
Report of the Yugoslav Federation on the 4th Convention of the JSZ: Chicago — May 27-29, 1923.

by Frank Petrich

Published as "Report of the Jugo-Slav Federation" in *The Socialist World* [Chicago],
v. 4, no. 7 (July 1923), pp. 15-16.

To the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party,
2418 W Madison Street,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Comrades,

This is a brief report regarding the convention held in this city by the Yugoslav Federation, Socialist Party [Jugoslovanska Socialistichna Zveza], from May 27 to May 29th [1923], inclusive.

The most important fact of this gathering is that it was the first convention held after the war and of dissension. It was important not only to the Federation, but also to its enemies. They wanted to know whether our announcement of delegates, our preparation for holding such a convention was genuine or was simply masquerading, hiding behind it a well prepared funeral of the JSF [JSZ]. The wish was the father to the thought...

But as it was, we were delighted; they disappointed. Because when the 27th of May came there was strong evidence that the delegates were in earnest, meaning business not in hairsplitting and in quarrelling for the things that are not around the corner, but in reorganizing and upbuilding the Socialist movement.

There were 21 regular delegates, 5 fraternal delegates, 4 agenda or referent delegates, and 8 members of the Executive Committee present. Total 38 members.

The convention adopted resolutions as to the International; as to immigration; as to the Yugoslav

question; as to recognition of Soviet Russia; as to "The House of Debs"; as to impeachment of Taft; as to Socialist propaganda among women; as to associate membership; and as to political prisoners.

The resolutions about which you would like to be informed are, I believe, the resolutions on Immigration and on the Yugoslav question, as the others are more or less only replicas of resolutions adopted by the Socialist Party Convention in New York [May 19-22, 1923].

The resolution on Immigration reads:

The principles of Socialism do not recognize classes, race, or sex; the aim of Socialism is human society wherein will be no economic classes but where all members of the society will have equal rights.

In order that this be achieved the duty of the Socialist movement, the duty of the Socialist Party and its organic units, is to combat with all their means the opinions that are the product of the capitalistic system and that lead to nationalistic and race hatreds everywhere, because such conflicts tend only to weaken the working class so as to remain an easy prey to capitalist exploitation.

That the Socialist movement may uphold the principles of international solidarity of the working class, who mainly is able to establish the final aim of Socialism, it cannot be antagonistic to the immigration which goes inherently with capitalistic development and which has its consequences to a smaller or larger degree in every country, according to that development.

We agree that the immigration of workers from the countries where capitalism is not yet so advanced does mean the endangering of a better living standard for the workers, and that such living standard was not given them voluntarily but was acquired through a long and bitter organized struggle; yet we doubt that this question could be settled satisfactorily solely on the basis of immigration restrictions.

The delegates of the 4th Convention of the JSF [JSZ] therefore declare that it is the duty of the Socialist movement to strengthen in the first place the economic and political organization of American labor, to educate him in the spirit of class struggle, to inspire him for his immediate and final aim alike, and support him in his everyday struggles for better living conditions. This we believe will be the best regulator for the influx of new labor-power that is now sought to be exploited by the capitalist class on account of organized labor.

In order that the interests of American labor be further safeguarded we recommend that such legislative action be undertaken which will secure immigrants the liberty of movement from place to place and to forbid the importation of strikebreakers and labor under such contract that deprives them of their liberty of action and of movement from place to place.

It is further to the interest of the workers that laws be enacted in state legislatures and in the United States Congress easing the procedure for naturalization as well as repealing all laws that disfranchise the workers because of their migration from state to state looking for work, thus depriving them of their political function on election day.

In order that the economic organization may be accessible to all immigrants and that they will not be material dumped into the competitive labor market in such a degree as today, it is imperative that those organizations reduce their admission fees and monthly dues to such an extent as to enable all newcomers to join them.

On the aforesaid basis the 4th Convention of the JSF [JSZ] believes that the working class thus may to a great extent overcome the machinations of the capitalist class, whose aim is to solve the immigration question on the basis of supply and demand on the labor market, with the view in the end to lower present day wages and with it the living standard of American workers.

The resolution on the Yugoslav question reads in part:

...After the war the unification of the Yugoslav territory has been partly accomplished, but the new states have not been formed on the basis of self-determination — a thesis

so often heard during the war — but were formed by the partisans of present day economic order. The boundaries have been decided by the imperialistic powers, meeting at Versailles.

The struggle for the aim that we have taken and still hold, goes on, as one defeat shall never be considered for us a final one. The Socialist order will come and with it the self-determination of nations will come in its true meaning.

The unification of one nation on the basis of capitalistic order does not mean the freedom of the working class. The working class carried on its struggles for Socialism and for its rights regardless where its enemy resides.

But the duty of the working class in every country is to fight the battles in its own country.

So the Yugoslav workers in America, who are a part of the American working class, will fight their political and economic battles with the American workers.

Regarding the cooperation and support of the Yugoslav workers in Jugoslavia in their political matters, the 4th Convention of the JSF [JSZ] declares that it will adhere to the principles and tactics of the Socialist Party of America and to the Socialist and Labor International.

The 4th Convention of the Yugoslav Federation will prove, I believe, such a success to our movement at large, as the success of the Socialist Party Convention held in New York [May 19-22, 1923] may mean.

Our branches, our comrades — our whole Federation — is ready to help your committee in any way possible, in order that great work or reorganization and upbuilding of the Socialist Party may soon be achieved.

With best wishes, I am

Fraternally yours,

Frank Petrich,
Secretary.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2007. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.