
Yugoslavs, Who Left Party in 1914, Come Back:

Secretary of South Slavic Federation Says There
Are 32 Branches Now Doing Active Work:

**New Locals Formed:
Will Hold Convention in Chicago and Go
Over Needs of Closer Alliance**

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Published in *The New York Call*, v. 14, no. 148 (May 28, 1921), pg. 7.

The bulk of the foreign-language federations formerly of the Socialist Party have long been out of the party because of the stand of the party on questions connected with the Communist International and tactics arising out of the Russian revolution. One Federation, however, the South Slavic, or Yugoslav, Federation, withdrew from the party at the outbreak of the war, and rejoined in 1920, because its members became convinced that the party's attitude was right.

The following account, written by the National Secretary of the Federation, explains the position of the Serbs and Montenegrins toward the Socialist Party.¹

The Yugoslav Federation withdrew from the Socialist Party upon the occasion of the outbreak of the World War, siding with the Allied

¹ The Yugoslav Federation of the Socialist Party was actually dominated by the Slovenian nationality, with Serbs and Montenegrins comprising a negligible percentage. The bulk of the radicals of Croatian heritage joined the fledgling Communist movement.

nations in the struggle for more democracy.² Some of our critics said that we sided with the Allied governments, but that is not the truth, and we want it to be understood that we sided with the nations who were, we felt at that time, struggling for the democracy that is dear to all of us.

The war is over, the joke is on us, and we are ready to repent. The outcome of the war and of the peace have taught us excellent lessons. The first was that one must never trust the ruling class, no matter how fair their professions.

The other is this: that no matter what happens in the home country the worker who has come from abroad must not dabble too deeply in the politics of the motherland. The worker must keep up his educational work in those things that fit him for life and work in the country of his adoption, leaving the affairs of his [native] country, as far as possible, in the hands of those who are on the spot and who can cope with them.

Any other policy is bound to cause confusion, and will tend to defeat the purposes for which the organization was formed.

After two years of passive inactivity we returned to the Socialist Party, finding that after all the Socialist Party was altogether right in its attitude toward the war.

When the Yugoslav Federation rejoined the Socialist Party in August 1920, there were 32 active locals with a membership of 435; in pre-war times the federation's membership was 3,200. But since the war the Croatian section left the federation and was afflicted by the "infantile disorder of Left Wingism." What became of the "clan" since we do not know, but individuals that have since been partly or totally cured of that disease tell us how they were overcome with that "sickness" and how glad they are now that they are over it. They need time now to recuperate; but as soon as they come to themselves they will be all right. You see, we all have had some sickness — ours was "war for more democracy," and theirs was "Left Wing-ism." But if they will be cured so well and in so short a time — Lenin is helping them now — as we were of our "war for more democracy," the progress will be wonderful.

² The South Slavic Federation actually determined to leave the Socialist Party at a conference held in Springfield, Illinois on Sept. 20, 1918. The federation vacated its office at Socialist Party headquarters in Chicago effective Oct. 1, 1918.

12 Locals Organized.

Since the federation rejoined the party, 12 new locals have been organized, and its membership now is 750.

The sentiment of the members towards the Third International is strong, but it does not go beyond bounds. This is one reason that at no time were demands made by the members that the federation should accept, or that the Socialist Party should unconditionally accept, the 21 Points submitted by the Moscow International. The membership thus concurs with the stand that the party took toward the Russian revolution and affiliation with the Third International some time ago.

To renew the vitality of the federation, a convention will be held shortly after the convention of the Socialist Party. This convention will be held at Chicago, Ill., and will be the 4th regular convention since the federation was organized in 1910.

The agenda for the convention prepared by the Executive Committee is the following: 1. Secretary's report since 1916; 2. The reports of the Slovenian and Serbian sections; 3. Literature and press; 4. The International; 5. Immigration: Its laws and citizenship/ 6. Ways and means for propaganda; 7. Cooperative movement; 8. The Yugoslav question; 9. Declaration of principles; 10. Constitution; 11. Special resolutions.

The Yugoslav question was put in the agenda for the purpose of threshing out once and for all the tactics that were followed by the federation during the war, and to eliminate all features that do not concur with the tactics of the main body — that is, of the Socialist Party of America.

At present the federation intends to send out a speaker to organize new locals and reorganize old ones. We have old, dead branches in Kansas, Montana, Washington, and in many other places. All these branches will have to be brought to life again. We think that after a while we will be able to get into our federation also some Croatian branches. It will take time, but it will be done. We have one local that belonged to the Communist Party back already. Others will follow, or they will die of underground lonesomeness.

75,000 Still Outside.

Our main energy is now directed upon getting into our ranks the members of sympathetic fraternal societies, of which there are among the Slovenians not a few. We point out that it is their duty to organize themselves into the fighting organization, and not only in a Red Cross organization. We point out that 750 members, which they have in their fighting organization (Yugoslav Socialist Federation) does not correspond with the Red Cross (national benefit societies), where over 75,000 are organized only among the Slovenes.

If they have such a splendid "Red Cross" organization, they surely should have an equally powerful political fighting organization. The Red Cross is not organized to bring social changes about, whereas the fighting organization is. All such lessons will have to be driven home before the workers of various nationalities will realize the necessity of a politically and economically fighting army.

To this end, the Yugoslav Federation is trying to do all that circumstances will permit.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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