language. I mentioned that in Russia the study of English was gradually becoming compulsory in schools, and that here the Bureau might introduce courses in Russian for those who wished to study it. They would then understand the extent to which their fear of the language was unfounded.

The wealthiest and most influential individuals in the world of commerce were elected to the Council.

A total of seventeen speakers addressed the meeting. I should note, incidentally, that the meeting also set the membership fee at one guinea a year.

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70 The President of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce in 1916–1916 was William Warren Kerr.

Closing the meeting, the chairman proposed that in view of its success a telegram should be sent announcing the formation of the Bureau to Petrograd: to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Trade and Industry, the Chairmen of the State Council and the State Duma.<sup>71</sup>

The meeting concluded with the playing of the Russian and British national anthems on the organ.

The local newspapers, both in Melbourne and beyond, all reported the founding of the new Bureau and pointed out its significance in the history of relations between Russia and Australia. Not wishing to detain the Department's attention by setting forth the content of those articles, I will only note that their tone is one of the greatest good will towards Russia and hope that the two countries separated by such a great distance will draw together, and they point to the Bureau as the best and surest factor in this rapprochement.

From the attached translation of the 'Rules' of the Russian–Australian Commerce and Information Bureau, drafted by the Executive Council on the basis of the resolutions tabled and examined at the founding meeting, the Second Department will discern that, in accordance with my intention, the consulate in my charge will always have a position of primary importance in the new body (Rules 3, 13, 16, 28), thus guaranteeing that its work will be to the benefit of Russia. Those I nominated for election to the Council, as well as the appointed members, a list of whom is attached, are by inclination the most devoted friends of Russia.<sup>72</sup> The Bureau's office is situated in one of the consulate's rooms, so is close at hand. It has thus been placed almost under the consulate's complete control.

According to its stated aims, the Bureau's task is not only to establish purely commercial links between Russia and Australia, but also 'to break down the barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding which have

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71 In February 1917, when the founding meeting of the Russian–Australian Commerce and Information Bureau was held, the Chairman of the Russian Imperial Council of Ministers was Nikolai Dmitriyevich Golitsyn, the Foreign Minister was Pokrovsky, the Minister of Trade and Industry was Vsevolod Nikolayevich Shakhovskoi, and the Chairman of the State Duma was Mikhail Vladimirovich Rodzianko.

72 The Rules and list of Council members are not reproduced here. According to the Rules, the Chairman of the Bureau, *ex officio*, was the Russian consul general, who also had the right to appoint five Council members from the Russian side at his own discretion. Thus, of a total of eleven members, six represented the interests of Russia.

hitherto restricted commerce between the two countries' (Rule 2 (c)). In accordance with this aim, and also in view of the interest shown in the study of Russian at the opening of the Bureau, it was decided to inaugurate courses in the language under its auspices. When this matter had gathered impetus, I personally delivered the first lecture on the Russian language in Melbourne Town Hall. The room allocated for the lecture turned out to be far too small. There were so many people wishing to attend that for want of seats several hundred people had to leave the building before the lecture began. In my talk I spoke of the general principles of Russian culture and explained some particular features of Russian etymology compared to that of English. Those who spoke after me – a Supreme Court judge and expert in Russian literature and history who speaks Russian well,<sup>73</sup> and Generals Foster and Cuscaden – warmly advocated the Australian public's need to gain a more detailed knowledge of Russia's cultural riches, to which the Russian language was the key.<sup>74</sup>

The Russian courses thus inaugurated were held in this consulate, in the room adapted for the office of the Bureau. At present there are up to fifty Australians studying Russian in Melbourne. The fee per term is two and a half guineas for members of the Bureau and two guineas for non-members; three lessons per week. The instructor is a Russian lady who completed high school in Russia.<sup>75</sup> From time to time I personally give lectures on the language and literature, so as to consolidate the students' knowledge and give them a general understanding of Russia.

Further, in accordance with the Bureau's Rule 2, on the initiative of Mr Pratt, a journalist and member of the Bureau, a description of Australia for Russian readers is now being published on behalf of the Bureau. The Australian Government, for its part, has eagerly taken part in this venture, allocating £2,000 for the publication and engaging specialists

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73 The reference is to Sir Isaac Alfred Isaacs, who knew Russian, having been born to a Jewish immigrant family from the Russian part of Poland. In 1905–1906, he was Commonwealth Attorney-General, in 1906–1931 member of the Supreme Court, which he headed in 1930–1931, and Governor-General 1931–1936.

74 Brigadier-General Hubert John Foster: Chief of Staff of the Australian Army in 1916–1917. George Cuscaden: in 1914–1921 principal army doctor of the Third Military District (Victoria).

75 It is possible that Abaza is referring to Yulia Grebina, a Russian émigrée of good education who by this time was already giving lectures on Russian culture in Melbourne. However, it has not proved possible to locate any evidence in Australian sources of any lectures delivered by Abaza himself, except the first (mentioned in his dispatch), or of any Russian courses in consular premises. The possibility cannot be excluded that he is overstating his case when he speaks of success in teaching Australians Russian.

in all spheres of learning. The material assembled will then be presented to Mr Kliachko, the Bureau's representative who is soon departing for Petrograd and will take it with him for translation into Russian and publication in Russia. The planned volume will contain accounts in as much detail as possible of the political, economic, and social life of Australia, with numerous illustrations pertaining to all the areas treated by the book. It would be desirable, if the Department finds it possible, to publish a corresponding book about Russia for Australians; Mr Kliachko might be able to undertake work towards such a publication.

In accordance with Rule 7, the organisation has now begun of branches of the Bureau throughout Australia. The aforementioned Mr Kliachko was sent to establish branches in Tasmania, Western Australia and South Australia. With his customary skill he attracted the attention of the business world in those states. At meetings in them, branches were set up and the required representatives appointed. In the near future it is planned to open branches in New South Wales and Queensland.

I cannot fail to note that, in the short period of its existence, the Bureau has already been beneficial to the cause of Russia here. Besides awakening in the Australian public an interest in the fundamentals of Russian culture, it has in the brief period of its existence achieved its primary purpose: providing information of a commercial nature about Russia. It has supplied several dozen items of information.

The Bureau now has up to 700 members and a fund of £900, accumulated from membership subscriptions.

The interest awakened by the Bureau has not gone unnoticed beyond Australia's shores. Mr Manson, the New Zealand trade agent, has proposed that the Bureau should extend its operations to the other British colony nearby, whose trade representative he is.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, a meeting of the Council decided to include New Zealand in the Bureau's jurisdiction, on condition that that colony can raise at least 150 members.

Concluding this dispatch, I cannot fail to mention the exceptional services rendered in the founding of the Bureau by Mr Kliachko, the doctor mentioned several times in this report, who is in Melbourne temporarily, or Mr Farr of the Australian Army, Lieutenant-Colonel in

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76 Henry James Manson was appointed Trade Commissioner for New Zealand in Australia in March 1914, having previously served as New Zealand's representative in Victoria.

the reserve. For the success of the venture the consulate is much indebted to Mr Kliachko's ability to influence people and win broad popularity quickly, and Mr Farr's gift for clerical work.

I most humbly beg the Department, if possible, to forward a copy of this dispatch to M. V. Rodzianko, the Chairman of the State Duma, who has been elected Honorary Vice-President of the Bureau, and the Minister of Trade and Industry. [...]

AVPRI 155 (II Department, I-5) -408-905, ff 49-53. In Russian.

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