
Minutes of the 4th Convention of the Russian Socialist Federation: New York City — Sept. 28-Oct. 2, 1918.

Document in DoJ/BoI Investigative Files, NARA collection M-1085, reel 938, document 341853.

First Session: Afternoon, Sept. 28, 1918.

The first session of the meeting opened on Saturday, Sept. 28th at 4 o'clock pm. Comrade Finkelberg of New York was elected Chairman. Four secretaries were elected to act during the entire session. Those comrades elected were:

Stolyar — Chicago.
Knizhnik — New York.
Litvinovich — Ansonia.
Sakhovich — Providence.

A Committee of Control was elected, consisting of Comrades Lvov of Boston, Dudinsky of Newark, and Rich of Detroit.

As a Permanent Committee were elected: Comrades Grundberg of Boston, Lipa of Syracuse, and Tyverovsky of New York.

The Committee of Control reported that there were present 34 delegates, representing 38 divisions.

Order of procedure as follows:

1. *Reports of the divisions.*
2. *Organization of the Russian Federation:*
 - a) Executive Committee of the Federation.
 - b) Secretariat of the Federation.
 - c) Divisional Committees.
 - d) Management of the publication *Novyi Mir*.
 - e) Press Bureau of the various divisions.
 - f) Organs of control.
 - g) Funds for propaganda.
 - h) Standing Committee of the Whole on All-Russian Revolutionary Federation.

i) Our relations to current events:

1. In Russia.
2. In the US.

3. *Tactical Questions Relative to:*

- a) Our relations to the American Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party.
- b) Our relations to trade unions, to cooperative organizations, and to the Councils of Workmen's Deputies.
- c) Our relation to the unorganized masses.

4. *Our relations to the Russian and foreign language newspapers (press).*

Reports were taken up from the following divisions:

Baltimore: In this division there are 40 members, of whom 20 are active. Besides the Socialist division there are: Union of Russian Workers and Group of the Social Democrats (Mensheviki). A fight is carried on against the Mensheviki even to the extent of resorting to fist fights. The clergy support the Mensheviki. There are no lectures because of the lack of lecturers. There are no active propagandists. The anarchists have the upper hand in the Councils of Workmen's Deputies.

Gary, Ind.: Thirty active and 2 inactive members. They have no active propagandist forces. Lectures are dependent upon outside forces. The public is interested in lectures. There is also a church organization of 150 members who busy themselves with reporting the doings of the Socialist Party. There is a good library there.

Whiting, Ind.: There are 13 members. The police terrorize the members of the division. No hall can be had for the meetings. There is a library there.

Chicago, Ill.: There are 2 divisions. In one, about 125 members, in the other, about 30 members. There are all kinds of organizations, among the number a Menshevik club organized by members who were excluded or resigned from the Russian division of the SP. This club has no influence on the masses. The majority of the non-partisan organizations are in sympathy with the Socialist divisions with the exception of the clergy, who are more inclined to the Mensheviks and with whom they often meet. The divisions have a good library and club. There are but few active workers. There are almost no lecturers and speakers, notwithstanding the fact that Chicago has to furnish the entire territory with them. Meetings and lectures have been well attended. The divisions recently have been meeting with growing encouragement. Recently there was organized a Territorial Committee in which the whole territory is represented.

Melrose Park, Ill.: Thirty-five members but few active workers. Good library. In the town there is a cooperative association organized by members of the division in which non-Socialists recently got the upper hand. There is also a non-partisan society for mutual aid which is hostile to the division. Meetings and lectures are held with the assistance of Chicago and other cities. Entertainments and lectures are successful.

Bristol: Division has 15 members, of whom 10 are active. The division is under (police) observation. During the past 4 months it has been impossible to hold meetings. The division cannot even use its own clubhouse for meetings. Only 1 member of the club left on account of the persecution. Spies attend the meetings.

Ansonia, Conn.: Forty members in the division; 35 active. Library has 200 volumes. Spies attend meetings. A non-partisan organization "Luch" [Light] is on very good terms with the division.

Naugatuck, Conn.: There are 9 active members. They have no workers of their own and New York refuses to assist. Therefore the division suffered. Regional conference recently in session organized Regional Committee in Ansonia.

Boston, Second Division: There are 59 members. The lack of workers is felt. There is a circle of agitators, the members of which speak but do not give scientific lectures. The priests tried to consolidate the

division with the Church.

Boston, First Division: Forty active members. Good library. Few active workers. They supply the Boston territory. Regional Committee organized.

Lowell, Mass.: Twenty-eight members. Only 1 active worker but he is not an orator. There is an agitating circle.

Lynn, Mass.: Thirty-eight members. There is a Church Brotherhood which does no harm.

Kenosha, Wisc.: Division organized recently. There are 85 members. Meetings held frequently...

Milwaukee: Has no active workers. Circle for self-instruction was organized.

Detroit: Five divisions. 804 members, of whom 714 pay well. They are united in Council of Workmen but they have no appropriate instructive lectures. There are also agitators and a library. Meetings are very well attended. There is a circle for self-instruction organized. The Mensheviks meddled at first but now they no longer exist. Their chief agitator is now trying to recruit Russians in the American army.

Providence: Sixty members. There is a school of instruction in Russian to the division. The school holds 2 sessions in the week. Committee of Agitation is organized but they have no workers of their own for active propaganda. There are organizers but not speakers.

Lawrence, Mass.: Forty-five members, but few workers. Larger part of them somewhat illiterate. Majority of the people in the city poorly educated. There is a small circle of self-instruction and school attached to the division.

Worcester: Forty-eight members., Lack of active workers. Recommend to have paid agitator.

Quincy, Mass.: Forty-two members, out of which 36 are active. Non-partisan unorganized mass which sympathizes with Bolsheviki but does not like Socialists.

New York, First Division: Three hundred members, 135 active. Many active workers. Have their own club, library, and special bureau for filling in questionnaires. Much literature is distributed. Division organized conference of immigrants from Russia.

New York, Fourth Division: Sixty members, 49 active. Non-partisan mass is on good terms with the division.

New York, Second Division: About 100 mem-

bers, out of which 60 are active. Meetings held frequently. Many active workers. Last year gave paid lectures on political economy. Had about 60 students. The course consisted of 6 lectures; charge \$1 for the whole course.

Endicott: Forty-four active members. Organization is very strong. Mass meetings are well attended. Few active workers. Circle of agitators organized. Good library. The finances are in bad condition because the division has one sick member, to whom \$200 has already been paid.

Staten Island: Fourteen members, 8 active. They are under [police] observation. Work is progressing with difficulty.

Cortland: Thirty-one members. Almost the entire Russian population comes to the mass meetings of the division. Lack of active workers.

Syracuse: Forty members, 36 active. A clergyman interfered but did no harm. Lack of active workers.

Newark: Fifty-five members. Masses sympathize. Few active workers. New York is cooperating. There are neither agitators nor speakers. The church brotherhood is hostile; sometimes they fight with the Socialists. They have their own club.

Elizabeth: Fifty-three members, 40 active. Good library. No agitators. School for propagandists has been organized already. Non-partisan fund for the mutual assistance of the division and of *Novyi Mir*.

Paterson: Nineteen members. All active. They pay monthly 25¢ for the support of *Novyi Mir*. Lack of active workers. Discussions on latest events are held weekly.

Springfield: Forty members. Population sympathizes with Bolsheviks.

Cleveland: Twenty-eight members, 23 active. Lack of active workers. At the last meeting they were clubbed by police and since that time the public fears to attend. Eleven members of the division were arrested during the meeting of Oberuchev and each one of them was given a month's term in prison and \$54 fine. Police broke into the quarters of the division, seized all the literature, Socialist banners, and were forced to pay \$2 for an American flag and 20¢ for a portrait of Wilson. There is a school for lecturers. Steps are being taken to establish a school for preparation of lectures and theses.

• • • • •

Comrade Rich, Secretary of the Federation, gave a general and financial report of the Federation. From that report it is seen that the Federation has 51 divisions, with a membership of 2,500. The financial report was given over to the Auditing Committee to audit. The part of the report which proposes to exclude the New York Second Division called forth extended debate. It was proposed to appoint a Committee on Griences to look into this and other instances. The following comrades were elected members: Lvov, Stolyar, Selivanov, Optsy, Gruneberg, Korbetsin, Yaroshuk.

It was resolved that this committee make its report at the end of the session.

• • • • •

Second Session: Morning, Sept. 29, 1918.

Session opened at 10:30 am, Sunday, Sept. 29th. Comrade [Oscar] Tyverovsky was elected Chairman. Comrade Rich reported that due to the special situation in the Federation he had to spend all of his time on the work of the Federation and he believed that he will have to devote more time to it as a result of this meeting, and therefore Comrade Rich requests that he be empowered to receive pay for his work and time until such time when a regular Secretary will be elected. This proposal was unanimously accepted.

The following Auditing Committee was elected: Dudinsky, Striachin, and Grikhilis.

It was proposed that the Auditing Committee give their report at this meeting. This proposal was accepted.

The proposal that all the different committees for this meeting be immediately elected was accepted.

The proposal that each committee have the right of <illeg.> was accepted.

The following committees were elected:

Committee on Finance: Sokovich, Arnotsky, and Simon.

Committee on Resolutions: Gurevich [Nicholas Hourwich], Lvova, Rich, Tyverovsky, and Stylyar.

Committee on Organization and Charter: Finkel-

berg, Rich, Korobitsin, Arnotsky, Radtsianovich, Lip, and Gurevich [Hourwich].

Comrade [George] Ashkenuzi made a report regarding the Executive Committee of the Federation and its Secretariat. The report, after debate, was referred to the Committee on Charter.

Session closed.

• • • • •

**Third Session:
Afternoon, Sept. 29, 1918.**

Session opened at 2:00 pm. Comrade Gulikhis was elected Chairman.

First question of business was *Novyi Mir* and its management. The report was made by Comrade [Alexander] Stoklitsky. After listening to the report the meeting decided to hear the counter-report of Comrade [Gregory] Weinstein, who was absent due to work at the *Novyi Mir* keeping him away; therefore, the hearing of his report was postponed.

Financial Report.

Financial report of the City Committee of the Russian Divisions of New York.

Committee on Transfer of the *Novyi Mir* and Committee of the *Novyi Mir* Society made by Comrade Goldman:

Income, August	\$4,036.91
Income, September	3,375.43
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$7,412.34</i>

Included in this total is a sum of \$3,516.25 which was received for the fund of assistance to *Novyi Mir*. Expenses for this period were \$7,340.70, and the balance on September 26th [1918] is \$71.64.

\$1,744.65 was paid to the creditors of *Novyi Mir*.

The report had been checked by the Auditing Committee which was elected some time ago to audit the accounts of *Novyi Mir*. The report of the committee has already been sent out in printed form. Comrade Tyverdorsky made the full report of the Auditing Committee. This report was accepted.

Next in order was the report of Comrade Weinstein. Discussion on this question was postponed at the request of Comrade Bogopolsky, who was to report the question in connection with the defense of Comrades Fedtov and Taichin, as he could not stay at the meeting any longer and he requested that we give his report precedence.

Comrade Bogopolsky made a full report on the matter of Fedtov and Taichin, and the present situation of the matter. The financial report was as follows: Income, \$1,2476.68; Expenses, \$273.01; Balance, \$974.67.

After this report it was decided to close the session for the day so as to give the committees time to work.

Session closed.

• • • • •

**Fourth Session:
Morning, Sept. 30, 1918.**

Session opened [Monday] Sept. 30th at 10 am. Comrade Rich was elected Chairman.

The Committee on Grievances offered to admit one representative from the excluded New York Second Division for general information. It was decided to admit a representative only at such time when this committee would make a report on the question.

The next question was the defense of Fedtov and Taichen. It was finally decided to request the City Committee of the Russian Division of the city of NY to continue the defense and to have charge over the Defense Committee and in case of necessity to reorganize the latter. It was resolved to organize the Defense Committee at each Regional Committee and also at the Central Committee of the Federation, and that all monies in the hands of these committees should belong to the Federation as a whole for the purposes of defense.

Comrade Stoklitsky made a report on the attitude toward the American Socialist Party. Debate on this question was postponed until after dinner.

• • • • •

**Fifth Session:
Afternoon, Sept. 30, 1918.**

Opened at 2 pm. Comrade Tyverovsky elected Chairman.

Debate in connection with the attitude of our Federation toward the American Socialist Party. After debate, the resolution on this question was referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

• • • • •

**Sixth Session:
Evening, Sept. 30, 1918.**

Opened 6 pm. Comrade Finkelberg elected Chairman.

Comrade Weinstein informed that Committee on Council of Workmen's Deputies of the City of NY requests to be permitted to attend the session. It was decided to offer the committee a written report and not admit them to the meeting.

The next question was the management of *Novyi Mir*. Comrade Ashkenuzi made report. After debate on the report the question was referred to the Committee on Charter.

The session closed at 1 am.

• • • • •

**Seventh Session:
Afternoon, Oct. 1, 1918.**

Opened at 12 noon, [Tuesday] October 1st. Comrade Stolyar elected Chairman.

After the report by the Committee on Resolutions, the resolution of that committee on the attitude toward the American Socialist Party was accepted.

Comrade Rich made a report on the question of union between all Federations of Russian immigrants. After debate the resolution on this question was accepted.

Session closed.

• • • • •

**Eighth Session:
Evening, Oct. 1, 1918.**

Opened at 4 pm. Comrade Tyverovsky elected Chairman.

Comrade Rich made a proposal to change the membership of the Committee on Grievances, members of which are from the Boston division, as there are some complaints against some members of Boston divisions. The proposal was accepted and the following were elected to the Committee on Grievances: Nazarchuk, Litvinovich, Radzivalovich.

Comrade Gurevich [Hourwich] made report on the attitude to the unorganized masses and to Councils of Workmen's Deputies in America. After debate the resolution was accepted.

• • • • •

**Ninth Session:
Night, Oct. 1, 1918.**

Opened at 9 o'clock [pm]. Finkelberg elected Chairman.

Election of candidates for Executive Committee, Secretaryship, etc. Following candidates elected:

Translator-Secretary: Stoklitsky, [alt.] Biderman.

Secretary of Federation: Tyverovsky, [alts.] Radtsivanovich, Litvinovsky.

Proposal was accepted that Comrade Stoklitsky immediately take the place of the Translator-Secretary in Chicago.

The proposal that the affairs of the *Novyi Mir* be held over for the next month, and during that time that others be found to replace the present force, as there was no possibility of obtaining any men at the present meeting, was accepted.

Many candidates for the Central Committee of the Federation were nominated. The names of the men so nominated will be sent to the members together with the resolutions of the meeting to be voted upon.

• • • • •

**Tenth Session:
Morning, Oct. 2, 1918.**

Opened Wednesday, Oct. 2, at 10 am. Comrade Lvov elected Chairman.

Correction of the charter was proposed. Referred to Committee on Charter.

It was proposed that different divisions pay to the federation 20¢ instead of 15¢ for membership stamps. Accepted.

Question in connection with the case of membership dues for \$1 was referred on referendum to all members.

It was resolved to protest against this and not to agree to the resolution in case same will decide to increase the membership dues.

• • • • •

**Eleventh Session:
Afternoon, Oct. 2, 1918.**

Opened at 3 pm. Comrade Tyverovsky elected Chairman.

Comrade Miller reported on the question of the attitude [of the Federation] toward the Russian and foreign press. After debate the resolution on this question was referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

Committee on Finance made its report, after which it was resolved that in the expenses of the meeting should be included payment for the working time lost by the delegates, which is, as per charter, \$2.50 per day per man. The committee stated that the delegates at the meeting spent 125 working days, equivalent to \$462.50. The expenses in connection with railroad fare were \$628.15. The total expenses in connection with the meeting, including the cost of lodging, was \$1,090.65. The committee stated that this was not the final accounting, as there might be some other expenses in connection with this conference. The report of the Finance Committee was accepted.

Comrade Biderman reported on the question of the attitude [of the Federation] toward the trade unions. The resolution in connection with the report

was referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

• • • • •

**Twelfth Session:
Night, Oct. 2, 1918.**

Opened at 8 pm. Comrade Opotsky elected Chairman.

Comrade Weinstein made a report on the attitude [of the Federation] toward current events in Russian and America. The resolution was referred to the Committee on Resolutions.

After this Weinstein reported that on account of the present condition of affairs of the *Novyi Mir*, he could not see the possibility of the newspaper's continued existence.† Unless immediate measures are taken to cover expenses for labor and editorial work, the paper could not exist. Comrade Gurevich [Hourwich] reported in connection with this that he was forced to leave the staff of *Novyi Mir* because of present conditions.

A proposal was made to immediately nominate and elect two paid editors for the newspapers. Comrade Weinstein and Comrade Stolyar were elected. It was offered to Comrade Stolyar to remain in NY and immediately take up his new duties.

The proposal was made to open nominations for the post of Translator-Secretary. Those nominated were Stoklitsky and Gurevich [Hourwich]. Stoklitsky was directed to immediately take the post of Translator-Secretary in Chicago temporarily, subject to referendum.

Comrade Stolyar made a report of the Committee on Grievances in connection with the expulsion of [elements of] the Second New York Division; the offer was made to the expelled part of the division to submit to the decision of the Socialist conference and to recall their delegates from the Council of Workmen's Deputies to escape any friction in the division. The recommendation was made to that part of the division to organize an independent division. This was adopted.

In connection with the Third New York Divi-

†- *Novyi Mir* had been not only cut off from the special mailing rates allowed to publications, it had had its First Class mailing rights administratively terminated by Postmaster General Burluson — all correspondence to the paper, including subscription funds, were returned to sender rather than being delivered. This, of course, created a financial crisis, as was the Wilson Administration's intent.

sion, a resolution was also adopted to instruct the division to recall their delegates from the Council of Workmen's Deputies and also not to publish any correspondence in the press hostile to them.

In connection with the matter of Comrade Shuisky, expelled from the Boston Division, it was resolved to request him to submit to the decision of the division and resign from the Church Brotherhood.

In connection with the same charges received against Comrade Grunberg, it was resolved to refer the decision on this question to the Regional Committee of the City of Boston, jointly with the members of the Executive committee of the Federation and representatives from the Russian Immigrants Federation until the final decision on this matter, and in the meantime to consider his candidacy conditional.

It was resolved that the *Novyi Mir* should not publish any correspondence in connection with the frictions among the divisions of the Socialist Party until the same shall have been settled.

In view of the lateness of the hour, it was resolved that the Committee on Resolutions should finish their work after the meeting, accepting as the basis for their work the resolutions passed at the meeting. For the same reasons it was recommended that the Committee on Auditing should finish their work after the meeting and refer their resolution to the Secretary of the meeting. Adopted.

This closed the session [*sine die*] at 1 am, Wednesday, Oct. 2nd.

• • • • •

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution Concerning Participation in the Congressional Campaign and Attitude Toward the American Socialist Party.

The Russian Socialist Federation understands the political struggle as a struggle of the working class for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the seizure by the working classes of power in their hands with the object of effecting Socialistic overturn. Taught by the lesson of the Russian revolution, we, as revolutionary

socialists, consider it absolutely necessary and inevitable that the proletariat representation be substituted for the present bourgeois parliamentarism, following the type of the Russian Soviets. Taking the foregoing into consideration and in preparation for such revolutionary change, we will take part in the present parliamentary struggle and especially we will support the Socialist candidates who, in their election announcements, plainly and openly emphasize the revolutionary, socialistic, and anti-militaristic character of their political views and stand for recognition of the Soviet government and against intervention in Russia.

(B) Considering it inevitable that sooner or later a schism, signs of which are appearing, will arise in the American Socialist Party as it has already happened in other countries between the revolutionary and non-revolutionary factions, the Russian Socialist Federation deems it its duty to revolutionize, as much as possible, its ranks in the spirit of Bolshevik principles and union of its Left Wing in anticipation of the inevitable schism.

• • • • •

Concerning Coordination between the Activities of the Russian Socialist Federation in America and of the Socialist Party.

With the object of attaining a more successful realization of our Bolshevik program in the ranks of the American Socialist Party, the meeting directs the Central Executive Committee of the Federation to call in the near future a conference of the representatives of the Russian Federations of the American Socialist Party who represent those ideas. The aim of this conference shall be to effect unity of action of all Russian Federations and organizations by one united center.†

• • • • •

Concerning the Organization of Socialist Conferences in Various Places.

It is recommended to Russian Socialist divisions to organize in their districts Socialist conferences of

†- By "Russian Federations" are meant the various language groups of the Socialist Party hearkening from the territory of the old Russian Empire — Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Polish, Latvian, Yiddish — and probably also including the South Slavic Federation.

representatives of All-Russian Socialist district organizations who accept our principles. It is recommended that divisions, in sending out their invitations to take part in these conferences, should use our social revolutionary slogans.

• • • • •

Concerning Relations to Non-Partisan Organizations, to Councils of Workmen's Deputies in America, and to the General, Unorganized Masses.

Taking into consideration the feat that one of the chief objects of the class-conscious revolutionary Socialists is agitation and propaganda of social revolutionary ideas among the broad class-unconscious masses, the Convention recommends to all the members of the Federation to enter those non-partisan organizations, including the Councils of Workmen's Deputies, which represent the major portion of the proletarian masses and whose political physiognomy is not yet clearly defined in a manner hostile to us, with a view to furthering our revolutionary work. For the purpose of doing more effective work in this direction, the members of the Federation must organize themselves inside of such non-partisan organizations in Socialist factions and act as a unit, and all the decisions of such Socialist factions must be binding upon all of its members. But the members of the Russian Socialist Federation must leave the ranks of such non-partisan organizations, including the Councils of Workmen's Deputies, the political physiognomy of which has crystallized and taken on a hostile character toward us and in which our socialistic work has been rendered impossible. The Convention deems it absolutely inadmissible for the members of the Federation to take party in any of the Church organizations.

• • • • •

Concerning the Soviets in America.

Concerning the newly formed type of Soviet organizations recently instituted in America following the 1st Inter-Colonial Convention, the following resolutions are adopted:

Taking into consideration the changed political conditions, these soviets lacked that political importance which they had at the time of the 1st Convention;

And also taking into consideration that the center of gravity in the present political situation is not in those soviets which were organized to meet the technical needs of Russian workmen's colonies in America in different places, but in political socialistic party organizations carrying on revolutionary propaganda and fighting for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat;

The Convention recommends that the Russian Socialists continue their labors in those soviets where Socialists are in majority, with the aim of reconstructing those soviets into purely socialistic organizations; but the Convention recommends to the Socialists that they leave the ranks of those soviets in which the Socialists are in minority and where it is impossible for them to work.

• • • • •

Concerning the Russian Press of America.

Considering the fact that existing organs of the press in the US, with the exception of the Russian Socialist Federation's paper *Novyi Mir*, inculcate political ideas muddling the class-consciousness of workers; That some of them, for example, *Worker and Peasant*, under the guise of non-partisanship express anti-Socialist and anarcho-Menshevist views concerning present soviets and the Soviet Government of Russia; and that others either represent in themselves a lack of principles, as for example, *Russkii Golos* (Russian Voice), or openly show themselves to be organs of the "Black Hundreds" and of the counterrevolutionists, as for instance *Russkoe Slovo* (Russian Word) and *Narodnaya Gazeta* (Newspaper of the People), the Convention <illeg.> the Russian Socialist Federation * * *

*<balance of resolution illegible
due to document damage>*

• • • • •

Concerning Creation of a Press Bureau.

With the object of widely acquainting the [working?] and general classes in America with the events in Russia [and] giving a correct exposition of those events from a Bolshevik standpoint, the convention finds it absolutely necessary to create, in connection with the Central Executive Committee of the Federation, a press bureau. The Central Executive Committee is directed to proceed to the establishment of such a bureau at the earliest possible moment.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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